

Professor Edward Melhuish, Executive Director of NESS and Director, Impact Evaluation

Edward Melhuish is Professor of Human Development at Birkbeck College, University of London and Visiting Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Education, University of London. Professor Melhuish is an internationally recognised expert in the study of child development and child care and has extensive experience with longitudinal studies. He was a Principal Investigator of studies of day care and family life in the 1980s, which had considerable influence on sections of the 1989 Children Act. He has also conducted research on child development, parenting and child care in several European countries, on behalf of the European Commission.

Currently, Professor Melhuish is a Principal Investigator on the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) and Effective Pre-school Provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI) projects based in England and Northern Ireland, which are following 4,000 children from 3-7 years of age. These studies are investigating the effects of family, community, and pre-school experiences (and their interaction) on child development. These studies are multi-site investigations, employing a research team of 30 fieldworkers, and requiring liaison with many Local Authority departments, particularly Social Services and Education. Directing such studies has led to considerable skills in the development, use and interpretation of a wide range of instruments for measuring young children's environments in home, child care and pre-school settings.

These studies are already contributing to the formulation of social policy in the area of families with young children. Work undertaken to date has addressed many of the issues relevant to Sure Start including cognitive, language and behavioural development of young children and the role of family factors, home environment, child care and pre-school experience upon children's development. Professor Melhuish has written reports on such studies for government departments, policy makers, practitioners and academic researchers. He has over 100 scientific papers, chapters and books. In the National Evaluation of Sure Start, Professor Melhuish is the Executive Director and also is responsible for directing the impact evaluation. This involves devising impact evaluation strategy and working with others to link the impact evaluation to other components such as the implementation study and local context analysis. Additionally he will be involved with other team members in writing up the research for dissemination to policy makers, practitioners and academic researchers.