# Initial Practitioner online survey

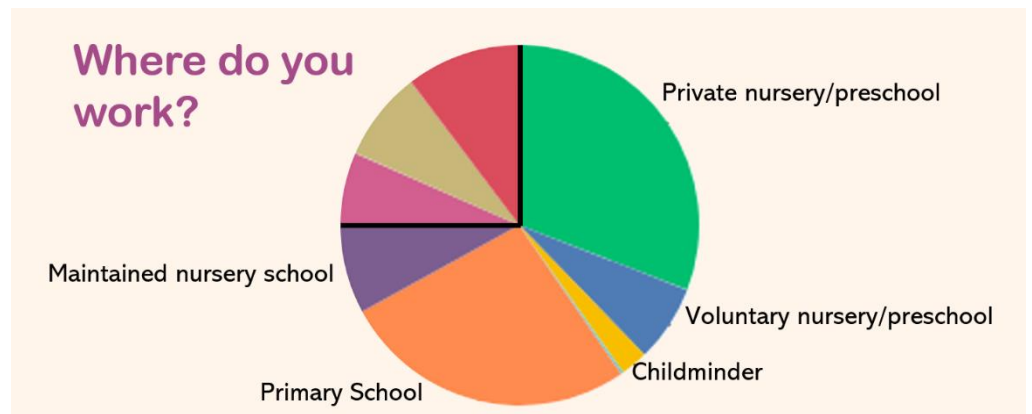**20 October to 2 November 2020**

total responses 1649

Q 1: What is your job role? (1647)

Respondents were predominantly working directly in early years settings (73%). The 'Other' category (11%) actually contained many teachers and preschool staff, alongside lecturers and many other roles.
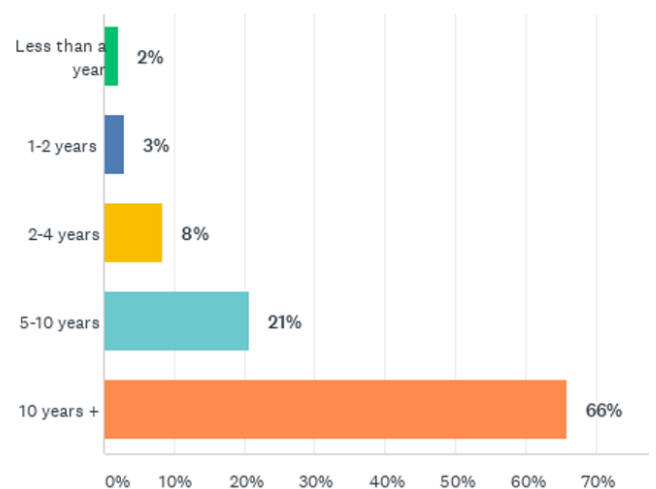

