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# **Individual and Collective Perspectives on Early Years Professional Status Converged**

## ***A Mixed Methods Study***

**Eunice Lumsden**

**BECERA**

***Evidencing Practice Through Professional  
Inquiry Conference***

**Birmingham**

**15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012**





# Research Aim

The overarching aim of this research is to explore:

*The concept of professional identity through a critique of the concept, implementation and impact of EYPS as a new professional model.*





## Research Objectives

- To explore the separatist versus integrated models of professional identity.
- To interrogate and critique the concept of Early Years Professional Status in relation to wider policy and professional roles, including international comparisons.



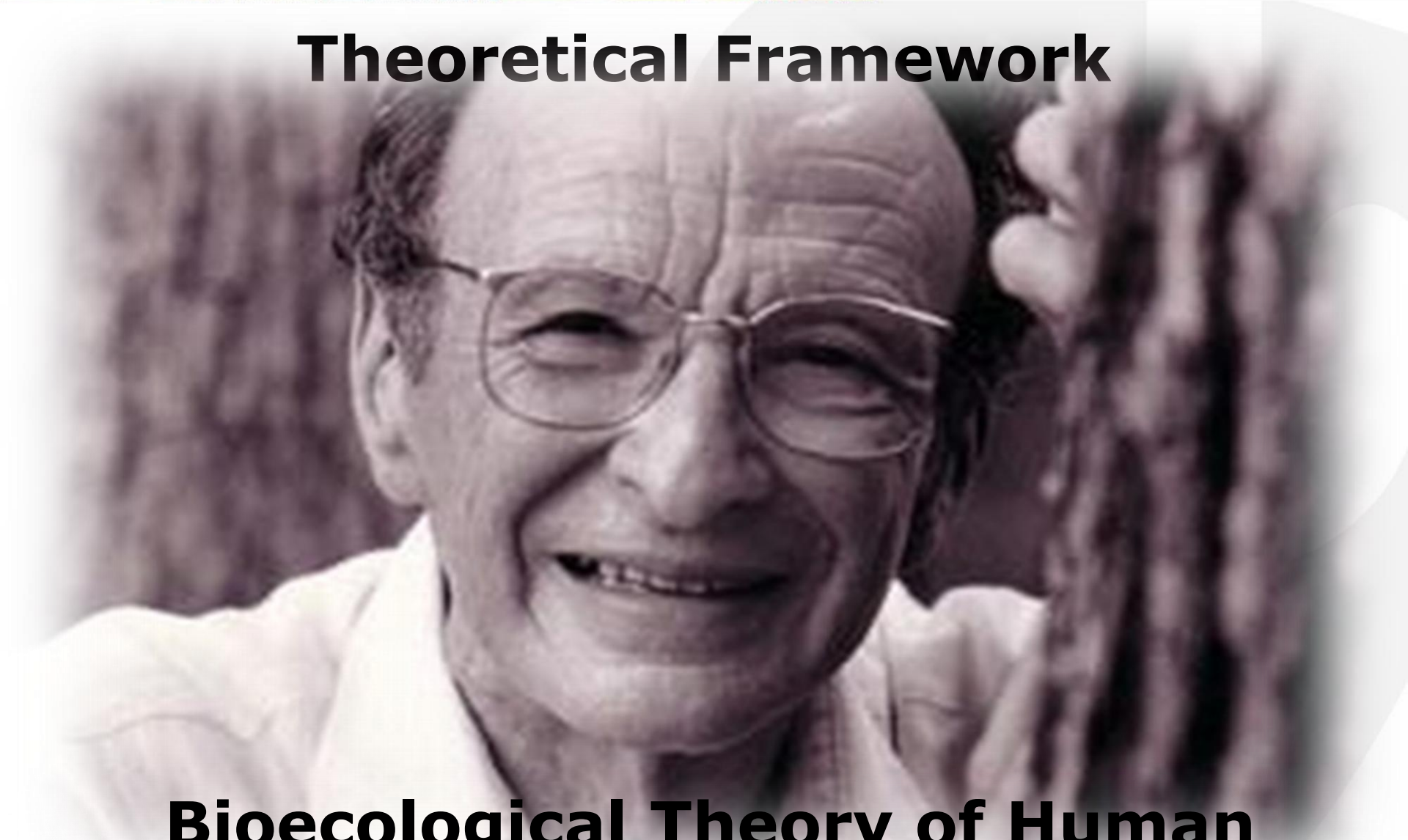
- To analyse the impact of achieving Early Years Professional Status on candidates' roles and practice and on perceptions of their professional identity.
- To critically evaluate the success and limitations of the Early Years Professional Status model for developing a profession (as opposed merely to professional development) and to assess the potential implications for future policy and practice.





