AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTAL CHOICE OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE

by

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Abstract

This study explores the factors that influence parents' choice of early education and care in a local authority with high levels of deprivation. A questionnaire survey, which generated both quantitative and qualitative data, provides an insight into parents' views.

The study focuses on parents using their child's entitlement to fifteen hours of free early education, in the private and voluntary sectors.

Findings show that the main factor influencing choice is location, followed by staff attitudes and behaviours, reputation and the free entitlement. Sources of information include word-of-mouth recommendations and the internet.

The study identifies the importance of parental engagement, with access to staff fundamental to the involvement of parents. The exchange of information helped to build relationships based on trust and co-operation which influenced parents' satisfaction levels with the quality of both early education and care.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my sister Jean who inspired me to do well

and never let past experiences influence future success

Jean Ann Atter 25th April1942 – 14th November 2013

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Glossary of Abbreviations

BERA   British Education Research Association

BME   Black and Ethnic Minority

CTC   Child Tax Credits

DCFS   Department for Children, Families and Schools

DfE   Department for Education

DfEE   Department for Education and Employment

DfES   Department for Education and Skills

ECERS   Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales

ECERS-R   Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales- Revised

ECM   Every Child Matters

EFO   Extended Flexible Offer

EYDCP   Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

EPPE   Effective Provision of Pre-school Education

EYFS   Early Years Foundation Stage

EYSFF   Early Years Single Funding Formula

FIS   Family Information Service

HMRC   Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

IDACI   Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices

IMD   Indices of Multiple Deprivation

LA   Local Authority

LAC   Looked After Children

MYE   Mid-Year Evaluation

NEF   Nursery Education Funding

NCS   National Childcare Strategy

NI   National Indicator

NNI   Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative

ONS   Office of National Statistics

SEN   Special Educational Needs

SOA   Super Output Areas

SSCC   Sure Start Children Centres

SSLP   Sure Start Local Programmes

UK   United Kingdom

US/USA   United States of America

WFTC   Working Families Tax Credit

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter is divided into three sections. The first discusses the context and rationale for this study. This is followed by the purpose and aims, and the chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

1.1. Introductory Rationale

This study is situated within the wider political and economic context of social policy in the United Kingdom (UK) in relation to tackling child poverty and social disadvantage. It is focused on the growth in nursery provision, particularly where early education is integrated with care, provided by the private and voluntary sectors rather than the maintained sector.

Whereas the benefit of early education is set within the context of 100 years of political and professional debate (Nutbrown et al., 2008), more recent Government policy has been focused on providing childcare to enable parents to work (GOV.UK, 2013a). This has resulted in the development of different types of provision, giving parents more options and supporting the notion of personal choice. This consumerist approach to childcare services places a responsibility on parents, as the primary decision makers, to select provision that meets their requirements on what is best for their child, including monitoring and potentially improving the quality of care provided.

However, there is only limited information on what influences parental choice of early education and care; especially when levels of satisfaction and understanding of what constitutes high quality care and education are considered. This important area, arguably relevant both to policy and sector developments, remains largely unexplored by research or literature. The study considers how aware parents are of their role and responsibilities, as consumers, in relation to the demand for sufficient high quality early education and care provision, in areas with high levels of disadvantage.

1.2 Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how parents make decisions about the care and education of their pre-school aged children.

The study provides the basis for more in-depth research into the relationship between the notion of personal choice and quality of early years provision and seeks to answer the following broad research question:

- What factors influence parents' choice of early education and care, particularly in an area with high levels of deprivation?

I will seek to highlight the issues for parents who use private and voluntary provision (day nurseries and pre-schools/playgroups) as opposed to statutory provision (nursery classes in schools). This study allows me to explore the factors that influence parental choices, to identify which aspects of pre-school provision are important to parents. Another aim of the study is to gain an understanding of the contribution that parents can make to improve the quality of early education and care within the social context of the provision they choose to use.

1.3 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter discusses the context, rationale, purpose and aims of the study, leading to the broad research question.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

 The literature review explores the already-known factors that influence parental choice, considering both research in the USA and the UK. The main contribution of this chapter is the specific research questions that emerge from the literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology chapter argues the case for the use of a questionnaire survey, exploring its advantages and disadvantages and possible limitations. This chapter also looks at data collection and analysis procedures and considers ethical issues, in relation to my research design.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter reports the findings of this research, presenting both quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter provides the analysis and discussion of the findings in relation to the literature.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The final chapter presents the conclusion and the implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on the literature connected to the political and historical context of formal childcare provision. It reviews research carried out in the America (USA) (Cryer and Burchinal, 1997; Shlay et al., 2005; Torquati et al., 2011) and the UK (Bryson et al., 2006; Vincent et al., 2009), on factors that contribute to the selection of early education and care by parents. Three broad themes are identified as influencing parental choice; access to information, cost and location. By identifying the factors that influence parents' choice of early education and care in disadvantaged areas, I will consider the relationship between the notion of personal choice and quality; leading to the specific research questions that emerge from reviewing the literature.

2.1. Context of Early Childhood Education and Care

There can be little doubt that the benefits of early education have been discussed by both academics and practitioners as the foundation for a civilised and productive society. This is a view supported by Moss and Penn who state:

'Nursery Education in Britain, more than any other kind of service to young

children, has been the subject of intense discussion, debate and theorising for

more than a century' (Moss and Penn, 2003 p.19).

Following on from this debate women's increasing presence in the workforce, supported by the social expectation that women have a right to work, as well as the growth in the numbers of lone parents (Office for National Statistics, 2010; Penn, 2008), provides an economic rationale for parents to use formal childcare in order to remain in employment (HM Treasury et al., 2013). In addition, childcare provision is considered beneficial in closing the gap in cognitive and social development between children whose families experience economic disadvantage and those children in more economically advantaged families (Sammons et al., 2008; Taggart, 2011). These economic and social factors have continued to influence government policy with the Coalition Government's launch of 'More Great Childcare' (DfE, 2013) with the aim of providing more good quality childcare which is affordable.

2.1.2. Government Policy

As a result of economic and social need, childcare policy has developed dramatically since the late 1990s, with a range of different policies and funding systems (Nutbrown et al., 2008). Underlying the policy debate and plethora of initiatives, two factors have continued to influence the decisions made within the sector, these being the lack of professional status and the economic cost, with the persistent theme of distinct differences between early education and childcare (Penn, 2008; Tomlinson, 2013).

Fundamentally, the status of early education has always been higher than childcare in terms of staff qualifications, salaries and public funding, based on the expected benefits of this provision to the child and to society (Moss and Penn, 2003; Nutbrown et al., 2008). In contrast to education, childcare has suffered from low status, low pay and a lack of public funding, underpinned by the view that childcare is the individual responsibility of the family (Bennett, 2011; Tomlinson, 2013).

However it is suggested that:

'By adopting an individual perspective on children's issues, society tends to expect parents to take responsibility for the needs and behaviours of children and consequently focuses policy on parental responsibilities rather than children's needs.' (Tomlinson, 2013,p.99),

The focus on parental responsibilities is reflected in policy priorities where wider issues such as the economy, underpinned by employment and income levels, provide the framework for early education and care (Penn, 2008; Williams, 2004; Woodhead, 2006).