responses

- Teacher/Practitioner 48%
- Manager 17%
- Headteacher, Deputy Head 8%
- Adviser, consultant 7%
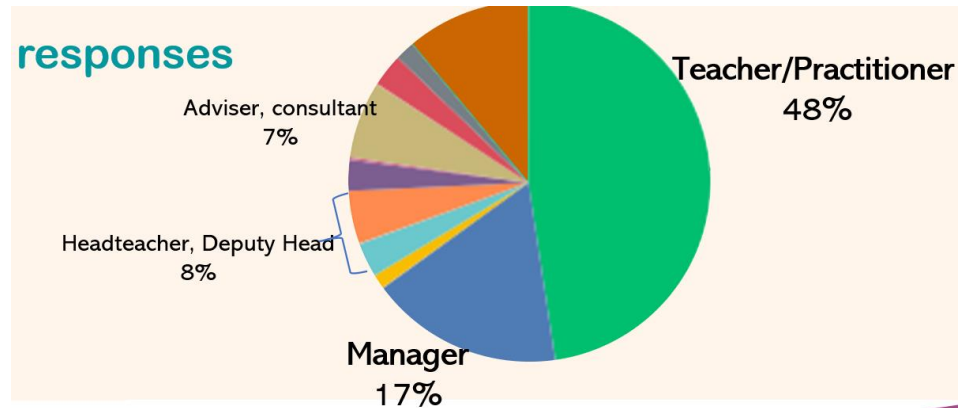
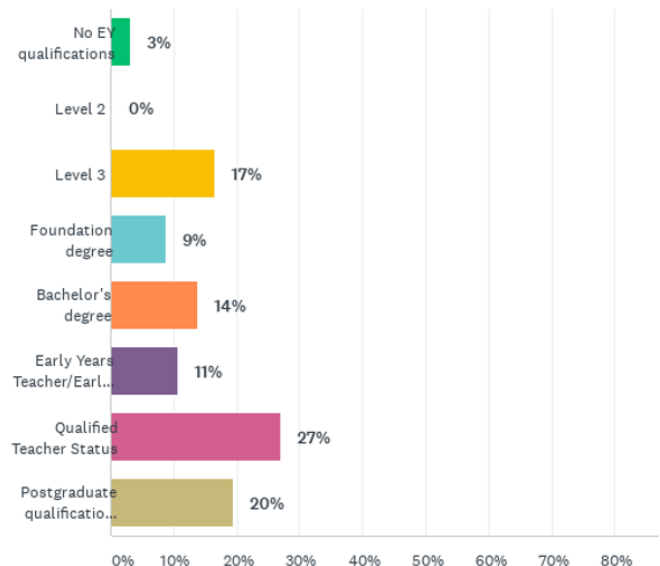**Q 2:** What type of organisation do you work in? (1638)

The great majority (75%) work directly in settings. In fact, many appearing in the 'Other' category work in academies and independent schools. Also included were local authority (7%) and colleges/universities (8%).

Where do you work?

- Private nursery/preschool
- Voluntary nursery/preschool
- Childminder
- Primary School
- Maintained nursery school

Q 3: How long have you worked in the early years? (1642)

- Less than a year: 2%
- 1-2 years: 3%
- 2-4 years: 8%
- 5-10 years: 21%
- 10 years +: 66%

Q 4. What is your highest early years qualification? (1645)

No EY qualifications	3%
Level 2	0%
Level 3	17%
Foundation degree	9%
Bachelor's degree	14%
Early Years Teacher/Earl..	11%
Qualified Teacher Status	27%
Postgraduate qualificatio...	20%

Q 5. Does DM 2012 help you to understand the structure of the EYFS (Principles, CoEL, AoLD?) (1365)

If no, what would help? (44)

Don't know 2% (31)
No 4% (48)
Yes 94% (1286)

- **More on Characteristics of Effective Learning (12)**
  - *Think the Characteristics of Learning should be given more emphasis.*
  - *Remove development matters, focus on COEL only.*
  - *Mostly it did, however I've never found the COEL especially clear.*
- **Too prescriptive (6)**
- **More on theories (4)**
- **Too vague, woolly, make more explicit (3)**
- **More on Under 3's (2)**
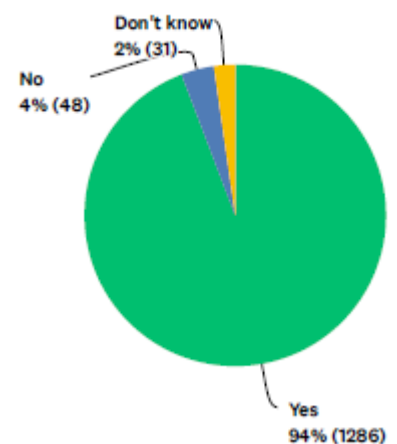
Q 6. Should Birth to 5 Matters outline the principles of the EYFS, and how these link to pedagogy – the role of the adult in providing Positive Relationships and Enabling Environments, in order to support the Learning and Development of each Unique Child, through the agency of each child demonstrated in the Characteristics of Effective Learning? (1360)
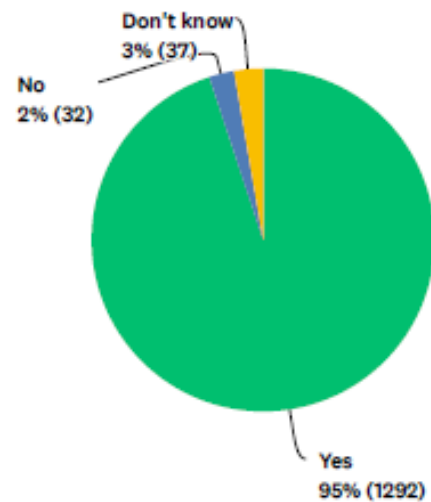
If no, tell us why (18)