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# Theoretical Framework



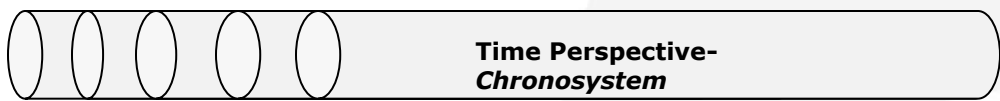
## Bioecological Theory of Human Development



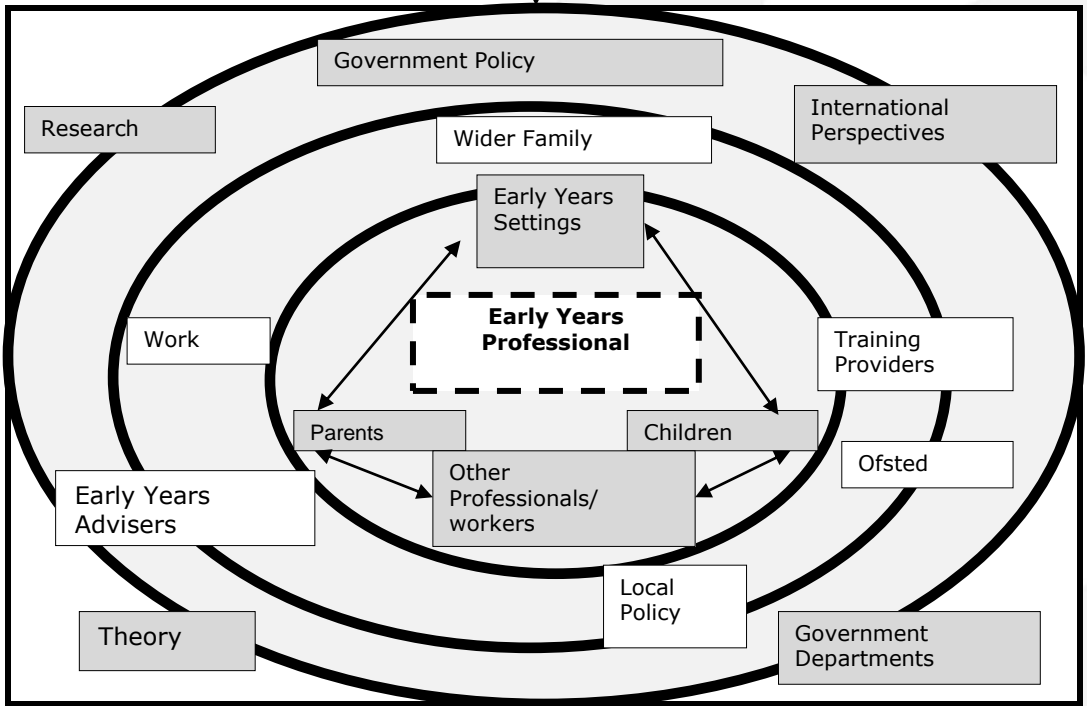
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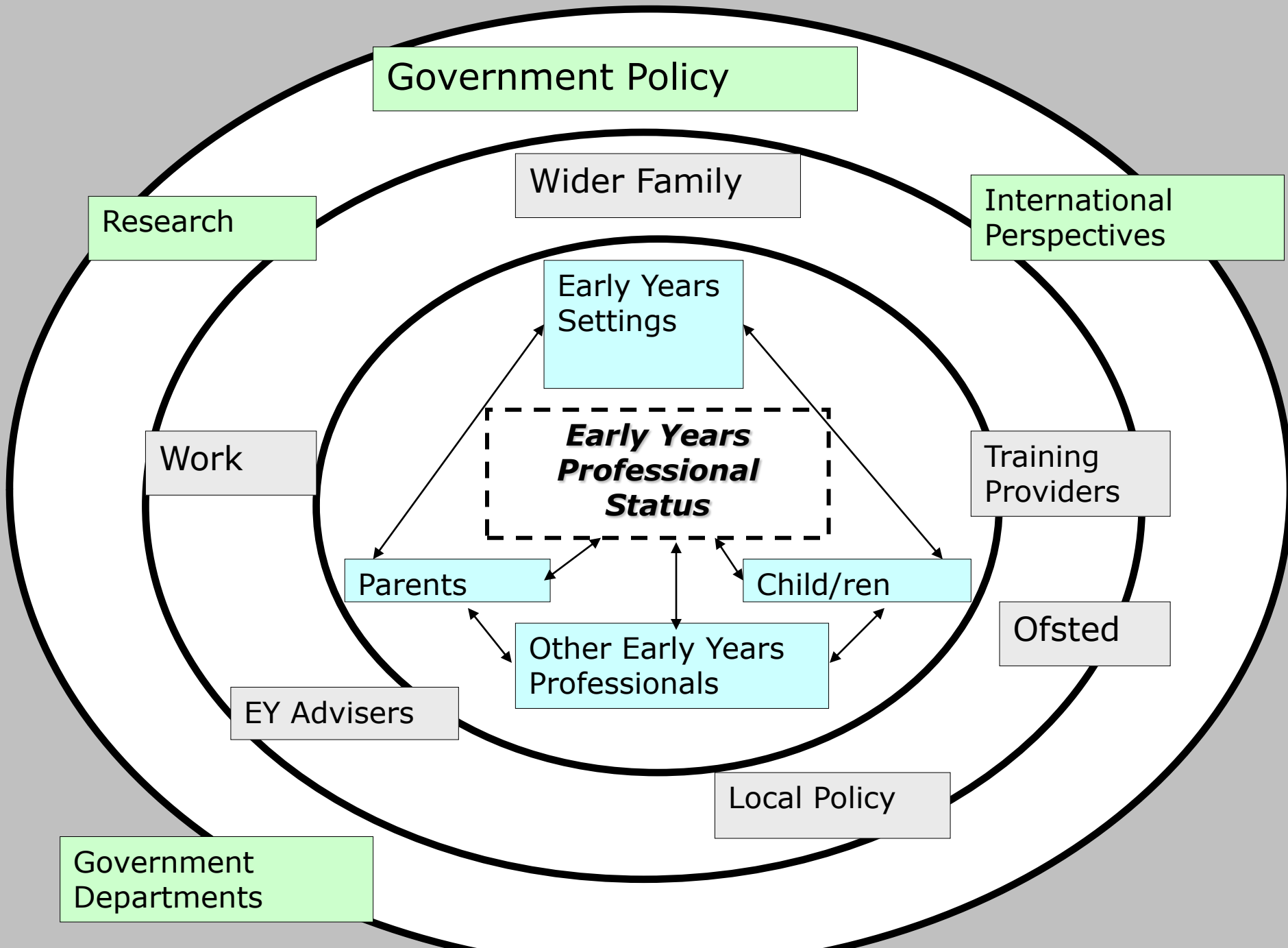