Indeed, policies in the late 1990s and up to the early part of this century attempted to combine supporting parents into work with improving children's educational attainment (DfEE, 1999; DfES, 2004). The focus on increasing families' income, by reducing the reliance on benefits, was counterbalanced with the need to close the gap in children's development in disadvantaged areas (Mathers et al., 2007). Both are considered of equal importance in breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Consequently the need for sufficient childcare has become integral to the success of social policy. The understanding of the need for high quality provision

has increased the value of childcare, as a poverty intervention that supports both children and parents.

The positive outcome from government policy has been the financial investment in the development of services. This has been supported by legislation that placed specific duties on Local Authorities (LA) to ensure the implementation of a national strategy to expand and improve childcare provision. A possible negative outcome from government policy is an over-reliance on market forces to increase provision and drive up quality (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Family and Childcare Trust, 2013).

2.1.3. National Childcare Strategy

Under the New Labour Government (1997-2010) the support given to children and families during pregnancy and the early years of life became central to educational and social change (Nutbrown et al., 2008). The launch of the National Childcare Strategy (NCS) in 1998 heralded the start of a major investment in early years and childcare services in Britain and was a key milestone in policy development, with responsibility for these services sitting with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (UKChildcare, 1998).

Central to the development and implementation of the NCS (1998) was the establishment of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) which were the mechanisms at LA level for the expansion of childcare places within a support structure for developing high quality early education and care.

The key factors that EYDCPs had to consider in supporting the growth of high quality, sustainable childcare were: diversity, social inclusion, accessibility, affordability and workforce development to facilitate the integration of care and education. Underpinning these factors was access to accurate information for parents, providers and employers (DfEE, 1999).

At the same time as the establishment of EYDCPs, the Government announced an area-based initiative to set up 250 Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) targeting up to 150,000 children in areas of deprivation (DCSF, 2008). This supported the NCS with capital and revenue funding allocated to the most deprived areas. The aim was to give children the best possible start in life, through improvement of childcare,

early education, health and family support, with an emphasis on outreach and community development.

The Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative (NNI), which was launched in 2001, provided further funding to establish high quality childcare in the most disadvantaged areas. By 2005 around 1,400 neighbourhood nurseries had been established, creating 45,000 new childcare places, providing a wider range of choice for parents seeking employment (Smith, 2007).

The vision underpinning the NNI was to have childcare available to all families which was affordable and of a high quality. However, even with the establishment of a NCS (1998) and its re-launch (DfES, 2004), pre-school provision in the UK remains fragmented. The range of provision from maintained, private, voluntary and independent providers is variable in quantity and quality, influenced by disparity in the training, qualifications and the pay of the workforce, geographical location and parents' ability to pay (Family and Childcare Trust, 2013; Nutbrown, 2012).

Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy (Her Majesty's Treasury, 2004) focused on improving educational opportunities and enabling parents to work. This had implications for early years services both in terms of the expansion, requiring quantity and quality, and cost of childcare (Daycare Trust, 2008; Family and Childcare Trust, 2013). There was an expectation that individual families would bear the cost of nursery provision. Based on a consumerist approach to supply and demand, parents were also expected to drive up quality standards, with the wider choice resulting in parents becoming more exacting. However, the cost and location of provision has marginalised parents in less affluent areas, compounded by the lack of knowledge and understanding of early education(Cryer and Burchinal, 1997; Vincent et al., 2009). Children from disadvantaged families, who are most likely to benefit from early education, are more likely to live in areas where there are higher numbers of poor quality providers (Ofsted, 2011).

While the NCS provided the basis for integrating early education with childcare, the blurring of the delineation in status between teaching and care affected both the perceptions of quality and the value placed on early education and care. Historically teaching has been considered a profession whereas childcare has been defined as a

vocation (Moss and Penn, 2003; Nutbrown, 2012). This was reflected in the expectations placed on the workforce to raise their qualification levels and in the role of parents in the choices they were able to make for their children. This was taken further in terms of the expectation of education, health and social care professionals to work in a more integrated manner to provide a holistic approach to services for children and their families.

2.1.4. Every Child Matters

The introduction of Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003) provided the impetus for this holistic approach and also indicated the importance placed on integrating early education and care. The ECM agenda was a step towards integrating services and increasing accountability. Underpinning the policy decisions was the need to ensure children were protected and professionals were accountable. However the language and format of the policy presents a linear view of childhood linked to maturation rather than a holistic, socio-constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) (Greenway, 2011). This presents a contradiction in that a linear approach suggests a certainty as to how children progress in their development, a Piagetian view of staged development (Piaget, 1948), rather than a socio-constructivist view which places value on the whole child and their interactions with the environment in which they live (Bruner, 1996; Williams, 2004).

Nonetheless, one benefit of ECM was the recognition of this interdependence, put forward as a way of acknowledging the role of the family and recognising the needs of the child in the development and delivery of services (Williams, 2004). The support for and involvement of families in service development and delivery strengthened the basis for exercising personal choice.

2.1.5. The Early Years Foundation Stage

The interdependence between practitioners and parents is exemplified in the bringing together of the Birth to Three Framework (DfE, 2005) and the Early Learning Goals(DfE, 1999). The introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), from birth to five, created a continuum for children's development and learning (DfES, 2007). The Foundation Stage also brought together statutory welfare duties as well as focusing on learning and development. This had an impact on the

regulatory framework for inspection, changing how Ofsted registered and inspected early years provision.

The statutory framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2012) sets the standards for all early years providers and seeks to provide the basis for partnership working between practitioners and parents/carers. The standards require the identification of a member of staff who will be the named person, primarily responsible for the child's care. The role of the named or Key Person (Elfer et al., 2003) is to build a relationship with parents and provide specific information, although the focus has tended to be on engagement with parents to improve children's learning outcomes or to improve parenting skills (Charlton, 2006; House of Commons, 2010b). This is based on a deficit model of parenting, with intervention strategies designed to close the gap in children's educational attainment (Mathers et al., 2007; Sylva et al., 2010), as well as ensuring an interagency approach to safeguarding children (HM Government, 2013).

This emphasis on education and protection masks issues around care and child rearing practices, overlooking their influences, if any, on parental choice of provision. As emphasised by Elfer (Elfer et al., 2003) the importance of the key person is undermined by lack of understanding and management of the emotional aspects of care, by both practitioners and parents. Politically, however, any consideration of the negative impact of formal childcare (Burchinal, 1999; Morgan, 1996) has been superseded by the emphasis on the positive benefits that high quality early education and care can bring. This has been continued under the Coalition Government formed in 2010.

2.1.6. Coalition Policies

Policies and actions introduced by the coalition government, since 2010, to reduce reliance on welfare benefits have supported the continuing need for childcare provision (Family and Childcare Trust, 2013). Heightened by the economic downturn and cuts in funding for public services, there has been an increasing reliance on the private and voluntary sectors to provide services (GOV.UK, 2013a).

