



**Save the Children**



## **IT ALL STARTS HERE**

Tackling the crisis in the early years teacher workforce

Every child has the right to a future. Save the Children works around the world to give children a healthy start in life, and the chance to learn and to be safe. We do whatever it takes to get children the things they need – every day and in times of crisis.

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Cover photo: Teacher, Becky, with Dereise, 3, at a nursery in Manchester on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016 (Photo: Magda Rakita/Save the Children)

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# Executive summary

The early years of a child's life lay the foundations for their future learning. It is when they start to walk, talk and explore the world. Childcare plays a key role in supporting this development. As well as enabling parents to work, it provides young children with opportunities to play, explore and learn.

High-quality childcare helps children start to build the skills they need to learn and thrive. It is especially important for disadvantaged children: childcare is as an equaliser, providing poorer children with the experiences they need to level the playing field from the offset.

But too many children from poor families are missing out. In 2017/18 37,500 children living in poverty had fallen behind before starting school. They are 50% more likely to fall behind than their wealthier classmates. Without support they may never catch up.

The government in England is investing in childcare, but its focus is more on increasing the number of hours available to parents, rather than enhancing quality. As a result, we are missing a prime opportunity to narrow the persistent attainment gap: children who attend a setting that struggles to provide high-quality early education are less likely to see developmental benefits.

One of the best ways to improve childcare quality is to invest in highly-qualified staff. All members of the workforce play a key role in supporting children, but settings led by a graduate early years teacher (EYT) – with specialist training in child development, how to support struggling children and how to work directly with families to support learning at home – score higher on quality indicators.

We believe all children should be able to access an EYT. But as this report demonstrates, there is a growing crisis in graduate- led provision in England:

- 325,000 children across England attend a childcare setting without a graduate teacher.
- Nearly 11,000 more EYTs are needed, but only 365 have enrolled to train in 2018/19 – down by 84% from 2013/14.

New research in this report shows that EYTs are leaving the sector due to poor pay, progression, and conditions.

These trends are cause for real concern. Even more alarming, the government does not have a strategy to reverse them. A commitment in England to examine how to increase the number of early years teachers in disadvantaged areas – where the need is greatest – has been withdrawn.

This report addresses that policy gap. Drawing on new research carried out with early years teachers, childcare providers, academics, and course leaders, it sets out recommendations to the Department for Education to help recruit, retain, and support EYTs. We call on the government to:

- increase awareness about the support available to people to become EYTs (through current government funding)
- improve the induction and career support EYTs receive in order to improve their retention and to help them have the most impact on children's development
- target investment to support EYTs in disadvantaged areas through trialling salary supplement schemes and early career payments.

The detailed recommendations in this report would have a tangible impact on the workforce. Many of them can be implemented immediately and do not require significant financial investment.

We urge the government to act on our proposals and – as a core part of its strategy to tackle disadvantage – to show leadership on childcare quality.

## The story in numbers

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**37,500**

The number of children receiving free school meals who start school without reaching a good level of development

**43%**

The proportion of children receiving free school meals who start school without reaching a good level of development.

**11,000**

Settings across England do not employ an early years teacher (or equivalent)

**365**

People have enrolled to train to be an early years teacher in 2018/19

**20%**

Of the graduate workforce in England is over 50 and approaching retirement

**95%**

Of three- and four-year-olds attend some form of childcare every week through the free entitlement

**48%**

Of these children attend a setting that doesn't employ a graduate early years teacher (EYT) or equivalent

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# 1. Early years teachers are crucial for children's futures

29% of children start school without the basic skills they need to learn, such as the ability to follow instructions, express themselves, or use tenses correctly. For the most disadvantaged children, this grows to 43% (Department for Education, 2018a).

<sup>1</sup> provides children with the stimulating experiences and interactions they need to learn and develop. It helps disadvantaged children – who otherwise may not have access to the materials, toys and experiences that are so important for development – to catch up with their wealthier peers.

There is strong evidence to show that when children attend a high-quality childcare setting, they get the support they need to develop the foundations for life-long learning:

- Children who attend a high-quality childcare setting, compared with those attending a low-quality setting, have been shown to start school several months ahead in their development (Sylva et al, 2004).
- Children who attend a high-quality setting are more likely to obtain good GCSEs and have increased earnings over their lifetime. These benefits are particularly strong for disadvantaged children (Cattan et al, 2015).
- A major study that followed more than 5,000 families has shown clear benefits – including for language and behaviour – for children attending high-quality childcare (Speight et al, 2015).

## Graduate early years teachers: key to high-quality childcare

When it comes to ensuring childcare is high-quality, it is the workforce that makes the difference. To create an enriching and nurturing environment that supports children's development, settings need staff with a mixture of skills, experience and backgrounds. Every practitioner has a part to play.

Children who fall behind in the early years find it much harder to catch up in later life.

The support parents give their children in the home is vital. But there is another important way to support children's learning: childcare.

High-quality childcare

Early years teachers (EYT) have a crucial role in this: evidence shows that childcare settings led by graduates consistently score higher across quality indicators. This is because EYTs:

- have been trained to understand children's cognitive development and to identify and support children at risk of falling behind.
- have responsive high-quality interactions with children which support early development (Hayakawa and Reynolds, 2014).
- upskill other members of staff, ensuring that the benefits are felt by the whole workforce (Sylva et al, 2004).

We believe that all children in England should be able to access an EYT. But it is especially important for those who are at most risk of falling behind: children living in poverty. The specialist support graduates provide can make a big difference to the life chances of a child growing up in poverty (see box below).

### Save the Children's work in the home

Save the Children's Wonder Words programme uses approaches drawn from behavioural science to develop 'nudges' that make it easier for parents and carers to support their child's language development. We're developing and testing different ways of giving parents frequent, engaging and timely prompts to chat more with children, using baby products, digital solutions, social media and popular brands.

<sup>11</sup> There are several different indicators of high-quality childcare. These include (but are not limited to) having a high-qualified workforce, operating at high staff-to-child ratios and in small groups, and delivering an age-appropriate and child-centred curriculum.