Don't know 1% (14)
No 1% (14)
Yes 98% (1332)

- **Not so prescriptive (3)**
- **Format (3)**
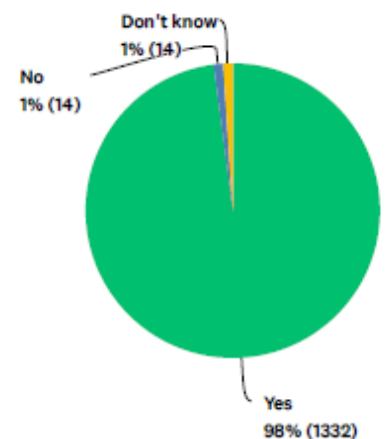
Q 7: Should Birth to 5 Matters illustrate "typical" child development, while emphasising that each Unique Child is not expected to match a preconceived trajectory? (1361)

Please tell us why. (237)

Don't know 3% (37)
No 2% (32)
Yes 95% (1292)

- **Important to see broad trajectory, but emphasise unique path for individual child (82)**
  - o *It is important that practitioners have realistic expectations about children's "typical" development in order for them to adjust and tailor their support for each child. The impact of unrealistic expectation is great and can lead to wrongly diagnosed issues. Practitioners need to have clear understanding of a child development alongside a real understanding of the child's previous experiences in order to provide appropriate support.*
  - o *I think some practitioners find it useful to know roughly where the child is developmentally, and yes, definitely we should not make checklist and expect children's development to be unpredictable and individual.*
  - o *For teachers working in the Early Years (especially those who have trained in Primary Education - which for some unusual reason doesn't cover Reception) having a document which shows typical development will really help the teachers to understand what skills and knowledge children should have to build upon throughout the year. All the time remembering the emphasis on Characteristics of effective learning and that every child is unique and learns in their own way & pace.*
  - o *"Typical" child development will aid in identifying support for all children whether they have universal needs or targeted needs.*

- **Children are unique, no such thing as 'typical'; children should not be expected to conform to preconceived trajectories (38)**
  - o *This is a difficult one! I think practitioners appreciate something of this kind and find it a useful reference but "typical" is a problematic term, typical for whom? We end up measuring all children against it and those that are different are in some ways othered, perceived as lacking, labelled far too early and become subjects of intervention strategies that are often inappropriate. It becomes a pre-conceived trajectory which everyone should adhere to whether or not we intend it to.*
  - o *As long as it focuses on illustrating "typical" development, it is inevitably creating preconceived expectations.*
  - o *What is a typical child? In 25yrs of teaching each child has come with their own unique experiences. The journey of learning is wonderfully different for each human.*
  - o *I have an issue with 'typical child development '. Is there such a thing as typical adult development in relation to how adults can learn...I don't think so and that's why I have an issue with those three words.*

- **Supports identification of need for additional support (34)**
  - o *I find it useful to gauge roughly where a child is and their progression. It was very useful when working with a SEND child as we could easily explain their development and get the support needed for that child.*
  - o *think it's useful to have a benchmark as this helps us to identify those that may need additional support*

- **Useful for less experienced practitioners to support knowledge of child development (33)**
  - o *I think it's also useful for practitioners newly qualified or new to the sector to be able to roughly identify where the child is and what they could be working towards*
  - o *.Having something to reference against can be useful especially for practitioners early on their journey or remind them of what 'normal' is as 'normal' can be a moving feast i.e. if you work with children who have little language it is easy to think all children have little language.*

- **Concern over use as tick list/deficit view of children (24)**
  - o *If each child is a "unique child" then they should not need to tick all boxes at any given age. It should be used as a loose useful guide, not as a hard and fast assessment tool.*