Despite the economic backdrop, high quality early years provision continues to be regarded as one of the ways of improving the economic status of low income families and, in the long term, improving the educational attainment of children (Sylva et al., 2010). While the cost of childcare remains the responsibility of individual families the Coalition Government has continued to support the provision of childcare. It has done so through a more targeted approach for the most disadvantaged children.

Continuing the free entitlement, established by the Labour Government, further funding has been allocated for places for two year-olds and there are proposals to introduce vouchers to help parents with childcare costs (DfE, 2011; GOV.UK, 2013a; b). However, the need for suitable environments and resources for two year olds limits the type of provision that can cater for this age range. These restrictions, along with an increasing birth rate, means that schools are less likely to be able to create places for them, placing more pressure on providers in the private and voluntary sectors to meet the increased demand.

Due to the criteria for eligibility of funding (DfE, 2011), these providers are targeting vulnerable children within disadvantaged families. These families are unlikely to have previously accessed formal childcare (Kazimirski et al., 2008). This need to target vulnerable two year olds raises the question of how information is made available and what sort of information is required to support parents in their choice of provision for the free entitlement. Although Family Information Services (FIS) have a key role to play in the provision of information, due to budget cuts, some LAs are failing in their legal duties to provide outreach and childcare brokerage services (Rutter and Stocker, 2014).

The need for these additional places puts pressure on LAs who have duties under the Childcare Act (McAuliffe et al., 2006), to ensure there is sufficient high quality provision. How quality is defined influences the allocation of funding and where parents can access their child's free entitlements. In 1996, the debate around defining quality began with the integration of early education and care, under the then Conservative Government and continues to influence the choices available to parents to date. However under new legislation (GOV.UK, 2013a) LAs have no duties to either define or support quality improvement. Ofsted is seen as the main arbitrator in measuring and improving quality standards. This puts more pressure on

parents to assess and monitor the quality of provision when making their choice and, as users, on a daily basis.

2.1.7. Free Entitlements- Extended Flexible Offer and Early Learning for Two year Olds

There can be little doubt that the development of early education and care over the past twenty years has changed the types of early years provision that children and their families are able to access. Through the NCS, pre-school education has been integrated with childcare and hours extended from 12.5hrs to 15hrs per week, offered flexibly (DfES, 2006a; Stephen et al., 2009). The Extended Flexible Offer (EFO) formally acknowledged the need for early education to be integrated with childcare provision, resulting in the delineation of education and care and extending parental choice. By extending the 15hrs free entitlement to disadvantaged two-year olds (DfE, 2011) more parents are able to access provision that may have previously been unaffordable for low income families.

The impact these subsidies have had on widening parental choice and participation has resulted in the need for more childcare places and the need to ensure those places are of high quality. By reducing the emphasis on the influence of cost, when considering parents as consumers of childcare, consideration can be given to other factors that influence parents' choice (Shlay et al., 2005).

2.2. The Benefits of Early Childhood Education and Care

In considering the historical context of early education and care Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 2013) draws attention to the Hadow Report (Hadow Report, 1933) in which the significance of the possible long-term benefits of early education is first raised. This was in opposition to the consensus at the time that the mother's role was in the home, as the primary carer of children up to the age of five (Browne, 1996). More recently the benefits of early education are confirmed in the Field and Allen Reports (Allen, 2011; Field, 2010). Both reports justify intervention in the early years, as a mediation process by professionals, to ensure long-term benefits for society. The Field Report acknowledged that there had been a significant improvement in early years provision over the last ten years, but also that services

were very variable with both a general lack of clear evidence of what works for poorer children and insufficient attention to developing the evidence base.

2.2.1. The Evidence Base

The first major study in the UK to focus on early years provision was the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project (Sylva et al., 2004). The aim of the study was to develop the evidence base, to understand the importance of various influences on the quality of pre-school education and to provide the basis for guidance on good practice for practitioners and policy makers (Sylva et al., 2008). The first phase of the study, which began in 1996, focused on the influence of pre-school experiences on children's cognitive and social development. The study was designed to establish factors relating to children's progress, involving more than 3,000 children from pre-school to post compulsory education. This large scale, longitudinal study which ended in 2014 represented a major investment by the DfE.

By exploring the characteristics of different types of pre-school provision and monitoring children's development, an evidence base has been established. The study has defined which aspects of pre-school education have had a positive impact on children's long term development, educational attainment and progress. The research indicates that the quality of early years provision and the duration the child attends are important for cognitive and social behavioural outcomes. The findings conclude that pre-school is an effective intervention that helps to counterbalance the effects of poverty and disadvantage (Sammons, 2010; Sammons et al., 2008)

A criticism of EPPE is that using an average mean rating for the Environment Rating Scales , which were used as a standardised quality measure (Harms et al., 2005; Harms et al., 2003), does not ensure that individual child's specific needs will be met. The basis of this criticism is that the association between childcare quality, as assessed by ECERS-R (Harms et al., 2005), and child development is not proven (Gordon et al., 2013). However, the value placed on quality measures, both by researchers and professionals, has dominated the discourse on quality (Dahlberg, 2007). Whilst customer satisfaction is compatible with quality measures there is little evidence of parental engagement in defining quality or their influence on delivery aspects (Greenway, 2011; Larner and Phillips, 1994).

EPPE focuses on the need for a qualified teacher to lead effective practice and emphasises the importance of the home learning environment. The emphasis on qualifications and standardisation has somewhat detracted from incorporating parental factors within service provision, as a basis for the achievement of higher quality provision for each individual child (Tobin, 2005). However, with the ultimate aim of closing the gap in cognitive and social development, there is a clear interdependency between staff, parents, the pre-school environment and the home learning environment (Williams, 2004).

With regard to government policy it is still unclear as to the impact of the EPPE research proportional to the investment, as the experiences of individual children vary (Melhuish, 2001).The findings do highlight the benefits of high quality pre-school education and the long-term effects on attainment (Sylva et al., 2010; Sylva et al., 2012). However, the development of early education and childcare over the period of the research has changed the types of pre-school provision that children and their families are able to access. Although Government policy is based on the premise of high quality early education and childcare, accountability remains with parents to make the right choices for their children.

2.3. Factors Influencing Parental Choice

In this section I will explore the factors that influence parental choice as stated in the literature.

2.3.1. The Importance of Parental Involvement

From their involvement in learning in the 1980s (Athey, 1990) to the identification of benefits and challenges (Draper and Wheeler, 2010) and to the role of the social pedagogue (Allen and Whalley, 2010), the engagement and involvement of parents is recognised as being pivotal in anchoring children's learning in the complexity of their family and community.

There is, however, a need for caution when assessing what this role has meant in practice. As identified by Hughes and MacNaughton, their survey of the literature around parental involvement concluded that parents were placed in a subordinate position to early years practitioners, especially in respect to knowledge (Hughes and

MacNaughton, 2000). Although parents are referred to as collaborators, in reality their knowledge is treated as merely secondary. This approach to parental engagement may prevent quality from being defined based on any form of consensus with a dominance of a politicised domain that effectively excludes parents and marginalises their knowledge (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005).