## What is EYT status?

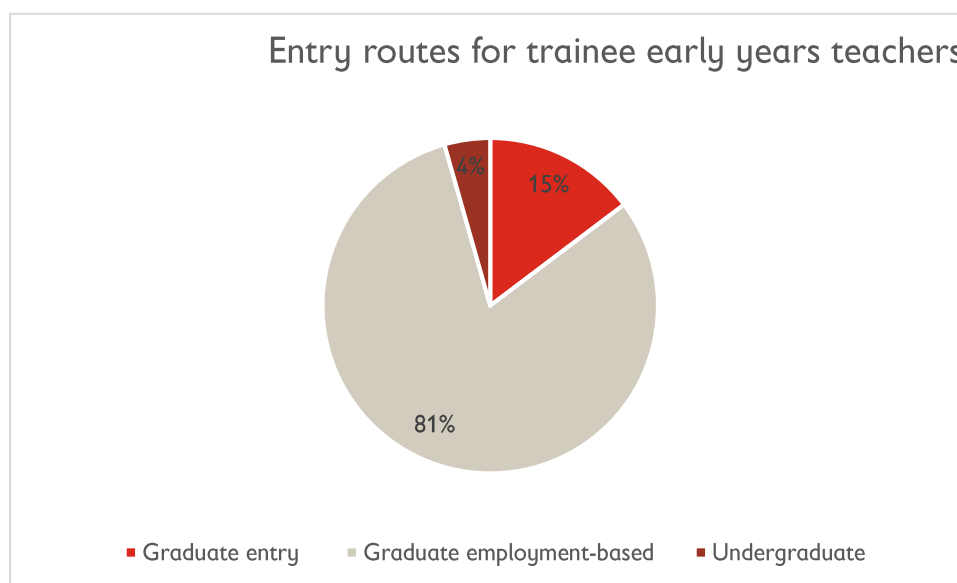
EYT Status is a graduate qualification. Trainees specialise in the development of children aged 0–5 and are taught how to deliver the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. The course is composed of work placements and face-to-face teaching from trainers. EYT Status was introduced in 2013 to replace Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

There are four entry routes to gain EYT status:

- Graduate entry (full-time)
- Graduate employment-based (part-time)
- Undergraduate (full-time)
- Assessment only (three months)

For the 2018/19 academic year, 365 people have enrolled to train to be an EYT (Department for Education, 2018). Most trainees chose the graduate employment-based route (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Entry routes for early years teachers



Source: Department for Education (2018b), Initial teacher training census for the academic year 2018 to 2019, England

The government offers significant financial support to enable people to become EYTs:

- Postgraduate early years initial teacher training (EYITT) courses are fully funded.
- Trainees on the graduate-entry full-time route are eligible for bursaries, depending on the level of degree which they hold.
- Providers are entitled to £7,000 if they support a member of their workforce to train to become an EYT.

However, on completion of EYITT, EYTs – unlike primary and secondary teachers – are not awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). This means that they are not allowed to lead classes in maintained childcare settings (e.g., state-run settings in schools), are not placed on the teacher pay scale and cannot access the same training opportunities.

Maintained childcare settings are required by law to employ a graduate teacher with qualified teacher status (QTS). In contrast, there is no requirement for private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings to employ an EYT,

## Graduates: evidence of their impact

There is a wealth of evidence from England, from the UK and internationally which highlights that EYTs are a key component of high-quality childcare.

- The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) found that degree-level qualifications were the most important indicator of quality
- Similarly, the 2004 study on Effective Provision of Preschool Education found that graduates were the strongest determinant of quality in childcare, and that children who made the most progress had attended childcare led by a graduate member of staff (Sylva et al, 2004).
- Disadvantaged children can benefit most from graduated childcare: graduates play a key role in closing the gap in quality between settings in disadvantaged and better-off areas. Settings which are led by graduates are better able to provide quality childcare when faced with the additional challenge of supporting children who are at risk of language and behavioural problems. (Mathers et al, 2014).

Graduates add value in three main ways:

- Supporting and mentoring staff: graduates are able to share knowledge, model best practice, and observe colleagues in their settings and feedback. This improves skills across the setting (Sylva et al, 2004).
- Leading practice: graduates should be responsible for leading practice within the setting, developing the curriculum and implementing improvements to childcare quality. This is best achieved where graduates have a role that enables them to lead change, but that does not restrict them to managerial tasks in the day-to-day running of the setting (Mathers et al, 2011).

in England (Slot, Lerkkanen & Lesman, 2015).

- The evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund showed that settings which gained a graduate improved more than settings which did not across all aspects of provision, particularly on support for language development, early literacy and curriculum (Mathers et al, 2011).
- Working with children: To have the biggest impact, graduates must spend time interacting directly with children, rather than in back-office or managerial roles with limited contact time. There is a clear correlation between the number of hours a graduate spends working with children and the improvements they can make in quality for children (Mathers et al, 2011; Sylva et al, 2004; Hadfield et al, 2012).

In contrast with this body of evidence, a recent study found that, among children taking up the free entitlement to childcare in England, graduates have no direct impact on outcomes (Blanden et al, 2017). Some have argued that this finding may be explained by underlying methodological issues with the research (Sammons et al, 2017).

Alternatively, it may indicate that the way provision is delivered or taken up as part of the free entitlement restricts the impact graduates can have. This finding suggests that more research is needed to understand how graduates can help to raise quality and support children's early learning.

Nevertheless, the wider evidence base is clear: graduate qualifications are closely related to the quality of provision, and this in turn can lead to better outcomes for children.

## 2. The crisis in the early years workforce

The importance of EYTs is widely recognised. Yet we face a significant shortage of EYTs; and evidence suggests that, without action, the situation will get worse. This chapter sets out the scale of that challenge. And it explores the Department for Education (DfE) early years policy and what it means for the current and future EYT workforce.