- o *The bands can be labelling and give a false impression that the child is not developing if they are working or best fit into a particular category e.g below their age. Children need to be secure in the prime areas as a priority over the specific to show a more accurate picture of there stage of development, this takes time and every child is Unique and will unfold in their own time. Some children take more time and development is internalised and comes out often when they are individually developmentally ready. A Unique child should not match a pre-conceived trajectory and the teacher should not feel they need to explicitly teach to match the child against it to access the child's development, It comes best from the child when they are ready.*
  - o *While I understand people's dislike of the "checklist" style format, it is useful to plan with and is very helpful for new practitioners, who are not so confident in their knowledge, to be guided by while they learn. However this should be for practitioner guidance rather than child assessment.*

- **Communicating with parents (14)**
  - o *It also serves as a helpful reminder for all practitioners and we have found it very useful having a guide when discussing learning and development with parents, especially those with unrealistically high expectations.*

- **Age expectations should not apply - bands, no ages (5)**
- **Specific concern re SEN/EAL (4)**
- **Other comments:**
  - o Show only development trajectory, not formal learning
  - o Include clear milestones
  - o Yes and no! –
  - o 'possible developmental trajectory' rather than 'typical'
  - o Development is not linear

Q 8. Should Birth to 5 Matters support practitioners in the observation/assessment/planning cycle to meet children's needs and scaffold their learning (formative assessment)? (1356)
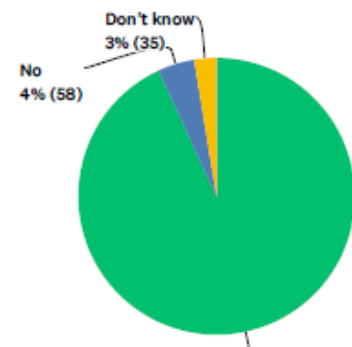
Q 9. Should Birth to 5 Matters support periodic assessment of children's progress, using best-fit judgements in age-stage bands (not checklists)? (1353)
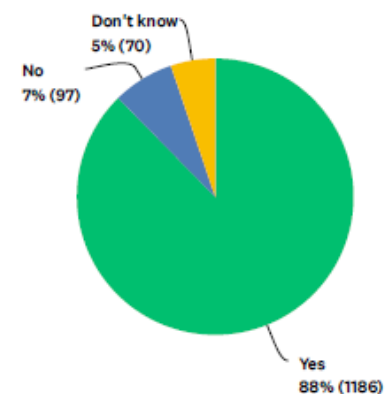

Q 10. Are there other purposes that should be addressed by the new guidance? (393)

Comments on purposes of the guidance:

Holistic view of well-being and learning
It should show the integrated/interconnected nature of learning and development, the importance of the Characteristics of Effective learning and a recognition of the needs of children and families living in the world today.
Reiterate need for good attachments and holistic perspective of child and their family Importance of opportunity for exploration and curiosity to support development NOT didactic teaching of content EG formal maths and literacy. Importance of non tangible areas of development- EG- Well-being, executive functioning skills and resilience How to support behaviour management that has a more neuroscientific 'trauma' lens rather than reward and punishment

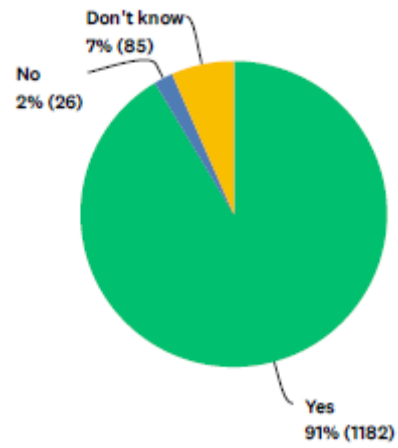| |
|---|
| What healthy early years looks like - body, mind and "spirit" - holistic well-being |
| **Families** |
| Sharing and celebrating children's unique learning journeys with parents and carers, and supporting home learning. 2) Including ways for children to talk about their own learning/metacognition. 3) Teachable moments- when to intervene and when not to. 4) How to design a curriculum based on the statutory EYFS programmes (not the ELGs!) |
| Working in partnership with all children's families, which has fallen off the government's agenda big time (lots in statutory document about what parents should be told but nothing about how you establish an effective working relationship with primary caregivers). Not well covered in 2012 Dev. Matters either. |
| **SEND/EAL** |
| More guidance in working with children with behavioural difficulties and additional needs, especially trauma and attachment issues |
| Differentiated versions of assessment toolkits to support practitioners to make best fit judgements within finer steps of progress e.g. SEND Or AEN children |
| The unique development curves for children with sensory and other physical disabilities |
| Inclusion of EAL learners and their families. Valuing the home language and respecting the parents' if they do not speak English confidently and recognizing transferable skills and bilingualism as an advantage. |