In many contemporary western societies, what parents' value and what determines their choices has not been clearly defined. The extent to which those values influence quality, as defined within the current political context, is also unclear. There does, however, appear to be a consensus that to enable parents to fully participate would be influential in the creation of high quality pre-school provision (Bryson et al., 2006; Harrist et al., 2007; Moss and Pence, 1994).

This is supported by Greenway who suggests that the importance of parental participation is through building relationships with early years practitioners, which is essential in defining quality. Despite the acknowledgement of this importance 'there is a dearth of empirically based evidence regarding parental choice of provision and their perceptions of quality matters' (Greenway, 2011,p.91).

2.3.2. The Influence of Social Class

The type of provision that parents choose is more likely to be determined by social class than for philosophical or educational reasons (Vincent et al., 2010). However, Vincent proposed that, rather than choice being determined by a lack of knowledge or skills, there are different sets of priorities that affect working-class parents based on local community attachments. If inequalities are to be addressed, policy makers need to acknowledge the differences in attitude to education as influenced by social class. She suggests that this can be assisted by increasing parents' involvement and policy makers understanding of:

> 'the benefits of, and logic to, prioritising the local and known [as opposed to] strategic and individual enterprise' .(Vincent et al., 2010 p.295)

In some ways this fits with the view of parents as consumers and their influence at a local level, driving up demand for high quality childcare. Alternatively, parents' 'local

and known' attitudes could result in an acceptance of poor quality childcare in deference to convenience of location and cost.

2.3.3. What Does Research in the USA Tell Us?

In America there has been more research on parents' preferences and perceptions of quality which focus on the constraints that low-income families face, within the socio-economic context of that time. Working on the premise that supply and demand drives up quality this was not found to be the case (Cryer and Burchinal, 1997). The reason for this was apportioned to parents' lack of information both prior to purchasing childcare and on a daily basis when using childcare (Walker, 1991). Cryer points out that the 'accuracy of consumers' information, as it relates to the childcare market, has been rarely documented in research' (Cryer and Burchinal, 1997,p.37).

While various studies have shown that childcare centres in the USA were of low quality (Clifford, 1989; Cryer, 1988; Phillipsen, 1995), those that have looked at parental satisfaction indicate that only a small proportion of parents are dissatisfied with the quality of their childcare provision (Kontos and Wells, 1986; Willer et al., 1991).

In 2005, an investigation into how low income families evaluated childcare quality was carried out by examining the care preferences of a sample of African American parents (Shlay et al., 2005). A factorial survey method was used to assess how parents constructed child care quality through the identification of preferences. Firstly, from the arrangements they chose and, secondly, from what parents said they preferred. This was different from previous studies as it allowed parents to express their preferences as consumers of childcare without the constraints faced in reality, such as cost, availability and sufficiency. In these circumstances parents' perceptions of quality mirrored those of professionals. The study suggests parents' choices are influenced by availability and cost, not because they don't know what quality is or because they define quality differently. These findings may vary from the earlier studies due to parents being better informed as to what constitutes good quality childcare.

In 2011 Torquati looked at the links between income and good quality care, defined as that which is known to support children's development. It showed that low-income families are less likely to access good quality care due to cost constraints, availability and accessibility, preferences and other family selection factors (Torquati et al., 2011).

Although low parent participation rates limit the generalisabilty of Torquati's study differences in income reflected that it was actually low-income families (those in work with low pay) rather than poor families (those out of work and living on benefits) who were least likely to be able to access high quality care, neither having the financial resources or the income eligibility to receive subsidies. The study concluded that while child poverty rates are increasing, access to high quality childcare is restricted to those who can afford it.

This research is relevant to the UK in relation to the rising cost of childcare (Daycare Trust, 2011), but is counterbalanced by early intervention to tackle inequalities. By addressing the constraints that low-income places on families, parents are supposed to have more choice. How this impacts on other factors that may influence parental choice is an area for investigation.

2.3.4. What Does Research in the UK Tell Us?

In the UK, as in the USA, the government has increased the emphasis on parental choice, (Allen, 2011). Rather than fully funding childcare, it has been left to market forces and parents to decide on the type of pre-school provision most suitable for their children (Daycare Trust, 2011; Mathers et al., 2012). Most research on childcare quality has focused on how professionals and experts within the field define quality (Anning et al., 2004; Campbell-Barr and Wilkinson, 2010; Greenway, 2011); less is known about how parents define quality and the influence on choice.

Factors that influence parental choice have been identified in surveys in the UK as part of a time series data collection that contributed to the evaluation of government policy interventions (1997-2010) (Bryson et al., 2006; Woodland et al., 2004). Also, under the Childcare Act (McAuliffe et al., 2006), local authorities have a duty to carry out Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (DCSF, 2010), which are based on local surveys of parents. The CSA is aimed at mapping supply and demand so that LAs

could improve access to childcare provision, as well as support providers to remain viable. Reviews showed that there were still gaps in provision, with parents reporting a lack of information and citing cost as a barrier to take-up (Office for Public Management, 2008). These issues have continued to be raised when parents have been consulted (Daycare Trust, 2010; 2011; Family and Childcare Trust, 2013).

A study of parents' use of formal and informal childcare (0-14yrs), their views and experience, was originally carried out in 2001(Bryson et al., 2006). The report highlighted how parents' use of childcare had changed since 1999, focusing on the use of formal childcare as defined in the NCS (Her Majesty's Treasury, 2004). The data was used to support the potential for increasing the use of formal childcare in line with government policy.

The majority of parents using formal childcare were satisfied with provision, although it was suggested that half of providers could improve some aspect of the provision. This reflects research on parental satisfaction in the USA (Kontos and Wells, 1986; Willer, 1991), with aspects such as the range in hours, communication and quality of the building being cited. In the Bryson study, the factors influencing parental choice of formal registered provision included the social and educational development of the child, supported by well trained staff. Factors such as reliability and reputation were also reflected in the need to find care that is compatible with parents working hours, in a convenient location and has been recommended by other parents (Bryson et al., 2006).

These responses show that the social aspects of early education and care are important to parents as well as the educational opportunities. The reputation of provision with trained staff that parents feel they can trust to socialise and educate their child rated more highly than affection and continuity of child rearing practices.

In a previous study Woodland used comparisons in household income, whereby only households in the lower income bands showed an increase in the use of formal childcare. The same factors and in similar proportions were identified as influencing choice of formal registered provision (Woodland et al., 2004 p.126-127).

In the 2010 Daycare Trust Survey (Daycare Trust, 2010), parents ranked the following criteria when choosing childcare:

- Staff well qualified, trained and experienced - 74%
- Warm and caring atmosphere - 59%
- Good Ofsted Report - 44%
- Cost - 36%

If social class influences choice of childcare the ranking of the criteria could be a reflection of the socio-economic status of parents who responded to the survey. However, the survey findings concluded that improving information is central to supporting parents to make informed choices, with the child's development and happiness key factors in making those choices.