### The government's approach to early years

The government is making important steps towards supporting children's learning in the early years:

- With Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential, the DfE laid out a series of measures to improve social mobility, with a focus on narrowing the early-years word gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. This included investing £50 million to create more high-quality school-based provision for disadvantaged children (Department for Education, 2017c)
- The DfE is investing £20 million to improve childcare quality by enhancing continuous professional development opportunities for practitioners in the most disadvantaged areas of the country.
- Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds has set out a vision to halve the number of children starting school behind on their literacy by 2028, including exploring how to enhance the home learning environment.

We are pleased to see the government recognise the importance of the early years and we welcome these commitments. But for the government to achieve its aims, its plans must include measures to grow the graduate early years workforce.

The government had signalled that it was taking up this challenge. Its 2017 Early Years Workforce Strategy acknowledged the importance of graduate staff and committed to conducting a feasibility study into a programme to grow the graduate workforce in disadvantaged areas:

'Where settings employ specially trained graduates, quality is higher and the quality gap between settings in disadvantaged and more affluent areas is narrower. It is important, therefore, that we seek to maximise the number of specialist graduates employed in disadvantaged areas.' (Department for Education, 2017a)

However, since that announcement the government has backtracked. In July 2018 it announced it will not proceed with this commitment and no alternative plans have been published to increase the number of EYTs in private, voluntary, and independent settings (PVI).

Instead, the DfE is focusing on expanding school-based early years provision. This is because school-based settings are required to employ graduate teachers and are therefore more likely to provide high-quality care (Department for Education, 2017b).

While we welcome the investment in school-based provision, our analysis suggests this is unlikely to significantly increase access to graduate-based provision. The majority of two-year-olds (89%) and three-year olds (64%), as well as one in five four-year-olds, receive the free entitlement in a PVI setting (Department for Education, 2018d). For many families, PVI settings are more practical as they offer flexible hours. Even with the expansion of school-based settings, these families are likely to continue to want to access childcare in a PVI. The school-based approach risks excluding this large group of children from high-quality early education.

Furthermore, expecting a significant expansion in school-based settings runs against trends in provision. We estimate that, in the ten most disadvantaged areas of England, increasing the number of children attending settings with EYTs by 50% would require new provision to be created in 69 schools – which is four times more than was created in school settings in these same areas between 2014 and 2017 (Save the Children, 2018a).

In discounting the critical role the PVI sector plays in providing childcare in England, the government's strategy overlooks the contribution this sector can make to increasing the quality of provision and sharing best practice.

### The EYT workforce crisis

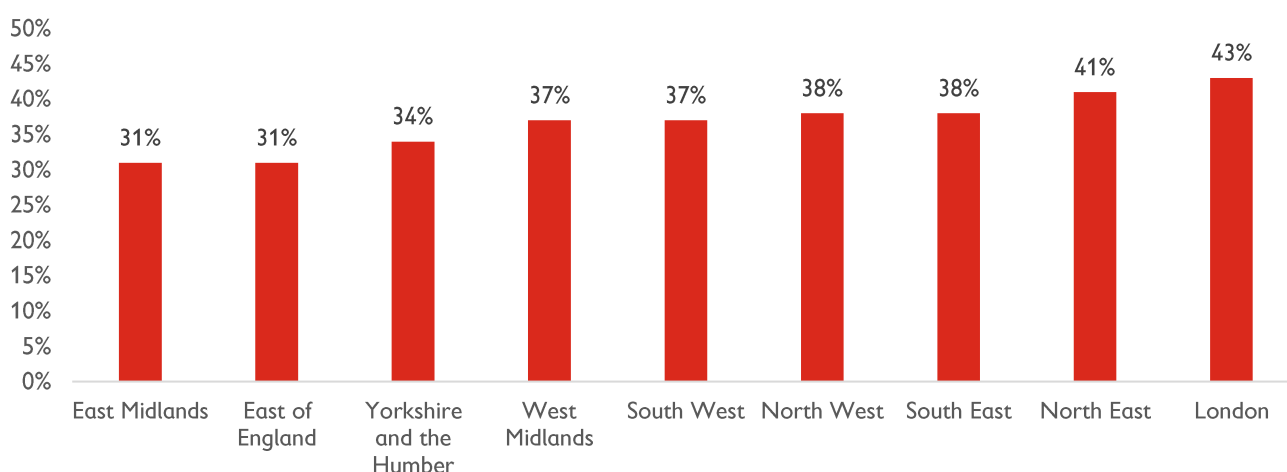
The most recent figures from the DfE show that almost two-thirds (64%) of settings in the PVI sector do not employ an EYT or equivalent. Across the board, over half (51%) of group-based settings – almost 11,000 in total – do not employ an EYT. As a result, more than 325,000 children – 48% of children receiving the free childcare entitlement – attend a childcare setting without an EYT (Save the Children, 2018b).

Figure 2 presents the proportion of PVI settings that employ an EYT or equivalent by region:

- London has the highest proportion of EYTs, with 43% of all settings employing an EYT or equivalent.

- The East Midlands and the East of England have the lowest proportions, with 31% of settings employing an EYT or equivalent.

**Figure 2 Proportion of PVI settings employing an EYT or equivalent by region**



**Source:** Department for Education (2018d), *Education provision: children under five years of age*

Employment of EYTs also varies greatly by local authority. The tables below present the ten best- and worst-performing local authorities in the country:

- Kensington and Chelsea has the highest proportion of EYTs, with 78% of settings employing at least one.
- The worst-performing local authority is Swindon, where only 8% of settings employ an EYT.

**Table 1 Proportion of providers employing an EYT or equivalent- top and bottom local authorities**

Local authority	Top ten	Local authority	Bottom ten
Kensington and Chelsea	78%	Swindon	8%
Hammersmith and Fulham	64%	Rotherham	13%
Lambeth	62%	Shropshire	14%
City of London	60%	Hartlepool	18%
Brighton and Hove	59%	Rochdale	19%
Camden	59%	Halton	20%
Herefordshire	59%	Derbyshire	20%
Sunderland	59%	Isles of Scilly	20%
Barnet	57%	Dudley	21%
Islington	56%	Cambridgeshire	21%

**Source:** Department for Education (2018d), *Education provision: children under five years of age*

These figures show that access to an EYT is a postcode lottery for children. It is unfair and unacceptable that a child's access to this vital support is dependent on where they live.

