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DON'T GO! Retaining families & staff

Saying goodbye to preschoolers is a poignant time in the early years calendar with parties, 'graduation ceremonies' and a few tears on the part of staff and parents alike. Ceeda research tells us that 95% of four-year-old children leave their PVI setting to start school in a Reception (95%) or nursery class (3%). But what of those children who leave a setting before this scheduled transition? What are the reasons for children moving on and what can we learn from leaver feedback?

To date the Ceeda leaver survey has tracked the reasons for 917 children leaving nursery provision and these are summarised in the table below. Interestingly, in 8% of cases children aged three years and younger leave a setting because the quality of early education and childcare is not satisfactory. It is vital that settings capture, evaluate and act on feedback in these cases – ideally before a family moves on.

Analysis of open feedback from the survey highlights a number of recurrent themes. A small number of parents raise issues such as poor communication, inadequate health and hygiene, inadequate behaviour management and poor diet. By far the most common issue raised, however, is high staff turnover.

Staff turnover

The early years sector is particularly vulnerable to high staff turnover levels – indeed NDNA's workforce survey 2015

reported average staff turnover of 14% (ow.ly/Sh3Te).

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Where employees need to develop strong customer relationships as part of their role, the impact can be significant. The quality of early years education and childcare is highly contingent on the relationships between children and staff (see ow.ly/Sh4xs) – lack of continuity in carers is unsettling for children and parents and has an impact on the quality of key worker relationships.

RECRUITMENT

Where relatively high levels of staff turnover are coupled with recruitment difficulties, settings are likely to experience challenges in sustaining an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce, with potential consequences for service quality. Half of all organisations surveyed by NDNA reported recruitment difficulties, and these challenges come at a time when greater capacity is required to enact government policy.

Key factors impacting on the recruitment and retention of qualified early years staff are wage levels and differentials within maintained and private sectors in early years, as well as wider labour market competition. The current government review of funding levels will be critical in addressing barriers of low pay, particularly in PVI settings. For apprentices and Level 2 staff, lack of

GCSE qualifications at Grade C or above in maths and English are a commonly reported barrier to recruitment and progression. While these are no longer an entry requirement for stand-alone Early Years Educator qualifications, the requirement for Level 3 practitioners to hold GCSEs to count in ratios and continued non-equivalence of functional skills mean that barriers remain.

Reducing turnover

Reviewing your practice against guidance provided by bodies such as the CIPD can help to identify strengths and weaknesses and feed into workforce planning. Some of the elements highlighted by the CIPD as playing a positive role in retention include:

- **JOB PREVIEWS** – give a realistic expectation of the job role.
- **LINE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY** – make staff retention a performance criteria for team/room leaders and support their management training and development.
- **CAREER DEVELOPMENT** – maximise opportunities to progress, including sideways moves to make work more challenging, interesting and rewarding.
- **CONSULT EMPLOYEES** – give employees a voice through appraisal, consultative bodies, workforce surveys and grievance systems.
- **BE FLEXIBLE** – where possible accommodate preferences for working hours and times.
- **JOB SECURITY** – provide as much security of employment as possible.
- **TREAT PEOPLE FAIRLY** – perceptions of unfairness in monetary or other forms of rewards and progression are amongst the most common reasons for resignations.

See more at ow.ly/Sh56t

To find out more about research from Ceeda, email Jo at enquiries@ceeda.co.uk or call 0845 680 0631. Visit ceeda.co.uk or share your thoughts on this research by tweeting @ceeda_uk

Reason	Aged 4 years plus	Aged 3 years & under
Starting school Reception class	95%	11%
Starting school nursery class	3%	31%
Moving house	2%	23%
Reduced working hours	1%	5%
One or more parents lost their job	0%	1%
No longer afford fees	0%	4%
Left the workforce to care for child	0%	6%
Unhappy with the service	0%	8%

Multiple response % may exceed 100
Base: 917 surveys completed in the period September 2013 to September 2015