Q11. Should guidance be structured under the EYFS Themes and Principles (like the Commitments cards in the 2008 EYFS)? (1279)
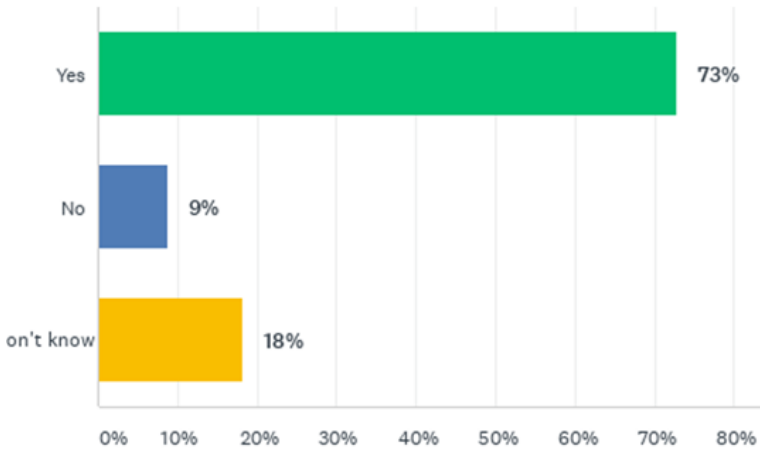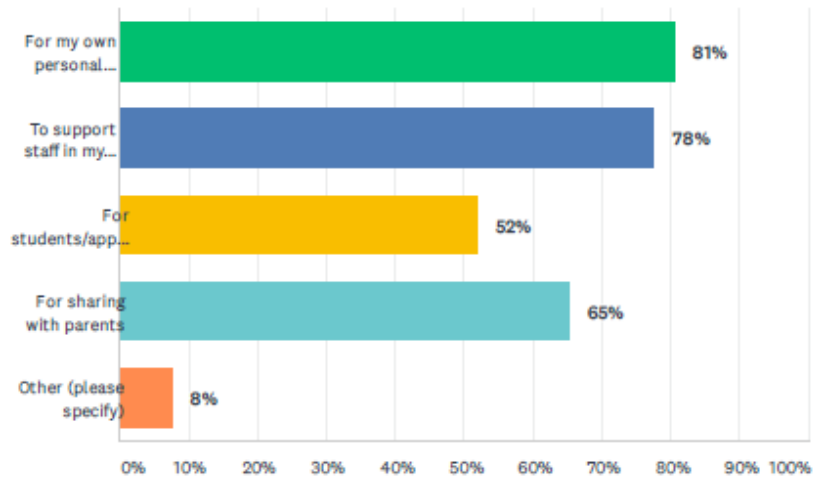