 The concept of the happiness is defined by practitioners (Alexander, 2010), who described a successful child as a happy child. Practitioners' values and goals for children, although subjective, are integral to the process of defining quality (Cottle and Alexander, 2013). However, in the USA and UK (Family and Childcare Trust, 2013; Shlay et al., 2005; Torquati et al., 2011), cost continues to be regarded as a defining factor in choice, over and above quality. Further, parents are construed as being un-informed and lacking knowledge of what factors influence their child's success (Hughes and MacNaughton, 2000).

Although cost constraints have been alleviated to some extent with the EFO, Tax Credits and Early Learning for Two's there is still an issue of cost versus sufficiency of high quality places (Dickens et al., 2012). The consumer model of childcare provision may allow parents to widen their choices, with an expectation that providers will continuously improve in order to keep their customers. This issue of sufficiency becomes an influential factor when parental choice is limited either by a shortage of places or a lack of flexibility to meet working patterns and hours (Family and Childcare Trust, 2013).

The political and practical implications of ensuring there is sufficient high quality early years provision leads to the need to explore the factors that influence parents' choice of formal childcare and, subsequently, what defines quality for them. This is particularly relevant because although the focus on poverty is multi-dimensional in

nature, the main priorities for the Foundation Years are identified as engagement with parents and access to high quality early years provision (Field, 2010). As already discussed, the quality of this engagement is crucial in ensuring quality is co-constructed with parents.

The term 'co-construction' denotes the engagement of parents and practitioners together, as they are mutually involved in the construction of meaning in order to create understanding across differences (Dahlberg, 2007; Urban and Dalli, 2008). A co-constructive environment empowers both practitioners and parents and in turn empowers children in their learning (Hughes and MacNaughton, 2000).The co-construction of knowledge will support parents in their choices, thus helping to reduce inequalities in both access and quality. The understanding of structures and processes need to be co-constructed with parents if there is to be a change in the standardised constructs of quality and a shared understanding (Cottle and Alexander, 2013).

2.4. Conclusion

Changes in government policy, the impact of funding cuts and the overall economic downturn have done little to improve access to high quality childcare for families living in disadvantaged circumstances. However, the need for formal childcare has continued to increase with more parents needing to work and a rising birth-rate. The implications of ensuring there is sufficient high quality pre-school provision demands consideration of parents involvement in improving quality, by exploring the factors that influence their choice of childcare.

2.4.1 The Influence of Information

It is suggested that parental knowledge and the type of information they have access to are important factors in addressing social classes' differences, as discussed by Vincent (Vincent et al., 2009). The findings of the literature review show that a factor in choice of childcare is the information to which parents have access and how they use this information to make (more or less) informed choices. What information parents have and the influence this has on choice is an area for investigation in this study.

2.4.2. The Influence of Cost

Further to the findings of the Daycare Trust (Daycare Trust, 2010), cost factors are considered to influence not only parental choice but also affect the emotional or guilt responses to using poor quality childcare. Parents may be in denial regarding the quality of provision they were forced to accept within their limited economic circumstances (Torquati et al., 2011). However in circumstances where parents are able to access funded early education places, thus reducing costs, it is important to consider if cost is still an issue that influences parental choice of childcare.

2.4.3. The Influence of Location

The literature review gives consideration to the concept of children's learning being anchored in the family and the community (Bryson et al., 2006). This contrasts with the logistics of getting children to and from pre-school provision and school, combined with the parental priority of having to get to work. Therefore the influence of location over and above other factors could have negative connotations. Yet, convenience as a priority factor in the choice of childcare may be counterbalanced by parental engagement and preferences for the 'local and known'(Vincent et al., 2010). This leads to consideration of the positive effect that logistics may have on personal choice and the involvement of parents in the development and delivery of local services. Therefore the influence of location and the importance placed on this by parents is an area for investigation in this study.

2.4.4. The Influence of Staff

The importance of engagement and the connection with staff qualifications and attitudes is reflected in Elfers' research on the role and impact of the Key Person (Elfer et al., 2003). The level of knowledge that parents have about the positive benefits of early education and care may be reflected in their expectations of staff. How highly parents rate staff in terms of qualifications, attitudes and behaviour may provide an insight to the level of knowledge parents have (Hughes and MacNaughton, 2000) and if they feel excluded or marginalised (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005) by professionals. The influence of staff qualifications, behaviours and attitudes, and the importance placed on these by parents, is an area for investigation in this study.

2.5. Specific Research Questions

This study is concerned with the contribution that parents can make to improve the quality of early education and care, within the social context of the provision they choose to use. Although the contextual framework remains anchored in Government Policy the focus is on parents' perspectives, which lead to the following specific questions:

1. What information do parents use when making choices about early education and childcare provision for their pre-school children?

2. What are the main influences on parental choice of early education and childcare for their pre-school children in an area with high levels of deprivation?

3. What are parent's levels of satisfaction, with the quality of care and learning, in relation to their child's experience of pre-school provision?

4. What are parent's levels of engagement and involvement with the pre-school provision they have chosen to use?

N.B. - the terms 'pre-school' and 'nursery' are used generically throughout the theses, to refer to any form pre-school provision.

These research questions are addressed in Chapter 4 and the use of an appropriate methodology and methods is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approach and considers the most appropriate methods of data collection for this study. It reflects my philosophical stance and addresses ethical issues, in accordance with the guidelines of the British Education Research Association (BERA) and University of Birmingham Ethics Committee, in relation to my research design. This chapter also looks at data collection and analysis procedures exploring the possible limitations of this research. The rationale for this study, to consider parents' views, has influenced the research design - a questionnaire survey - which is discussed in detail in this chapter.

3.1. Philosophical Approach

In considering an inquiry into the concept of personal choice, I considered two alternatives about the nature of this research. The first is that the research is situated within an objective reality that can be observed and measured, within a post-positivist paradigm (Phillips and Burbules, 2000; Reichardt and Rallis, 1994). This paradigm recognises the interdependency between the researcher and researched person but there is still a commitment to objectivity.

The second is that the research is situated in a socially constructed, interpretivist paradigm (Schwandt, 1994) which requires an understanding of how individuals interrelate and acknowledges the researcher's background and how they "position themselves" (Creswell, 2003 p.8).

I have reflected on the origins of my personal and professional values in relation to the topic, acknowledging my role as a participant in my research, recognising that 'a consideration of the role of the researcher [as in] helping to construct a reality with the researched' (Greenway, 2011 p.102), is important. In order to construct a reality with the researched I had to recognise my position as an insider.

My role within the LA where the research is carried out began in 2002, with my appointment as Lead Officer for the EYDCP, and ended in 2012 as Head of Early Years and Childcare. It was a conscious decision to choose early years as the focus for my research because it is a field of study that reflects my personal experience of living and working in areas where high levels of disadvantage involve collaborative

working across all services and sectors. With over 45 years of early years engagement, professionally and personally, that enables me to bring both practical and academic insight to my studies. I regard myself a true 'insider', having had responsibility at a local level for the delivery of the NCS to include funding, sufficiency, information and quality, but always with the needs of children and families at the forefront of my work.