## Trouble ahead

What is more, the evidence suggests that, without action, the situation will get worse. The Education Policy Institute has found that 20% of current graduates are aged over 50 and approaching retirement (Bonetti, 2018a).

At the same time, fewer people are training to become EYTs, leading to a deficit of graduates:

- 365 people have enrolled to train to be an early years teacher in 2018/19.
- This was the fourth year in a row that the number of trainees has declined, falling by a third since 2017/18 and by 84% since the course was introduced in 2013/14.

- The number of universities and training providers offering the EYITT course has dropped from 43 in 2016 to 30 in November 2018, with losses mainly occurring in the north of England (Department for Education, 2018c).
- A study by PACEY (the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years) and Voice, the education and early years union, found that half of current trainees intend to obtain QTS after completing their status and work in a maintained setting, instead of a PVI (Kalitowski, 2018)
- If current trends continue, by 2023 80% of childcare staff will not have – and not be working towards – a higher-level qualification (Bonetti, 2018b).

It's clear that progress is stalling. In fact, we will soon be moving backwards. As we show in the following chapter, there are underlying challenges to the employment, training and retention of EYTs. These issues need to be addressed if we want more children, particularly the poorest, to be able to access the benefits of EYTs.



Teacher, Steph, interacts with children during a teaching session at a nursery in Manchester on 6th October 2016.

(Photo : Magda Rakita/ Save the Children)

## What can England learn from other countries?

There is a wide body of international evidence demonstrating the importance of graduates for children's early development. In many countries, it is a requirement for centre-based settings to employ at least one teacher qualified to degree level.

- In **Norway** every kindergarten is required to employ at least one teacher with a three-year degree, and childminders are required to be supervised by a qualified teacher on a weekly basis (Ellingsater, 2015).
- Similarly, in **Denmark**, all day care centres are led by a teacher with a degree, and these make up 60% of the childcare workforce (Nauman, 2013).

Other countries have successfully increased the graduate workforce through financial investment:

- In **New Zealand**, a new funding system was introduced in 2002 to improve quality and boost the number of graduate teachers in the early years. Funding is based on four quality bands, where public funding is allocated to settings based on the percentage of staff qualified to degree level, with funding increasing as the proportion of qualified teachers grows. Early years teachers are paid at the same level as primary and secondary teachers and the government has introduced a target for centre-based settings to have at least 80% of their staff as qualified teachers. This has led to a sharp increase in the number of qualified teachers in the workforce, and in 2013 94% of teacher-led centre-based services had reached the target (OECD, 2017). The government are now looking to increase their aim so that 100% of the workforce are qualified teachers.
- In **Scotland** all setting managers are required to possess or be working towards the degree-level Childhood Practice Award or hold an equivalent qualification. There have previously been concerns about the content of these qualifications (Siraj et al, 2015) but the government has committed to reviewing them to strengthen the focus on early childhood development. In recognition of the fact that setting managers have to balance leading pedagogy with other management and administrative tasks, the Scottish Government has also introduced a commitment to support settings in the 20% most disadvantaged areas to employ an additional graduate, who will spend most of their time interacting directly with children. The government is supporting providers to do this by funding training and employment (Scottish Government, 2017).

- Successful initiatives have previously been implemented in **England** to grow the graduate workforce. The Graduate Leader Fund (GLF) was a financial initiative led by the DfE from 2008 to 2011 to support PVI settings to employ a graduate Early Years Professional, through providing settings with extra funding to employ or train graduates. It played a key role in helping settings to recruit and retain early years graduates, and its evaluation demonstrated the impact of graduates on setting quality (Sylva et al, 2011). However, the fund was abolished in 2011.

This evidence demonstrates that England lags behind when it comes to childcare. The government can change this. International successes show that it is possible to develop a graduate-led workforce.

### 3.Barriers to a graduate-led early years workforce: new research

As presented in the previous chapter, there is stark evidence of a growing crisis in graduate provision in England. To understand the drivers of this crisis and what can be done to address them, we conducted research and analysis with the early years sector.

The findings presented in this section are based on an online survey and qualitative interviews with EYTs, managers, wider members of the workforce, academics and EYITT course leaders (see appendix for full methodology). The research revealed a range of themes influencing recruitment and retention of EYTs linked to:

- perceptions of the EYT role
- pay and funding
- support and progression for graduates.

This section sets out these themes.

#### Perceptions of EYTs: the positive impact of the graduate qualification

Practitioners who had attained EYT status were overwhelmingly positive about their experience of training. In the online survey:

- 77% of EYTs said they found the qualification valuable or very valuable for the skills they acquired in working with young children.

- 72% of EYTs said they found the qualification valuable or very valuable for their understanding of children's development.

EYTs said that the EYITT course had improved their practice, knowledge and confidence in working with children:

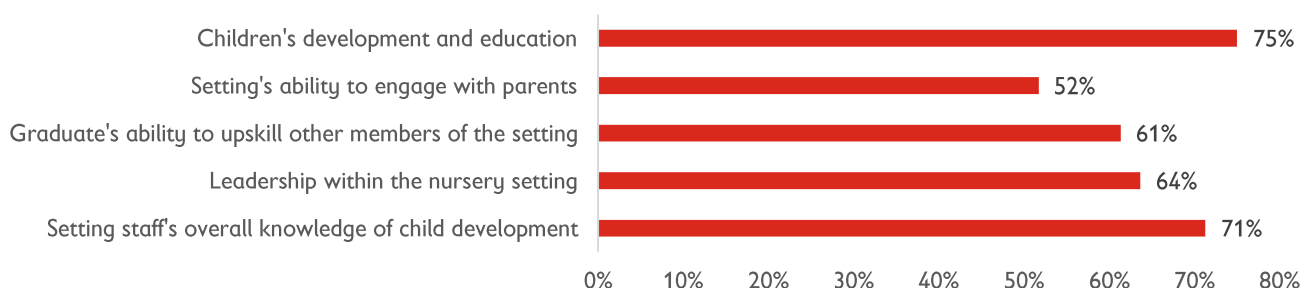
- They attained an in-depth understanding of the EYFS framework and how best to support children's development through the curriculum.
- They were able to upskill other staff members by sharing their knowledge and giving feedback on their practice.