Q12. Which of the following topics would you like Birth to 5 Matters to cover? (1291)
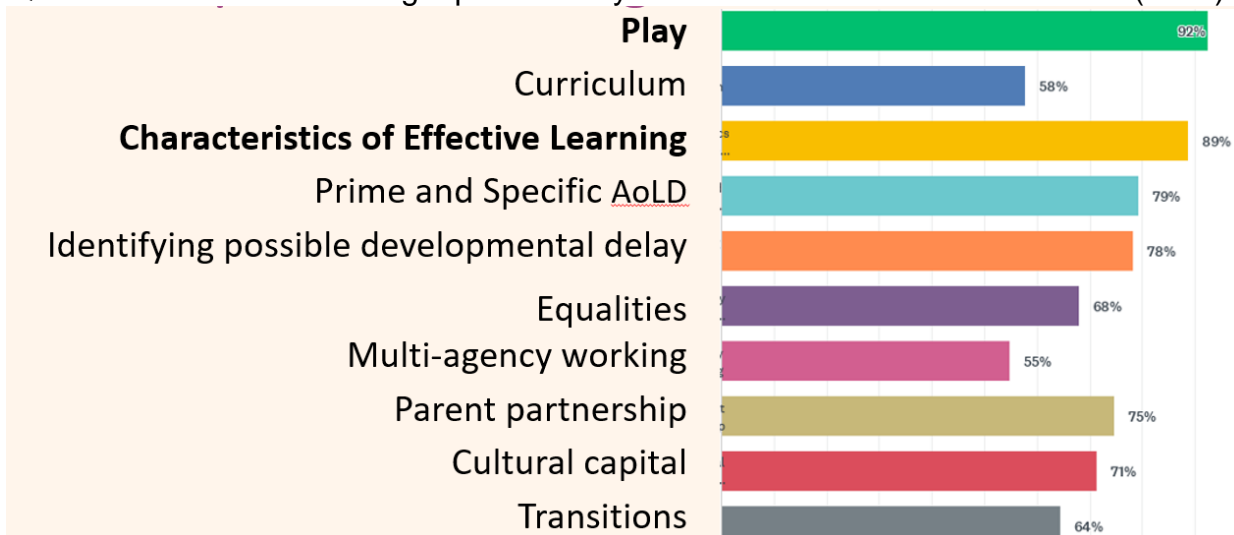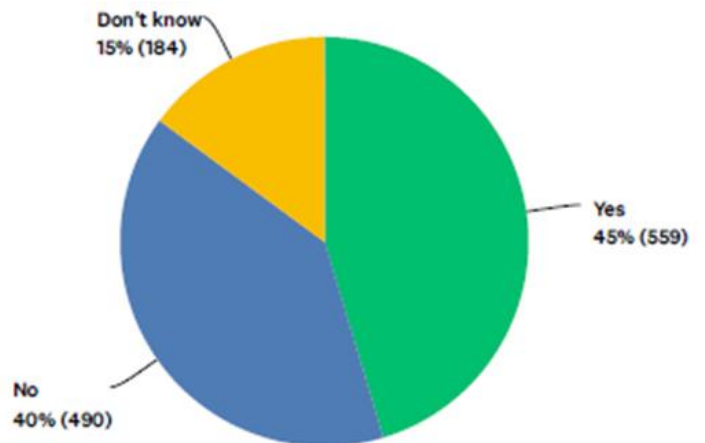
Q13. Would you use links to the evidence underpinning the guidance and further reading to support your CPD? (1293)
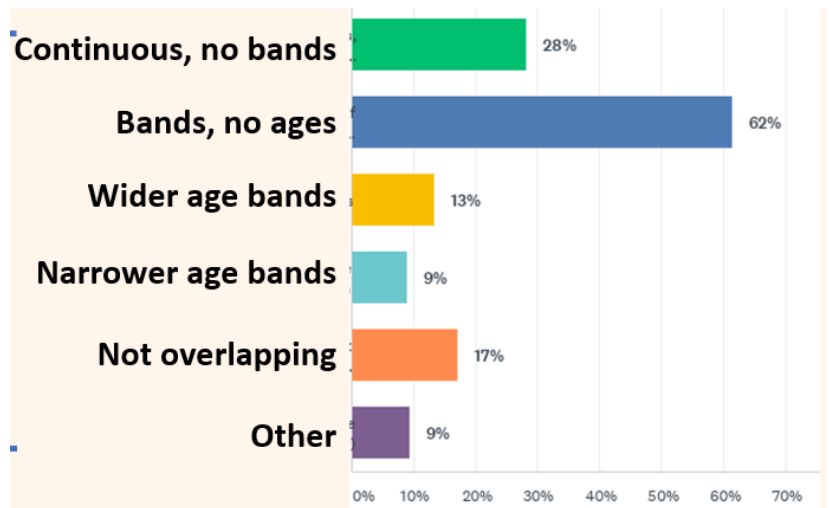
Don't know
7% (85)