**View 1**



**View 2**







## **Time**

*Development of  
Professional  
Identity  
Evolution of role  
Evolving  
Training-CPD*

## **Process**

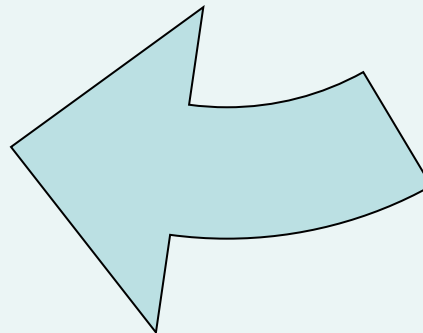
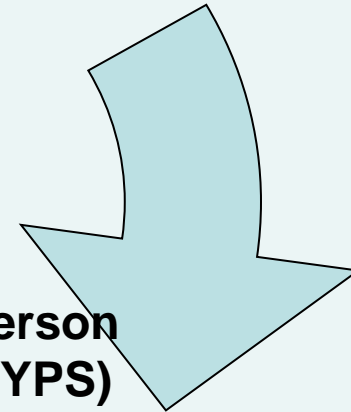
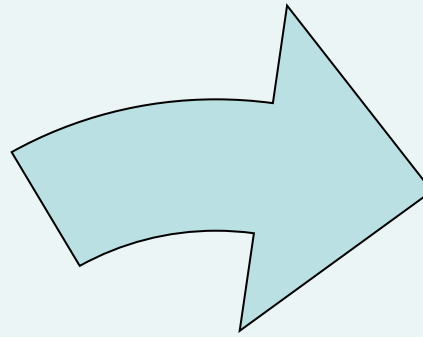
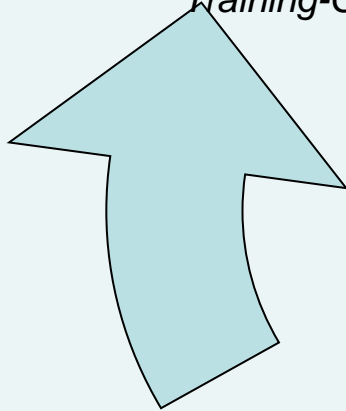
*EYPS  
EY Setting  
Training*