There are of course advantages to 'insider' research: these are practical aspects such as access, prior knowledge and understanding of the organisation, and 'street credibility' (Robson, 2002 p.382). The disadvantages though can be substantial, including compromising relationships with colleagues, managing confidential information and remaining objective. Consequently I have explored any possible bias through reviewing the literature, self-reflection, peer review, discussions with my supervisor and the choice of an appropriate research design.

In early years, as with other stages of education, there is a reliance on quantitative data to measure and evaluate progress towards targets and pre-determined outcomes. The nature of early years (Dahlberg, 2007) is such that quantitative data has little meaning without the social interpretation that qualitative data can provide. Rather than remaining objective and neutral, understanding is key:

'What understandings do the people we are talking to have about the world, and how can we in turn understand these?' (Thomas, 2009 p.75).

Although I have been consistently working within post-positivist approaches, in relation to the political framework that early education and care is positioned in, my epistemological stance is within an interpretive paradigm. This has led me to develop an overall approach, using a survey as a research strategy, seeking to understand rather than explain parents' preferences.

As a senior manager within the LA I had the benefit of unlimited access to both data and a range of stakeholders. With this access came an awareness of the position of power that the LA holds when allocating funding and other resources. These issues were addressed by maintaining clarity as to what the LA policies and procedures were in terms of the statutory requirements and funding criteria in comparison to

voluntary participation in the research project based on informed consent. This formed the basis for the ethical considerations of the study.

3.2. Ethical Considerations

Thomas (2009, p146) states that *"Although there are important practical matters that stem from ethical concerns, ethics is about the conduct of your work: it is about how you think about enquiry, how you think about this research project; it is about your respect for others."*

As well as considering if the methods used were fit for purpose in terms of answering the research questions, I considered the ethical issues of asking parents to take part in a survey because they were identified as 'disadvantaged' by virtue of where they live, and where the childcare may be of poorer quality than other areas in the UK. This was addressed by surveying all parents across all settings, in the private and voluntary sectors, who were registered to provide free early education places for two, three and four year olds. The information requested would be relevant to any parent in relation to contributing to the shaping of early education and childcare services and the design of the questionnaire did allow parents the opportunity to explain and comment on their responses, which were made on a voluntary basis.

There are ethical considerations regarding the collection of data from parents about their use of childcare in that there may be a range of biases in their responses. Parents may want to believe they have made the best choice for their child or, if they had any particular difficulty with the provision, may have a negative opinion. Consequently I had to consider how to manage information about practices that may have a detrimental impact on the children and families using that provision but also on the staff within the setting. As an 'insider' researcher I had to consider information both as data and as a possible issue to be dealt with in my job role. I could not pre-empt any specific problems that may arise; however, there were other structures and processes in place for dealing with poor practice outside of the research study.

By considering possible biases as an integral part of the data collection process safeguarding children has been the mediating factor in considering any action to be taken. It was made clear to participants, both in writing and verbally, that confidentiality is not guaranteed if children are placed 'At Risk' with reference made

to Safeguarding Children policies and Ofsted Regulations. This has included a personalised covering letter explaining the purpose of the research and why it is important, including confidentiality, publication and ethics, as well as providing an *opting-in* (Thomas, 2009) consent form to taking part in the research. (Appendix 1)

Due consideration was given to ethics in the analysis and presentation of findings. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants has been ensured by the coding of questionnaires and removal of any names and data has been securely stored with restricted access.

The issue of copyright has also been addressed by gaining the permission of the LA to use any data collected as part of my job for my research study. This has helped address the issues regarding *insider: outsider* (Robson, 2002) researcher ethics.

3.3. Design Framework

When first considering the design framework and methods for data collection and analysis, my starting points were the existing systems and tools used both nationally and within the LA. These were:

- Ofsted Inspection Grades (Ofsted, 2013)
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS) (Harms et al., 2005)
- Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (DCSF, 2010)
- Early Years Profile Scores (Directgov, 2012)
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) (Department for Education, 2010)

These data identified levels of deprivation and attainment in relation to the sufficiency of Good and Outstanding provision (Ofsted, 2011), to meet the demand for funded early education places. The ECERS audits, which were carried out by LA staff as part of the Quality Improvement Support Strategy (The National Strategies/Early Years, 2008), identified those settings that consistently failed to improve, despite having support from the LA. This raised concerns about the fact that parents continued to use poor quality provision, and lead to the decision to focus on parents' views.

Therefore, as I wished to involve as many parents as possible, I decided to use an approach that follows Thomas's definition of characteristics of a survey in that the researcher is

> 'collecting data from a varied number of respondents [in order] to describe some feature of the social situation in which they exist [unlike an experiment]. Once these descriptive data have been collected they can be examined for the existence of relationships between and among them' (Thomas, 2009 p.135).

The advantage of using a survey is that 'they provide a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives' (Robson, 2002 p.233). Although a questionnaire tends to be quantitative in nature it can still explore meaning (Scott, 2000), such as identifying the value that parents place on specific elements of early years provision. I consider the questionnaire to be an appropriate tool to collect the views of parents due to the number of settings in receipt of NEF. Access was easier because the LA holds a data base of all children, parents and providers, allowing for wider engagement and less demands on parents' time than if interviews or focus groups were carried out.

The defining characteristic of a questionnaire is that it is a written form of questioning and, depending on design, has a level of versatility for data collection (Thomas, 2009). I am aware that the questionnaire may have proved difficult to complete for parents with English as a second language or low literacy levels. However, although they were in the target group, they were not my primary target, which was all parents who chose to use the free entitlement to nursery education in the non-maintained sectors. The focus was on 'disadvantaged' parents; however, all private and voluntary providers were included in the survey, as the borough has one of the highest levels of deprivation among LAs in England (see Chapter 4 for socio-economic context).

The questionnaire was designed to be self-administered and included questions that required quantitative and qualitative responses. The questionnaires were relativity easy to administer, printing costs and postage were covered by the LA and the contact details of all early years education providers are held on a central data base. Likewise the providers' details are available from the Ofsted portal and are in the

public domain. Prior to distribution modifications were made to the layout, as well as explaining to providers the purpose of the research at a termly network meeting hosted by the LA.

3.4. Implementation of Questionnaire Survey

This section discusses the suitability of the methods used – sampling, content of the questionnaire, and practicalities of distribution and return rate.
(See full questionnaire in Appendix 2).

3.4.1. Data Collection

I have used what Thomas describes as a 'purposive sample' (Thomas, 2009 p.104) The target groups were the parents of two, three and four year olds who use private and voluntary sector provision to access funded places for nursery education. Although no parent was excluded the focus was on parents who need childcare to enable them to work, based on the LA review of sufficiency of childcare. Therefore the questionnaire needed to identify this particular group, and was a consideration in the analysis of the responses, although feedback from all parents is valuable when aiming to support practitioners to improve the quality of provision.