No
2% (26)

Yes
91% (1182)

Q14. If you answered yes, how would you use this further information? (1191)

Category	Percentage
For my own personal...	81%
To support staff in my...	78%
For students/app...	52%
For sharing with parents	65%
Other (please specify)	8%

Q15 Should the current bands be retained? (1233)

Don't know
15% (184)

Yes
45% (559)

No
40% (490)

Q 16 If you answered no, what alternative do you suggest? (625)

Alternative	Percentage
Continuous, no bands	28%
Bands, no ages	62%
Wider age bands	13%
Narrower age bands	9%
Not overlapping	17%
Other	9%

Breakdown of all views
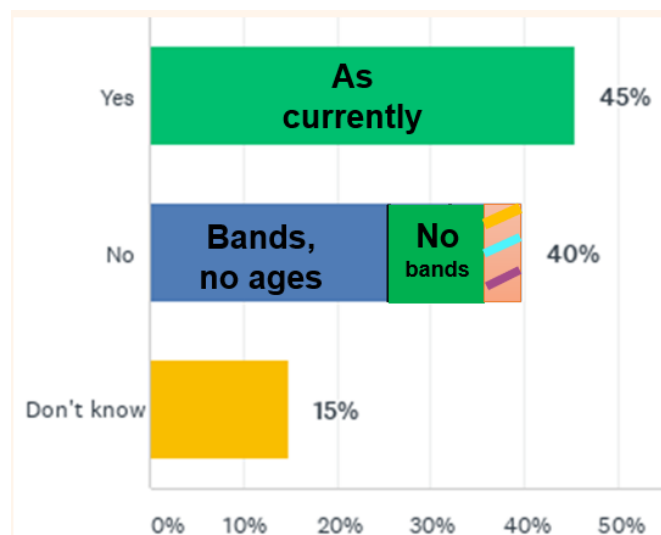
Overall breakdown indicates need to keep what is valued (the need to support practitioners in understanding child development, identify developmental delay, and plan to support progression in learning) while responding to concerns about labelling children or having a mechanistic, linear view of learning and ignoring the concept of Unique Child.

> *'I don't actually disagree with the age bands - what I disagree with is the constant assessment points throughout the year where we are expected to choose a sub point within each band to assess every child in all 17 areas which is an unrealistic expectation. If we are to have age bands, OFSTED and the guidance needs to be very clear that box ticking and assessing through overlapping age bands is not effective or reliable.'*

> *'maybe a guide to typical ages, but not emphasising the 'need' to be within them'*

> *'Possible age bands that cover up to an older age, reception children can be up to 71 months but the end of reception and so being in a band that is 40-60months+ can be a little confusing.'*

> *'Stages but with caveat that these are not 'goals''*

> *'maybe have more conventional age bands e.g. birth to six months, 6-12, 12-18, 18-2years, 2-3 years, 3-4years 4-5, 5-6 but still with overlaps in the way it is set out'*

> *'I'm not sure of the solution but I'd like to see something that helps schools to broaden their focus and be able to use the information shared from nurseries when the children reach Reception. Something that helps with the issue that there is around 12 months age gap within an academic year but once children start school they are expected to develop the same.'*

Other – please specify. (59)

- **Bands with no ages (7)**
- **Guide to 'typical', while removing sense that children should follow (6)**
- **Overlaps smaller or removed (6)**
- **Key indicators (5)**
- **Smaller steps for SEND (5)**
- **Narrower bands (5)**
- **Use narrative descriptions, detail of processes (5)**
- **Wider bands (3)**
- **Ages by year groups (3)**
- **Age bands of equal length (2)**

Other comments (1)
- Place age at end of grid
- Web, not linear
- Stop over-assessing

- Use KS1/Yr1 outcomes
- Create Kindergarten stage
- Focus on motor-sensory integration
- Checklist reduces depth in play and learning