## **Person (EYPS)**

*Experience  
Training route  
Professional  
Development*

## **Context**

*Training  
provided  
Policy  
Support*





# Literature Review

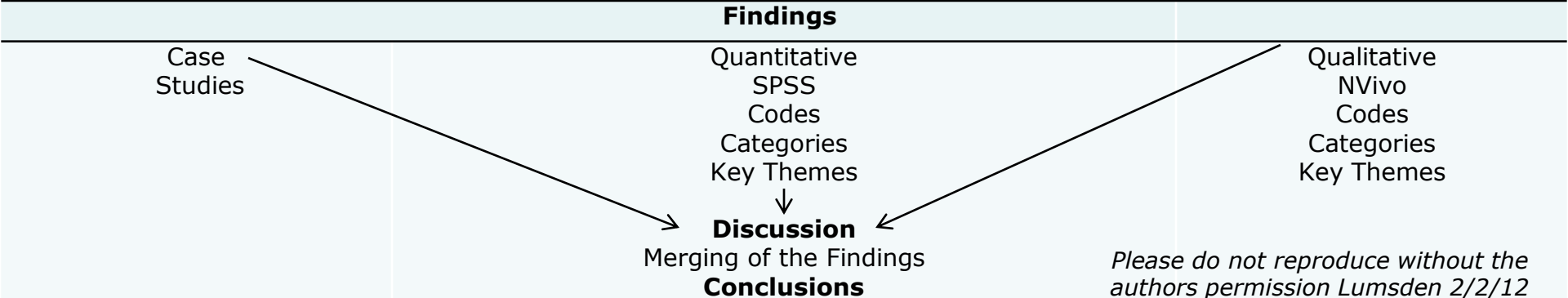
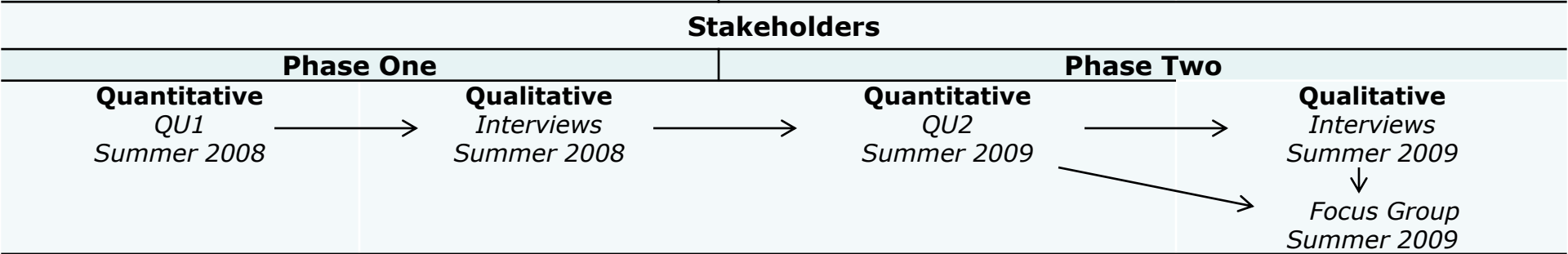
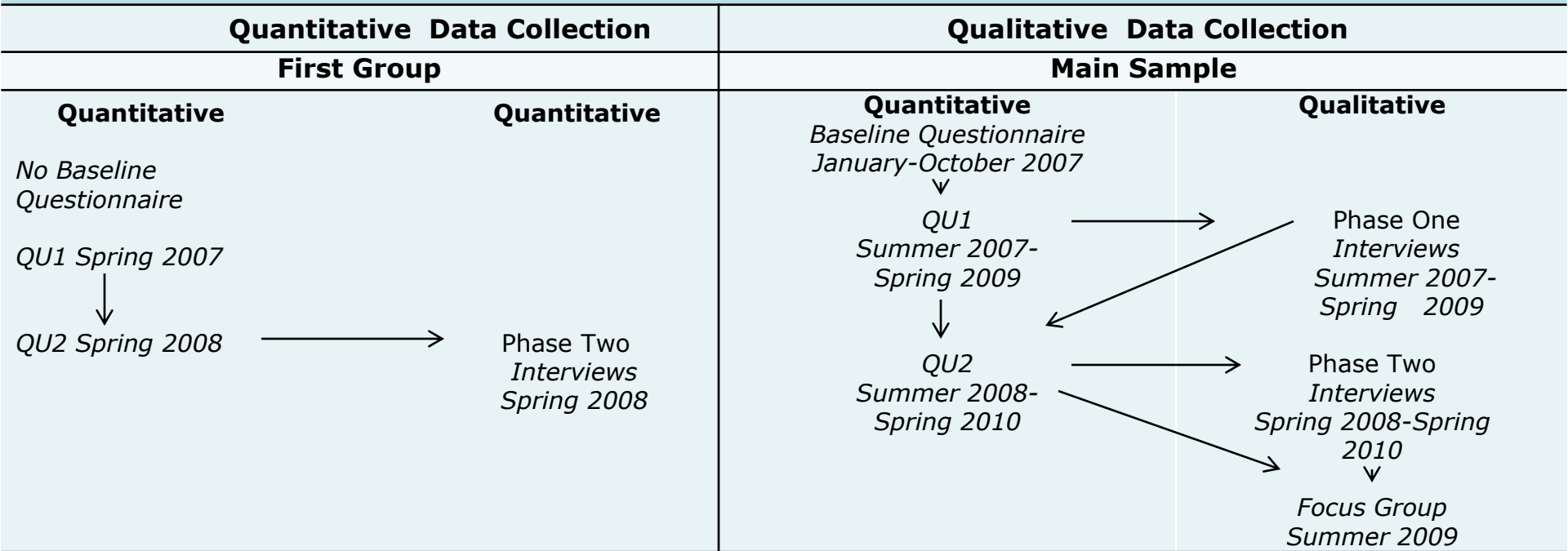
Policy