In deciding on the content of the questionnaire I considered previous questionnaires (see Appendix 3) that had been sent out via the FIS as part of the CSA (DCSF, 2010). The consultation, on quality of provision, found parents expressed satisfaction with current provision which was in contradiction to the Ofsted Grades and ECERS scores of several providers. These scores were the result of audits that had been carried out by LA staff in order to identify the strengths and areas for improvement, ranging from 'excellent' to 'inadequate'. The resulting Action Plans were monitored over a set period of time to support improvement, with some providers failing to improve despite having additional support and resources.   This lead to the specific research questions to ascertain the factors that influence parental choice of early education and care and the factors that influence their perceptions of quality.

This is an overview of the questionnaire used in the study (Appendix 2):
Questions 1-7 and 20-24 profiles the users and their circumstances; Questions 3,6,9 identify how parents find out about their childcare choices, why they use the provision and the main reasons why they chose their current childcare provision; Questions 10,18,19 consider the quality of care in relation to the child's experiences

and in relation to staff (Q.11); and finally Questions 8,12,13 a & b consider parental engagement, both with parents as consumers and as partners (Q. 14-17).

The questionnaire was piloted with three individual parents. Follow-up interviews were carried out with two of these parents to get feedback on the questions, layout and general response to being asked to be part of a research project. There was no negative feedback; the parents' response was that the questionnaire had been easy to understand and they had been happy to answer all the questions. For example:

'The questionnaire was straightforward, user-friendly with an opportunity to expand on comments and put in details'.

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed in June 2011, 1444 questionnaires were sent out across 72 settings, with 313 parents responding (representing 334 children). This represented a return rate of 22%. This may be considered low in terms of a large scale survey (Aday and Cornelius, 1996; Babbie, 1990) however, the non-response rates were fairly equal across all the settings. Efforts were made to increase the response rate with follow-up calls to encourage settings to remind parents of the deadline set for return. Pre-paid envelopes were provided for the return of the questionnaire with a covering letter that was sent out via the early years providers. Parents were encouraged to complete and return the questionnaires anonymously with the option to identify themselves for further engagement in the research. All questionnaires were coded to identify the setting the child attended with the intention of identifying the representational spread and the opportunity to further correlate the parents' responses to other factors such as demographic data, type of provision and Ofsted Reports.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

This section discusses the data analysis procedure, the effectiveness of the analysis of quantative data (represented as tables and charts) and qualitative data (visual representation of word frequency), including a contextualised discussion of methodological and design issues. I have used different units of analysis, based on a mixture of structured (researcher defined categories) and unstructured data (parental commentary), to be able to generate evidence in a circumstantial and interpretive sense (Mason, 1996).

3.5.1. Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The design of the survey allowed for a structured focus as well as open questions, divided into three sections:

Section 1- basic information about the children, how parents found out about provision, attendance patterns and reasons for using the pre-school provision; related to socio-economic context and population profile.

Section 2 - parents needs, reasons for choosing the provision, understanding of children's emotional well-being, the role of staff, general engagement and involvement with the provision and overall satisfaction with the quality of both care and education.

Section 3 - information about parents and their availability for follow-up interviews.

The presentation of the findings and analysis are based on the questions that relate to the concepts of choice, quality and parental engagement. These themes follow my research questions and reflect issues that had been identified through the literature. The collation of data was a 'desk-top' exercise and, where appropriate, has been categorised and represented in tables and charts.

As well as the researcher-determined categories parents were given the option of explaining reasons, such as choice of provision, or comment further on their selected responses. There were issues of confidentiality, because parents had identified the settings and children, requiring editing of qualitative data.

Analysis is based on an interpretive approach to the qualitative data, by identifying themes that emerge and considering the interconnections between them. The themes are used to capture the contents of the qualitative data, generated from parents' responses using the 'constant comparison' method of analysis (Thomas, 2009 p.198). From these themes categories were used to construct deeper meaning that supported the influences prioritised in the quantitative analysis.

The reason I constructed the themes and categories was in part due to the volume of data generated by parents' comments but also the need to drill down on specific issues, such as parents' understanding of the impact of daycare on children's emotional well-being.

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Parents' responses, per question, were then presented using Wordle, a tool for generating "word clouds" from text. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. Wordle is a good resource for several reasons, not least because it enables large volumes of text to be presented in a visually accessible format; it is confidential, because no information leaves the workstation; it has no cost implication and has a level of creativity that tables and graphs do not. The disadvantage is that the Wordle can only be saved by taking a screen shot rather than using copy and paste which can affect the quality of the text.

Where data was so diverse, whereby not having any level of common word frequency did not lend it to analysis using Wordle, comments were apportioned as negative or positive and the subject of the comment represented numerically. These comments were then added to the identified themes across the data, ensuring consistency and giving additional coherence to the parents' comments.

3.5.2. Limitations

The reason for carrying out a survey across the LA rather than within individual settings was to allow an analysis across all settings, with data emerging from a wider representation of parents. The data secured may not be generalisable but it does represent the unique position of the researcher, as an 'insider', using data to support strategic planning to improve sufficiency and quality, borough wide.
Limitations of this method are related to the use of questionnaires especially due to the voluntary nature of surveys. Although the parents were using nurseries, pre-schools and childminders that were representative of early years provision within the LA, the return rate from certain providers was lower than others; therefore the responses may not be representative of all parents. To counteract this parents' and providers' post codes were analysed, although not all parents provided a home postcode. Although the borough as a whole is disadvantaged, the postcode analysis supported the validity of the data as it allowed consideration of which parts of the borough and which provider's parents' responses were representative of.

A negative view of questionnaires is that they only provide a superficial view of the subject and part of the answer to research questions (Roberts-Holmes, 2005). To compound this view it is suggested that the structure of the questionnaire and the questions asked may impose on the responses (Flick, 1998). Also the problem with

using a list of items is the possibility of bias, based on the pre-determined factors directing respondents to reply in certain ways (Bell, 1999).

Despite these limitations the questionnaire was the most practical way of collecting data from a large sample of parents, because it could be administered without the presence of the researcher, (Robson, 2002) and the responses were relevant to my research questions.

By using Likert Scale based questions (Appendix 2), followed by the opportunity for parents to comment on their answers, this allowed me to 'engage respondents' interest' (Robson, 2002) to elicit parents' views on their current childcare provision. The research benefits from employing the partial picture elicited from analysis of the quantitative data, along with the equally partial picture elicited from the qualitative data providing further insight, which extended the value of this study.

The analysis has identified limitations in the quantitative data, such as children's ethnicity which is identified but not that of their parents. Also, there was no specific question about the use of Ofsted Reports when making choices. However, this is tempered by the rich and diverse insight provided by the parents' written responses, justifying the use of a survey approach.

The response rate to the questionnaire (22%) and, specifically, the amount of qualitative data generated showed that when parents are given the opportunity to participate they are willing to be involved and want to have their voices heard. This was supported by the number of parents who agreed to make themselves available for follow-up interviews: 88 across 46 settings. The use of the questionnaire survey has been a particular strength in this study, by allowing parents to contribute to defining quality without compromising their position as service users.