Q17 Currently the guidance illustrates progression within separate strands for each area of learning and development (e.g. rather than listing all of Communication and Language together, there is a progression shown for each strand of Listening and Attention, Understanding, and Speaking). Should we continue this approach? (1243)
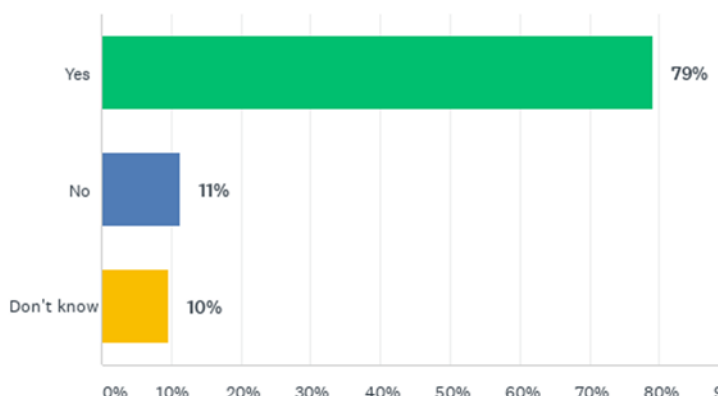
Q18 Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding the Birth to 5 Matters guidance? (278)

- **Update/improve descriptors (25)**
- **More focus on CoEL, self-regulation, persistence (22)**
  'I would like extra guidance on characteristics of effective learning. Since they were implemented people have become more aware of them and may now have further ideas on how to focus on them etc.'
- **Focus on play (19)**
  'A focus on investigative, exploratory PLAY and engaged and informed adults providing opportunities for learning through PLAY'
- **More focus PSED/well-being/mental health (15)**
  'For me Play and social interaction is the most important foundation to a child's well being, and this provides a strong foundation to the child's learning, concerns are if we begin to teach formally to early the mental health/anxiety damage, to the child can then very hard to rectify'
- **Evolve, don't change too much (15)**
  'Don't just change something for change's sake - things can be reviewed and tweeked or kept, as still very relevant and working without overhauling the whole criteria.'
  'I like the guidance - something similar would be great'
- **Links to further information, evidence base (15)**
  'I really like the idea of the links to the research behind the guidance for personal and staff teams' cpd'
- **Appropriate for EAL, SEND (14)**
- **Keep it useful/accessible language and design (13)**
- **Avoid formal approach to teaching and learning (12)**
- **Deter checklists (11)**
- **Holistic view, links between AoLD (9)**
- **Adult role in sensitive scaffolding, interaction (7)**
- **Flexible, respect other approaches and views (7)**
- **Unique Child, less emphasis on age/stage (7)**
- **Understanding home life/ circumstances, ACE, multicultural (7)**
- **Aspects separate (7)**
- **Include examples/case studies (7)**
- **Guidance for parents (6)**
- **Beyond – transition, extend to 7 (6)**
- **Training needed, initial and CPD (5)**
- **Value birth to five as a phase in itself (5)**
- **Observation (5)**
  - narrative (2)
  - schemas (3)

- **Design with colour and photos (5)**
- **Prime areas focus (4)**
- **More focus curiosity, creativity, joy (4)**
- **Rights/sustainability goals - UNCRC, UNSDDG (4)**
- **More on birth to three, prime areas (4)**
- **Include knowing colour names (4)**
- **Include milestones (3)**
- **Aspects merged (3)**
- **Trajectory – understand development and how to help (3)**
- **Equality/diversity/disadvantage (2)**
- **Meet needs of today and the future/ climate change (2)**
- **Theory into practice (2)**

Other comments:
- Brain development and impact by year
- Wide curriculum
- Safeguarding – one-site document
- Community links
- Focus on development, not learning
- Ideas for curiosity approach
- 'How to guides' (e.g. Transitions, SEN)
- Rich experiences and opportunities
- Remove toileting from PSED
- Split reception from pre-reception
- Simple broad strokes
- Guidance on best-fit assessment
- Strategies for teaching
- What to Expect When good layout