The Professions

Professionalisation to  
Professional



# Mixed Methods Sequential Design



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	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
	<i>Pathway Start</i>	<i>Start of Pathway Questionnaire (Baseline)</i>	<i>Candidates Undertaking Validation</i>	<i>End of Validation (Qu. One)</i>	<i>Awarded EYPS</i>	<i>One Year on Questionnaire (Qu. Two)</i>
<b>First Group</b>	46	-	41	30	39	5
<b>% Response Rate</b>		-		77% (of 39)		13% (of 39)
<b>Main Sample</b>	115	73	96	43	76	44
<b>% Response Rate</b>		63% (of 115)		45% (of 96)		58% (of 76)



	<b>Phase One</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Phase Two</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
<b>FIRST GROUP</b> <i>September 2006 Start</i>	—	—	Spring 2008	5
<b>VALIDATION PATHWAY</b> <i>January 2007 Start</i>	Summer 2007	1	Summer 2008	1
<b>SHORT PATHWAY</b> <i>January 2007 Start</i>	Spring 2008	7	Spring 2009	7
<b>SHORT PATHWAY</b> <i>September 2007 Start</i>	Summer 2008	4	Summer 2009	4
<b>FULL PATHWAY</b> <i>Autumn 2007 Start</i>	Spring 2008	7	Summer 2009	4
<b>LONG PATHWAY</b> <i>Autumn 2007 Start</i>	Spring 2009	3	Spring 2010	2
		<b>22</b>		<b>23</b>





# Stakeholders

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## Questionnaires

## Interviews

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**Phase One  
Summer 2008**

63 (63%)

10

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**Phase Two  
Summer 2009**

46 (46%)

6

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# Focus Groups

<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Early Years Professionals</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>
<b>Number</b>	5	4
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female
<b>Role</b>	EYP	Lecturers
<b>Setting</b>	PVI Children Centre's Local Authority	University Former Teachers Advisers





## Key Findings

- Overwhelming agreement over the research period, from all the research strands that EYPS was a positive and welcomed development.
- A new professional space with flexible borders is developing at the intersection of education, health and social care, occupied by those with EYPS, though the title 'Early Years Professional' **was not being used.**





Within the new space a locus of practice was being negotiated individually and collectively with varying degrees of success, depending on how the setting and Early Years Professional embraced the new role and responsibilities.