They felt equipped to work with parents, speaking to them about their child's development and supporting them in the home.

Even practitioners with many years' experience before doing EYTS said they had found it useful to update their knowledge, as the theory had changed since they had last completed training. Many managers who employed an EYT responded in the online survey that they had seen a tangible improvement in the quality of practice and on children's outcomes:

- 71% of managers said they had found employing a graduate valuable or very valuable for staff's overall knowledge of child development.
- 75% of managers had found employing a graduate valuable for children's development and education.

**Figure 3 Managers' views on how EYTs have improved aspects of the childcare setting**



**Source:** Save the Children (2018c), survey of early years workers

These survey findings on EYTs upskilling other staff and possessing a high level of knowledge on child development were echoed in interviews. Managers felt that EYTs were better able to work with parents and educate them about their child's development and the EYFS. They attributed this to EYTs having enhanced knowledge and confidence in talking to parents, including difficult conversations about a child's learning at home.

Reflecting on the experience of employing an EYT, one manager explained:

*"For the other staff, having them there has really raised the standards and helped the other practitioners to understand the science and process behind learning in the early years. Graduates really know their stuff inside and out. You have to have strategies for dealing with different children. You need a massive bag of strategies to get it right for the right child, which takes skill. Those with QTS or EYTS are more confident in having difficult conversations with parents and staff."*

*"Having that education behind you does give people more knowledge and the confidence to start applying it. We have to have a lot of conversations with parents from an education perspective. We educate them about the EYFS and sometimes have to have really difficult conversations. Having those people has really transformed the way we do our business here, I trust them implicitly with what they've learned. They definitely improve the standard of delivery of education."*

Those managers who did not see qualifications as the most important consideration when recruiting, nevertheless agreed that having the EYT qualification was useful, alongside other factors such as experience, rapport with children and being able to apply knowledge.

Managers without an EYT still saw EYTs as beneficial; only 12% of those who responded to the survey said they did not see the value of EYTs.

## Status, pay and progression: a lack of reward for higher skills

Although EYTs and providers could clearly see the benefits of the qualification, they identified a range of challenges. Key to this was the low pay practitioners receive after becoming an EYT.

- Only 13% of EYTs who responded to the online survey said they had found the qualification valuable in terms of improving their pay.

Staff, providers, and trainers told us that the wage differential between staff with and without EYTS is insubstantial, with EYTs often earning little more than the

minimum wage. In many cases they are paid the same, or only slightly above, the salary of a level three practitioner.

*"It's very simple – raise the pay and status. Why would anyone study for a degree and postgrad certificate then receive minimum wage? ... My pay and terms and conditions are worse now than they were 15 years ago (before I achieved level 6). There is a lot of talk about the importance of early years, but no one is willing to invest in our children's future."* (EYT respondent)

EYTs were frustrated that they had undertaken difficult training, and sometimes taken on debt, for no tangible reward. In spite of enjoying their work and feeling passionate about working with young children, many were considering leaving the PVI sector, or early years altogether, in order to increase their salary.

One early years teacher, who left the country in search of better pay and conditions, explained:

*"The pay is poor even after qualifying... I have left the country as a result. My pay while studying was barely minimum wage and I was cramming in extra hours to make up for my study day. Then after I qualified my pay was just a bit more. No thanks."*

EYTs saw limited opportunities for progression, with promotions largely limited to management roles that do not require EYTS, and which take practitioners away from direct work with children. This was a further disincentive to undertake the EYITT course or remain in the sector.

A recurrent issue in our research was the lack of parity with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Many EYTs believed that the content of the EYITT was more valuable for their role than courses with QTS, as it allowed them to specialise in and understand the 0-5 age group and was more specific to leading the curriculum in the PVI sector. EYTs therefore:

- felt frustrated that those with QTS had a higher salary, shorter working hours and better progression opportunities, despite both courses having the same entry requirements and taking the same length of time to complete
- struggled to understand why EYTs are unable to lead classes in maintained schools, while teachers with QTS can work in any setting.

As one EYT explained:

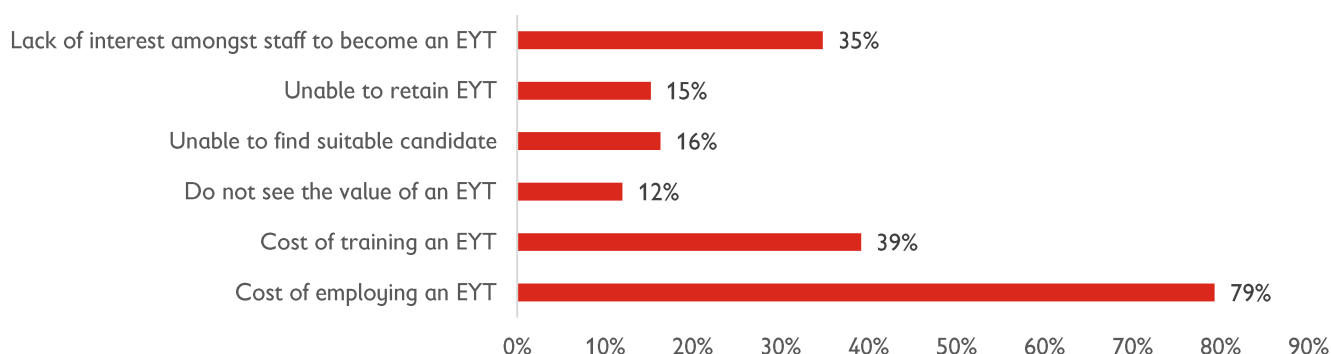
*"We get the name but not the recognition, pay or rights. We're like second-rate teachers."*

EYITT course leaders confirmed that the lack of career opportunities and parity with QTS was leading to difficulties recruiting onto courses. They told us it is common for trainees to:

- apply to do EYITT as a back-up in case they are not accepted onto a QTS course
- drop out of EYITT and switch to a course with QTS once they realise they will not be able to work in maintained settings
- use EYTS as a stepping-stone to QTS, which they embark on immediately after obtaining EYTS.

