# Northern Early Years Commission

## A great Start in life for Children in the North

## Why early years matter for the North

Experiences in the earliest years of life have a profound impact later on. Overwhelming evidence shows that outcomes in health, education, citizenship and other crucial areas are closely related to the foundations laid down before the age of five or six. Politicians, commentators and parents agree that children deserve the best possible start in life, regardless of where they are born or their family’s background and resources, yet several key early years’ outcomes are poorer in regions outside London and the south east, and stark inequalities persist between places and demographic groups. For example, data from 2017 show that:

* **Around 60 per cent of the poorest children in the North** were assessed as attaining a good level of development at the Early Years Foundation Stage compared to **69 per cent in London**.
* The **gap between the poorest and the best-off** was around **20 per cent in the North** compared to **13 per cent in London**.

Recent research suggests that these differences don’t result from a simple ‘north south divide’ but from a more complex interaction of regional variations in socio-economic circumstances, health inequalities, ethnicity, labour markets and other community factors.

In this research we want to explain how policy can do more to ensure that our youngest children, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, get the best possible start to their life in the North.

## About the Northern Early Years Commission

The Northern Early Years Commission will develop a bold vision for children in the North of England, based on an analysis of the most up to date evidence about the reasons as to why children do less well in the North with a particular interest in the quality and quantity of early years provision. Based on this analysis, the Commission will develop practical policy recommendations for the short, medium and longer term to inform national early years policy as well as the work of the Mayoral Combined Authorities and Council Leaders across the North of England.

The Northern Early Year’s Commission will be chaired by Archbishop John Sentamu and bring together a group of expert stakeholders from across the North of England to guide and oversee this research. Meetings will be held in York.

## What research will be undertaken by the Commission?

We will use qualitative and quantitative methods to complement existing analyses and build a rich picture of the lives of very young children in the North of England, focussing on how they engage with the range of formal provision in early education and childcare, and how this interacts with the rest of their lives, in their families and communities.

Our work will include a mapping of early years’ provision, discussions with childcare providers, families and carers, as well as convening policy makers and businesses to explore the practical policy measures required to help tackle the inequalities in early years in the North.

We will work with experts in child development and policy makers to understand how social and policy contexts interact with children’s progression. International evidence and examples will provide vital direction and context. In addition, we will examine how investment

at this crucial stage relates to outcomes later on in life, and use this information to underpin proposals for how the system could be funded and governed in the emerging models of English devolution.

## We will also work with practitioners to produce a ‘practitioners’ pack’ of key statistics and findings on effective evidence-based practice, as well as areas where there is a lack of data, or significant areas of disagreement over what is effective.

The research will be conducted in the context of IPPR North’s wider programme on social and economic justice in the north of England and our engagement with a wide range of business, public sector and civil society organisations across the region. The Conclusions and final recommendations will be published in January 2020.

**For more information:**

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