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The new professional space is occupied by an Early Years Professional whose role and responsibilities are setting dependent.

She/he draws on holistic knowledge and understanding of children to lead practice in a way that is improving quality in early years settings and consequently improving outcomes for children.

***They have become a catalyst for change.***



**Three distinct groups emerged in relation to professional identity that coexisted together in the new professional space.**

The fundamental identity of those in high level roles, some of whom already had a pre-existing qualification in teaching, was not changed by EYPS. They had completed as a ***requirement*** or a ***formality***.



Those who already held a professional qualification in either early years or primary teaching, viewed their core professional identity as teachers.

On the whole completing EYPS was perceived as enhancing their professionalism in the early years - '**experts**' rather than '**novices**'.



The development of a ***distinct professional identity*** that is the '***Early Years Professional***' was evidenced in those who did not have a previous professional qualification.

Their professional identity was in relation to ***being*** an Early Years Professional, reflecting the importance of the initial socialisation processes into a profession.



## ***The Early Years Professional requires a range of professional knowledge, skills and attributes:***

- Higher level interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding.
- Well developed interpersonal skills – for work with adults as well as children.
- A strong work ethos, with a passion for working with children, a value base and ***resilience***.
- Leadership knowledge and the ability to transfer this into practice.
- To be reflective practitioners with emerging evidence of the importance of practice being not only reflective but reflexive.
- To recognise and embrace the need for CPD.