Many of the EYTs we spoke to had left the PVI sector to work as an unqualified teacher in a maintained school. The conditions and pay were perceived as more favourable, even though they were given less responsibility, they could not lead classes and their status as a graduate was not recognised.

**Figure 4 Survey responses from childcare managers giving reasons for not taking on an EYT**



**Source:** Save the Children (2018c), survey of early years workers

In interviews, managers said they were reluctant to support staff to become EYTs because it would not be possible to increase their wages after they had obtained the status. Many managers had experienced problems in retaining staff after they became EYTs due to low pay and lack of opportunities to progress. Summarising the issue, one provider stated:

*“It’s gold dust if you can get an EYT in your setting, but the reality is they don’t stay long. Why would they?”*

Managers who did employ a graduate said they were forced to recruit them on low salaries, or even into level two or three positions, which do not require the status. Providers told us that they struggled to afford higher staff wages because of:

- funding issues with the free entitlement
- increases to the minimum wage
- the rise in business rates
- withdrawal of support such as the Graduate Leadership Fund.

## Funding for providers: settings cannot invest in higher-qualified staff

While salaries across the childcare sector are low, for providers in our online survey the main barrier to recruiting graduates or encouraging staff to become EYTs was cost (see figure 4):

- 79% of managers who did not employ an EYT cited the cost of employing an EYT as a reason
- This cost scored almost double the next highest reason for not employing an EYT (cost of training).

As a result of issues with funding, some providers were letting their graduates go:

*“I am just about to make my graduates redundant as the setting is unsustainable due to underfunding.”*

Several providers who were able to cover the higher staffing costs told us this was only possible because of unusual circumstances, which led to lower overheads. For example, one setting was a forest school and another was on a military base, so neither setting had to pay building costs, enabling them to invest more in wages. Given that most settings must pay building costs, this approach is not widely replicable.

## Lack of awareness and uptake of financial support

When asked if they would encourage staff to complete EYITT, providers were enthusiastic, but saw the costs and time needed for training as a barrier. Practitioners also expressed that they would like to become an EYT, but their

manager would not allow it, because of concerns about the costs of training and time away from work. These responses point to a lack of awareness: funding is available to help cover the costs of the course and to employ cover staff when an employee is away on training or placement.

Most managers and providers in our online survey were not aware they are entitled to £7,000 if they support a member of their staff to train to become an EYT. In our survey:

- 67% of managers who do not currently employ an EYT did not believe they would be entitled to money
- 58% of managers already employing an EYT were unaware of the employer incentive.

One provider stated:

*“Money is tight for training and covering whilst staff training, and then to have to pay another member of staff. Small business can’t afford it.”*

Several EYTs who we interviewed told us they had to work around their training, making up hours in the evenings, as their provider had not taken on cover. They were presumably unaware of existing support that is provided to prevent this.

*“It’s hard to do a full-time course and work. If you aren’t at work for a day you lose a day’s pay.”*

Many providers said they would take advantage of such funding if it were available. In the recommendations below, we set out ways for the government to raise awareness and increase take-up of the initiatives they already offer to providers and trainees.

## EYTs’ experience: underused skills

Alongside financial issues, our research revealed that many EYTs face other challenges in their setting after obtaining the status. We frequently heard that there is inconsistency in graduates’ roles and that they are not always given opportunities to implement their skills effectively:

- EYTs are regularly put in managerial or administrative positions, where contact with children is limited.
- EYTs take on non-graduate roles, such as level two or three positions, where they are not given the responsibility to lead on the setting’s curriculum or share their learning with colleagues.

EYTs explained that there is often a lack of a shared understanding with colleagues and providers about the purpose of the EYT status:

- EYTs are frequently managed by staff members without the status, who are unsure about the course and what skills the EYT has attained.
- Some EYTs said that they face opposition when trying to apply knowledge, upskill other members of staff, or implement new ideas, due to confusion and uncertainty around the EYT status.

This is frustrating for EYTs and deters them from remaining in the sector:

*“If we had a role saying ‘these are the responsibilities of Early Years Teachers’ similar to the standards we have to meet then I think more people would want to work as an Early Years Teacher. Currently I am employed as a nursery nurse on my contract not an Early Years Teacher. The status just isn’t recognised as a job role.”*

Providers explained that they cannot afford to employ an EYT and a manager, so they try to resolve this by recruiting EYTs into management positions, where they are taken away from children. EYITT course leaders also explained that managers in childcare settings, as the most senior staff members, will often be chosen to do the EYT status, even though they intend to return to their management position and will not increase their contact time with children.

As one research participant explained, EYTs in these positions are unable to improve quality:

*“EYTs are put into management roles and then people say they haven’t improved quality. That’s because they’re not interacting with the children.”*

## Lack of induction for EYTs

Compounding the challenges EYTs face in their role is a lack of induction support after completing the EYT status.

Some EYTs explained that they are encountering difficulties that they did not experience on placement or in training, and which they do not feel supported to overcome. This is especially difficult for EYTs with less experience of working with children, such as those on the non-employment-based route, or those who are the only graduate in their setting.

EYITT trainers also expressed these concerns and felt that many EYTs missed out on a fundamental part of their learning. One trainer explained:

*“They do miss out on a newly qualified teacher year... they have newly qualified EYT needs.”*

## 4. Our recommendations to recruiting and retaining early years teachers

This report has highlighted the growing crisis in graduate employment in England and the drivers behind this. There is no quick-fix solution to complex challenges, but there are steps the DfE can take immediately to improve the support that EYTs receive and to help grow the EYT workforce.

This section lays out our recommendations to address:

- EYITT training
- Employment conditions
- Retention.

Many of our proposals are relevant for the whole workforce, but our priority must be to make sure the most disadvantaged children can access an EYT. Where possible, we have laid out proposals for the DfE to focus any policy changes on those children who are most at need.

