

Policy and Politics

DfE flags up changes to the code of practice

Catherine Gaunt, 01 November 2011, 12:00am

Ministers will consult in the next few weeks on the criteria that early years settings will need to meet in order to qualify for nursery education funding, as part of the consultation on the regulation of early education.

Speaking at an International Centre for the Study of the Mixed Economy of Childcare (ICMEC) seminar at the University of East London, Ann Gross, director of early years at the Department for Education, said that the aim would be to streamline the Code of Practice to take out the prescriptive detail but keep the focus on quality and maintaining diversity in the sector.



Ms Gross said, 'We will shortly be consulting on a basket of eligibility criteria that providers of the free entitlement will need to meet to receive funding.'

She said that this could include, for example, Ofsted grades and inspection reports, as well as levels of staff qualifications and whether settings are in a quality assurance scheme.

The Government is also considering whether tougher criteria will be introduced for those settings that will offer the free entitlement to two-year-olds.

Defining what sort of criteria should be used for places for under-twos will need to be balanced to ensure that there are also sufficient places for two-year-olds in the system.

From September 2013, a legal entitlement to nursery education will be extended to 20 per cent of two-year-olds.

The offer will be given to the poorest children, as well as looked-after children. There will also be flexibility for local authorities to fund other groups according to local need.

The consultation will also look at how to define the free entitlement.

Ms Gross also revealed that the department had received more than 2,300 responses to the Government's response to the Tickell Review of the EYFS.

She acknowledged that there had been some criticism over the Government's response to the revised EYFS.

'People fear that we've left out the nought to twos, but that was not our intention and we'll be saying more about development for nought to twos,' she said.

Ms Gross also confirmed that there would be a further consultation on the orders (the legal framework) that is needed to underpin the revised EYFS early next year.

Helen Penn, professor of Early Childhood at the University of East London and co-director of ICMEC, also spoke about the extent to which childcare and education across Europe is delivered by private providers and how

regulations vary.

Eva Lloyd, co-director of ICMEC, who chaired the seminar, said, 'These two presentations highlight the contrasts between our own country and other EU member states.'