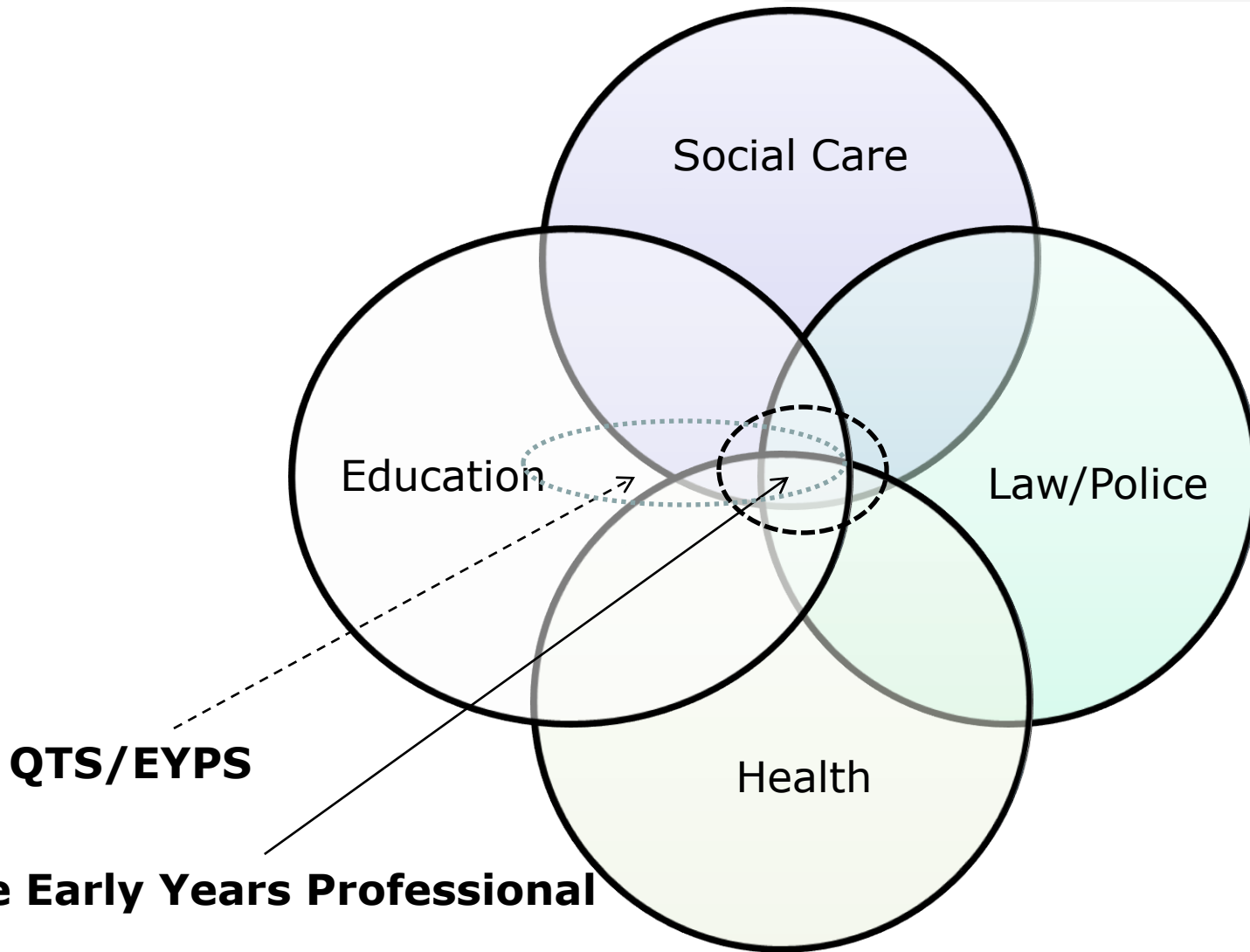


- The relationship between the Early Years Professional and the **child** is central and their role involves leading and supporting others as well as direct work with the children.
- There was considerable evidence of improved practice and engagement with parents/carers.



- Their role also embraces working with parents; therefore they have a role in early intervention not just with children but with their parents/carers as well.
- They have interdisciplinary knowledge and are positioned at the intersection of different professional groups.
- Unlike other professional groups they are an integrated not segregated professional.

# A New Professional Space with Flexible Borders



**QTS/EYPS**

**The Early Years Professional**

# ***The Early Years Professional and Early Years Teacher are complementary but essentially different.***

- Whilst there is commonality with the role of the Early Years Teacher, the Early Years Professional is a separate profession with different roles and responsibilities. The teacher has primarily an education focus and those with EYPS the holistic child is central.
- This difference stems from the Early Years Professional occupying a space where their leadership role embraces children, families, other practitioners and professionals.



- For the Early Years Professional, leading and supporting quality experience for young children, that improves outcomes is central to all they do - ***they are an advocate for children.***
- There was general agreement that Early Years Teachers working in the Early Years Foundation Stage should have EYPS.



- Not all Early Years Professionals wanted to be Early Years Teachers, some had positively chosen against this route.
- Conversely, not all Early Years Teachers would want to be an Early Years Professional and work with the youngest children or in the PVI sector.

- 'Communities of Practice' (network groups) are emerging, though there is regional variation. The importance of these in supporting EYPS and wider CPD cannot be underestimated.
- Despite the lack of pay, status and other characteristics of a profession, the majority of Early Years Professionals participating in this research embraced the opportunity provided by EYPS. There was a real sense of the early years being 'recognised'.



- Unanimous agreement in all research phases that this new professional **should** be afforded full professional status not just the name.
- Pay scales should reflect that those with EYPS have high levels of knowledge and skills, training and assessment processes equal to other professions and the need for ongoing professional training.
- There should be a CPD framework, professional body, code of practice and an induction year for new Early Years Professionals.

- EYPS is yet to be fully understood by parents/carers and other professionals. Dissemination is not just the responsibility of the government but the Early Years Professionals themselves. Change needs to be brought about from within as well as by external action.
- Government involvement in imposing and shaping the development of EYPS makes it vulnerable to political change – it was developed by government and could therefore be removed.

- There has been a lack of recognition and celebration by government about the positive impact the wider workforce reform agenda is having on the early years workforce.
- Given the name Early Years Professional is not being used, the lack of dissemination of the new professional role and status, alongside the emerging evidence of an integrated rather than segregated professional it may be opportune to rename the professional an ***Early Years Pedagogue*** with EYPS being the entry requirement.





# In conclusion...



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# **An 'Essential' not just Desirable Members of the Wider Children's Workforce**

The Early Years Professional is filling a new professional space in the early years sector and emerging as a profession is its own right.

This development has happened despite the lack of a clearly defined professional remit or a clear pay and career structure.

However...



...it will be a missed opportunity if the government continues not to recognise the workforce in real terms, as they will continue, as Osgood (2010) contends, to reinforce the ***social injustice, poverty and low status that persist in the early years workforce.***







## In short...

The collective and individual voices of those participating in all strands of this research have supported understanding of what it means to be an Early Years Professional.