### Why focus on disadvantaged children?

While it is important that children across the country can access an EYT, we must start by ensuring that all disadvantaged children attend a setting with an EYT. This is crucial because:

- It can be harder for families living in poverty to provide a good home-learning environment for their children because they are less able to afford educational resources and experiences; due to the broader impact of poverty like living in poor quality, unsuitable or cramped housing; and because of the stress experienced by parents who are constantly struggling to make ends meet. Parents are a child's primary educators, so it is important that they get the support they need to help their child learn at home – particularly if they struggled with education themselves.
- We welcome the Education Secretary's recent focus on exploring innovative approaches to supporting parents with home-learning, including Save the Children's Wonder Words programme. But childcare provision is also a critical route to supporting parents. EYTs can make an important contribution to this as they are trained to work with families and to provide tools and techniques to enhance learning in the home.

- EYTs are equipped to identify children who are struggling and provide appropriate support within the setting to help them catch-up. These skills are essential to giving disadvantaged children the best start to life; the evidence shows that EYTs can have the biggest impact for those children who are the furthest behind.
- Providers operating in disadvantaged areas can find it harder to employ an EYT and deliver high-quality childcare. They may face funding deficits as the families they work with are unable to pay for additional hours above the free entitlement. This makes it difficult to afford higher-qualified staff. Working in the setting can be more challenging and, as such, recruiting can be harder (Mathers et al, 2014). These settings therefore require targeted support to raise the quality of their care.

### Training

#### Improving awareness of current funding

**RECOMMENDATION:** to improve recruitment to the EYITT course, the DfE should ensure that staff and providers are aware of available funding and support.

Our research found that most providers and EYTs are unaware of funding available, especially the employee incentive. This finding is backed up by the DfE's own Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers, where 48% of group-based providers did not realise the employment-based route to EYTS is fully funded. Those who were aware and had taken advantage of this funding had found it useful (Department for Education, 2016).

To improve recruitment to the EYITT, the DfE should provide clear and accessible information to providers and the workforce, explicitly stating that the postgraduate course is free and that providers are entitled to financial support. It should explain how funding can be applied for, how it is paid and what it can be spent on.

There are several ways through which this information could be shared:

### Online

- Information on funding and support for EYITT should be improved and made more accessible on DfE online content, including Get into Teaching, where there is limited information about EYITT.
- The government should place articles in sector press, such as Nursery World and the Times Educational Supplement, to alert the sector to the new information.

### Support services

- The DfE must ensure that staff working for their Get into Teaching team, are equipped to provide information on the grants that are provided and to answer queries. Anecdotal evidence from our research indicates that this is not always the case.

### Local authorities

- Local authorities should regularly inform the childcare settings they work with about funding for EYITT, through local authority bulletins and visits to settings.
- The DfE should produce information resources on EYITT funding that local authorities can share with providers.

### Organisations representing the childcare sector

- Organisations that represent the childcare sector can raise awareness of EYITT funding through the regular updates they provide to their members. The DfE should explore how these organisations can be involved in any project to increase awareness of EYITT funding.

## Employment conditions

### Improving understanding of EYT's roles

**RECOMMENDATION:** The DfE should work with the sector, including trainers, providers, EYT's, and industry groups, to create an example job description for EYT's.

Our research identified that there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of EYT's and the roles they should be performing to make the greatest difference for children.

A sample job description has been produced in England for special educational needs coordinators. In Scotland an example job description for graduates has been distributed

to all local authorities to help them understand the purpose and responsibilities of additional early years graduates. This approach is easily replicable for EYT's in England.

Based on existing evidence, the description should detail the main duties and responsibilities graduates should be undertaking in settings and highlight the key policy objectives of EYT's. This document can guide settings in evaluating the effectiveness of their practice. It will also serve to empower EYT's to ask for more responsibility and make suggestions to improve pedagogy and staff skills.

The job description will need to be effectively distributed to providers and members of the workforce. There are a variety of ways this can be achieved, including through local authorities, universities and trainers, organisations representing the childcare sector, and sector press. This job description should be regularly reviewed as evidence of best practice advances to ensure it remains up-to-date and relevant.

### Improving induction support for EYT's

**RECOMMENDATION:** The DfE should establish a national induction resource for all newly qualified EYT's, in collaboration with EYT's, providers, academics, and trainers.

The lack of induction support available for many EYT's when starting their first graduate positions emerged in our research. This lack of support left EYT's feeling unsupported and made it harder for them to respond to the challenges they faced.

There is no statutory requirement for EYT's to be provided with further training or development<sup>2</sup>. While there are examples of best practice, induction support across the country is variable, and dependent on individual childcare providers and universities. This is despite clear evidence highlighting that pre-employment qualifications need to be combined with support in the workplace to produce the best outcomes for children (Bonetti, 2018a).

In contrast, trainees working towards QTS complete a newly qualified teacher induction. This is composed of mentoring, observations and assessment, and there is a requirement to satisfactorily complete the year. Following a consultation with the sector, this induction period is being expanded to two years.

Rather than a one-off meeting or session, which evidence shows to be ineffective in supporting professional

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<sup>2</sup> All early years practitioners are required to undertake statutory training, including child safeguarding and first aid. However, there is no obligation for EYT's to receive tailored induction support for their graduate role.

development, induction for newly qualified EYTs should be an ongoing programme of support. The learning outcomes, length, and structure of the programme should be agreed by the sector, while the approach should be based on evidence about what forms of professional development are most effective. This will help EYTs to have the greatest impact for children and will reduce inequalities between the support provided to EYTs and those with QTS.

## Retention

The DfE invests money to attract people to EYITT, through bursaries for trainees and financial support for providers releasing staff members. But there is inadequate investment in retaining EYTs, which has meant that many staff qualify, only to leave the workforce because of low pay.

A range of initiatives are being trialled to retain secondary teachers in shortage subjects, following recommendations from the Education Select Committee that retention initiatives are more cost effective than focusing purely on recruitment (Fosters et al, 2018). Save the Children believes that this investment and approach should be replicated for early years teachers to help grow the workforce.

As a priority, initiatives should be trialled in disadvantaged areas, where we know EYTs can have the greatest impact and are most needed. If found to be successful, they should be rolled out nationally.

