

SURVEYING THE SECTOR



How can you motivate and reward your team in a challenging funding environment? **Dr Jo Verrill** shares key headlines from recent research, while LEYF's Neil King offers his experience...



Me and my job theme	% giving positive ratings
My work is interesting and varied	90
My work gives me sense of achievement	90
I am proud of what I do	95
I feel involved in decisions that affect my work	68
I have control over how I do my job	70
I am happy in my job	78

Source: Ceeda early years workforce survey benchmark
Base: 6,172 surveys returned by early years staff in the period 01/04/13 to 20/11/14

Last issue we shared recent findings from the Ceeda Early Years Workforce survey that highlighted pay and rewards as a key issue for early years staff. Now, new research on funding gaps in the early years sector has shown how much of a challenge it will be to address this problem.

The research, commissioned by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, and carried out by Ceeda during the 2014 summer term, shows significant gaps between the average cost of delivering a funded place and the rates paid by LEAs in England. Researchers tracked the delivery costs of 186,712 hours of early education and childcare provided for 5,635 funded and non-funded children in randomly selected, non-domestic PVI childcare settings in England.

A comparison of delivery costs with LEA-published funding rates showed an average funding gap of 15% for funded two-year-old places, rising to 17% for funded three- and four-year-old places. Figures in the London region were 17% and 20% respectively.

The average salary rate of early years staff participating in the research was £7.77 per hour in sessional settings, rising to £7.87 in full daycare settings. The average rate of pay for an early years worker qualified to Level 3 was £7.43. Few would disagree that a skilled and qualified early years workforce deserves higher levels of remuneration, but it is difficult to see how this can be achieved in the current funding context.

Latest results from the Ceeda workforce survey remind us of the non-monetary rewards of working in the sector. The table on this page digs into the 'Me and my job' theme; on average 82% of staff give positive ratings across this theme. Looking at the detail, the vast majority of staff (90%) feel their work is interesting and varied, 90% say work gives them a sense of achievement and 95% are proud of what they do; few sectors could boast the same achievements. The results also show that increasing opportunities for staff to contribute to decisions and increasing the level of control individuals have over their work role can increase overall job satisfaction further.

Capital ideas

Neil King, head of HR at the London Early Years Foundation (LEYF), understands the difficulties of recognising the efforts of an early years workforce. "At LEYF we try to address the challenge of rewarding employees beyond salary by focusing on four areas: telling the story of what we want to achieve, ensuring that we have integrity and live by our values, that we have strong leadership and management, and that we listen to employees," he says.

"We've just completed a refresh of the story of LEYF, looking at what our shared ambition and values are, and how we all play a part in achieving this. It's really important for employees to know where they fit in with the 'bigger picture', and how they can contribute to the organisation's success.

"All 400 plus employees at LEYF recently took part in a workshop to look at our values and the behaviours that make them real. Employees (and parents) need to have a sense of trust that the organisation's values and behaviours are consistent. The bigger the gap between these, the more opportunity there is for mistrust.

"We also want to ensure that all of our employees are nurtured and inspired to be the best they can be. Effective relationships with line managers is critical to this. We recently invested in supervision training for all of our managers and deputies to help develop an enabling and empowering approach to leadership rather than a restrictive and controlling style.

"Seeking out employees' views and showing them their opinions count makes a real difference," he concludes. "Staff surveys are effective and sometimes the best conversations and challenge comes over a cup of tea and a slice of cake."

find out more

Dr Jo Verrill is Director at Ceeda. To find out more about Ceeda research services, or how to use the Ceeda workforce survey to take the temperature of your team, you can email her at enquiries@ceeda.co.uk or call 0845 680 0631. Visit ceeda.co.uk or share your thoughts on this month's focus by tweeting @ceeda_uk