They have affirmed the development and provided evidence that a new professional space has emerged in the early years and wider children's workforce occupied by...





***...an holistic leadership  
professional - an  
advocate for young  
children.***

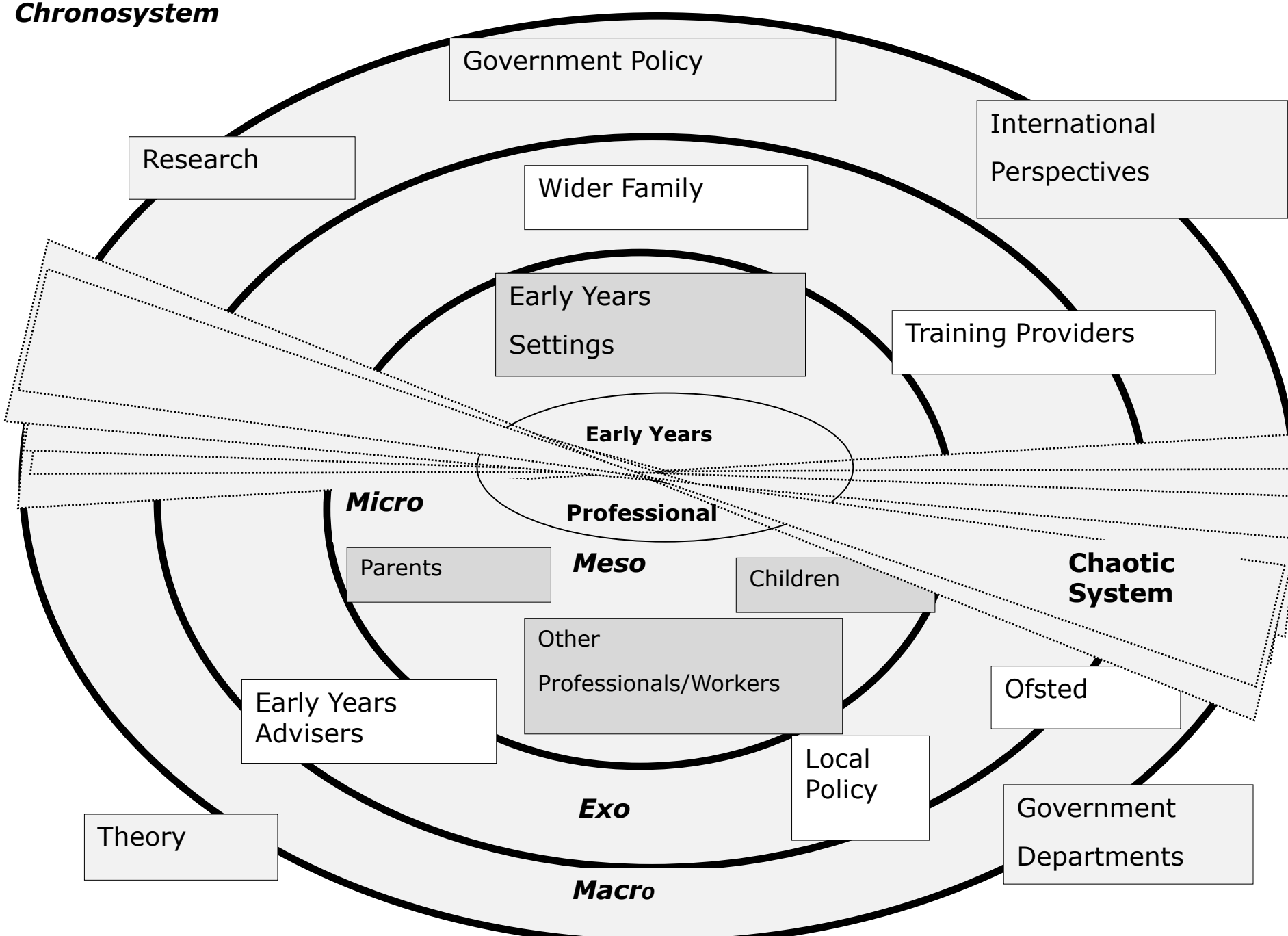


# Finally....The Theoretical Framework

How the Early Years Professional  
supports understanding of the  
under theorised 'Chaotic-System'



# Chronosystem







**Any  
Questions**





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