### Early career payments

**RECOMMENDATION:** The DfE should trial early career payments for newly qualified EYTs working in disadvantaged areas.

There is a shortage of EYTs across the country, and many are leaving the PVI sector because of inadequate pay and status. EYTs told us that they were not rewarded for the effort taken to complete their status or their new knowledge and expertise. They were particularly frustrated that peers with QTS earned significantly more than them, despite both statuses having the same entry requirements and taking the same length to complete. This led to EYTs leaving their roles in PVIs, either to move into the maintained sector, or into a role outside of childcare.

Early career payments are financial incentives given to a member of staff to encourage them to stay in their job. They are currently being trialled across England to incentivise secondary maths teachers to remain in teaching, with higher funding rates available if they choose to work in a school in a disadvantaged area. There is a body of international evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of career payments

(Sims, 2017; Feng and Sass, 2017), and other sectors in the UK, including social work, have also adopted this approach.

- The money should be available to EYTs for the first five years after obtaining the status if they stay working in a PVI in a disadvantaged area.
- The rate of the payments should be decided in collaboration with the sector and based on consultation with EYTs.

Financial investment from government would demonstrate to EYTs that they are valued and help to improve the sense of worth and professionalism across the sector.

### Salary supplement scheme

**RECOMMENDATION:** The DfE should trial a funding top-up for providers in disadvantaged communities to cover the additional cost of employing a graduate (EYT, EYP or QTS).

The main reason providers gave for not employing an EYT was the cost of wages. Faced with other financial pressures, recruiting a graduate was not seen as a viable option, unless they were offered support to do so. When providers did employ an EYT, they were unable to offer a fair wage, which led to graduates leaving the sector, feeling disincentivised in their role, or discouraging other people from becoming an EYT.

Our recommendation of a top-up for providers in disadvantaged communities could cover the difference between a level three salary and the starting salary of someone working in a school with QTS. We have developed rough estimates of the cost of this initiative based on the data available:

- We estimate that this would represent a cost of around £7,000 per teacher.
- If applied to all providers who currently employ EYTs (and equivalent) in the 20% most disadvantaged areas, this is likely to result in a cost of £11 million.
- If all providers in these areas moved to employ an EYT (or equivalent), this would result in an additional cost of £17 million per year.
- This means the ceiling for the cost of the policy to support all PVI settings in the poorest areas to employ an EYT would be £28 million per year.

To drive up the quality of the provision, the setting would have to provide evidence that the graduate is taking on appropriate roles, such as leading on the curriculum and working directly with children.

Providing this financial support would help providers to employ graduates, as well as ensuring that graduates receive a fairer wage.

## Looking ahead

Our recommendations to the DfE set out clear actions to improve the funding, opportunities and support for EYTs.

We urge the government to act quickly. The early years are the formative stage of a child's life and every day is an opportunity for them to play, explore and learn. We warmly welcome leadership from the Secretary of State for

Education on children's early development and the commitment to close the early language gap. But currently, many children are missing out on one of the key routes to achieve this - high-quality childcare and early years education. This failure to provide for children in their early years cannot be allowed to continue; children do not get a second chance.

Through this range of practical measures to boost the graduate workforce, the DfE should work to ensure that all children can access the services they need to get the best start to life.



Teacher, Kathryn, interacts with children at a nursery in Manchester on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016. (Photo: Magda Rikita: Save the Children)

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# Appendix

## Research methodology

To understand the shortage of EYTs, Save the Children has conducted research with the childcare sector, exploring views on the EYT status and the barriers to training and recruiting more EYTs.

The research was composed of two strands:

- an online survey promoted on Nursery World in November 2017 and completed by 368 participants
- 51 semi-structured qualitative interviews with members of the PVI sector.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with:

- 18 EYTs and EYPs
- ten managers with an EYT/EYP
- two managers without an EYT/EYP
- six non EYTs (primarily level three practitioners or childminders who wanted to become EYTs)
- 15 EYITT course leaders.

Interviews were conducted over the telephone and lasted approximately half an hour each. Interviewees were asked to discuss the following topics:

- their views on EYTs and the content of the qualification
- their reasons for undertaking or planning to undertake the course (where applicable)
- their reasons for employing a graduate (where applicable)
- their experiences of undertaking the course and/or employing a graduate (where applicable)
- barriers to undertaking the course and/or employing a graduate
- suggestions of what can be done to overcome the barriers.

We have used the research findings to devise recommendations, which have been shared with the early years sector for feedback.

## Salary supplement methodology

The average salary of a level three practitioner was estimated using the 2016 Early Years Pay and Conditions Survey, which is the most recent data available on early years pay [[https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/digital\\_assets/1325/NW\\_Salary-Pay-Conditions.pdf](https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/digital_assets/1325/NW_Salary-Pay-Conditions.pdf)]. According to this data, a level three member of staff earned on average £7.84 per hour.

However, as this data is two years old, and the national minimum and living wages have increased since then, it is reasonable to assume that level three wages will have increased in line with this. If the average salary of a level three practitioner had increased in line with increases in the national living wage, this would mean that the average wage is now £8.53 per hour. This would translate into an annual salary of £16,378, assuming working hours of 40 hours per week, 48 weeks per year.

In comparison, a newly qualified teacher with QTS can expect to earn a starting salary of £23,720 outside London [<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/funding-and-salary/teacher-salaries>]. The difference between the two salaries is therefore approximately £7,000 per teacher per year.

This figure was then applied to providers in disadvantaged areas, measured using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). According to data obtained by Save the Children from the Department for Education through a Freedom of Information request, there are currently 1,559 PVI providers in the top 20% most disadvantaged areas who currently employ an EYT or equivalent. If all of these providers were to take up the salary supplement of £7,000 for one member of staff per setting, this would result in a total cost of £10.9 million per year.

Additionally, there are 2,404 providers in these areas who do not currently employ an EYT. If all of these providers were to take up the salary supplement in order to employ an EYT, this would result in a cost of £16.8 million per year. The total cost of the policy would therefore be £27.7 million per year.

These figures are rough estimates and should therefore be treated with caution.