The findings from the questionnaire will be presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the content analysis of a consultative questionnaire (see Appendix 2) and is organised in four sections.

These sections are based on the socio-economic context of the borough where the research has been carried out; the main influences on parental choice; parents' views on the quality of care and learning; and parents' experience of engagement with the provision.

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed in June 2011; 1444 questionnaires were sent out across 72 settings, with 313 parents responding (representing 334 children). This represented a return rate of 22%.

4.1. The Socio-Economic Context

The research has been carried out in a borough where the Super Output Areas (SOA) typically score low on levels of deprivation as assessed across seven domains: Income Deprivation, Employment Deprivation, Health Deprivation and Disability, Education, Skills and Training Deprivation, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and the Living Environment.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combine the scores from the seven domains to give an overall indicator of relative deprivation at the SOA level. The borough has one of the highest levels of deprivation among local authorities in England, with 53% of its population living in wards designated as 'very deprived' (Department for Education, 2010). Data from the IMD provides the base for calculating the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) which measures in a local area the proportion of children under the age of 16 that live in low income households. These are defined as households receiving: Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Pension Credits or with an equivalent income below 60% of the national median before housing costs, so eligible for Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and/or Child Tax Credit(CTC). Within the borough only 14% of low income families were claiming the childcare element of CTC (Source Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs-HMRC) although a third of children, over 20,000, were living in households below the IDACI threshold (Department for Education, 2010).

According to HMRC figures, this means the borough had 30.8% of their child population living in what is considered "relative" poverty and is within the lowest decile (10%) of all authorities National Indicator (NI 116) definition. There were however significant variations from the average in different parts of the borough (HMRC).

 The overview of the users and their circumstances can be found in Appendix 4.

The findings in the next section explore factors that influence parental choice of early education and care.

4.2. Making the Choice

This section presents the main findings of this study. It is structured around the key influences on parental choice and how parents set about choosing provision.

 Research Question One: What information do parents use when making choices about early education and childcare provision for their pre-school children?

4.2.1. Finding Out

Table 1

Family Information Service	10.5%	33
School	14%	43
Friend/Neighbour/Family	39%	122
Newsletter/publication/flyer	7%	21
Other	37%	117
Blank	0.6%	2

Sources of Information for Parents

Table 1 presents parents responses to the question - How did you find out about the nursery? Parents were asked to tick all that applied from the list of items (Table 1) and also state what other sources they used.

The first step in making a choice is to find out what is available. How parents access information will impact on the number and types of provision from which they can choose. FIS provide a range of information on all services available to parents; however, the findings show that FIS were not the main information source. Only 10% of parents said they found out about the nursery through FIS.

The most common source of information was family, neighbours or friends and 'Other' sources. Comments made by parents identified other sources of information, and also showed how parents set about choosing provision. Figure 1 presents parents' comments, from question one, standardised using key words as discussed in Chapter Three. The word frequency shows that parents mainly used the internet, followed by their existing knowledge of the local area, in order to find out about pre-school provision The influence of what is 'local and known' (Bryson et al., 2006) is evident in these other responses.

Figure 1
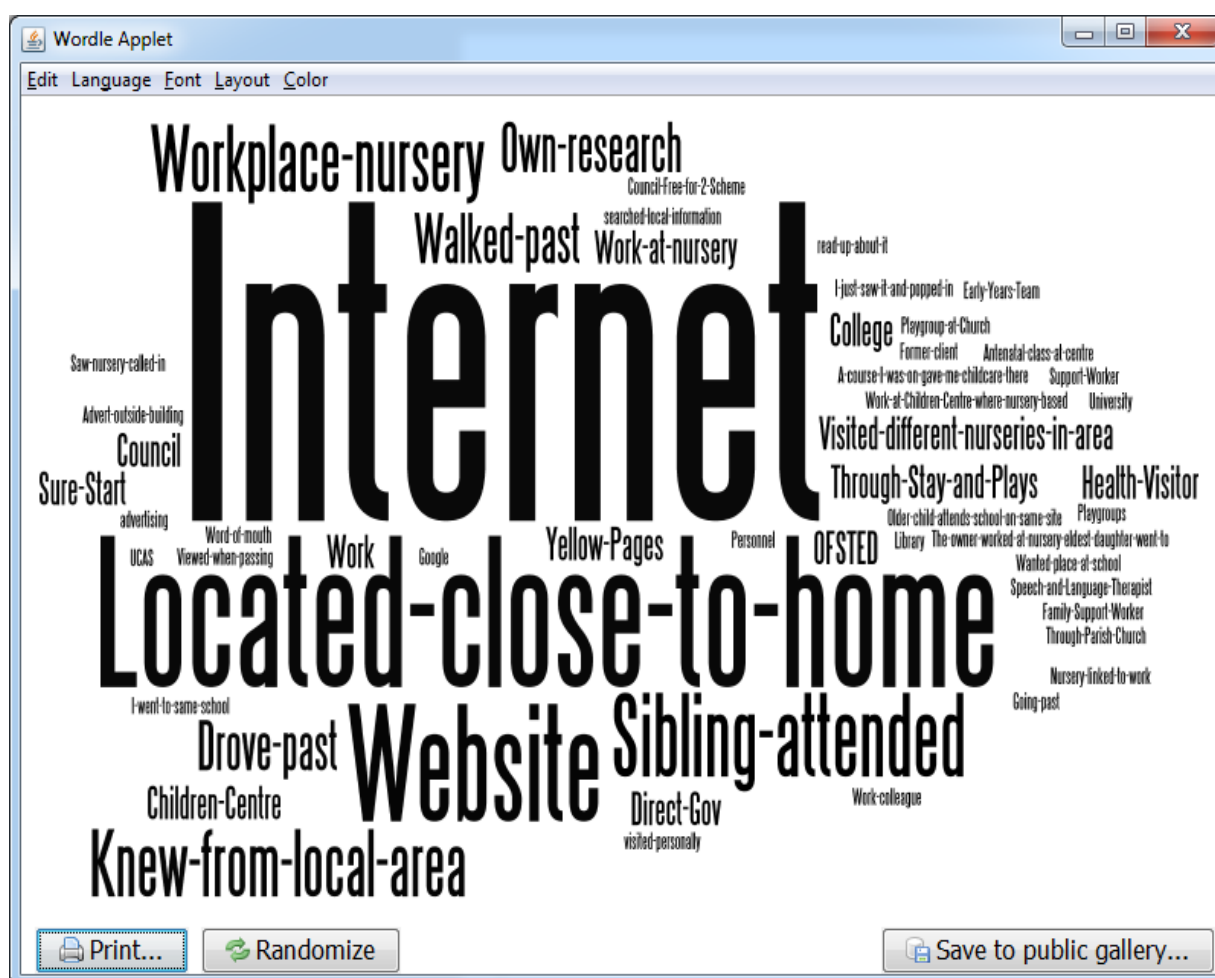
Parents' Other Sources

Although the internet is a primary source of information the process of choosing involved drawing on existing knowledge and experience, supported by recommendations, and visiting local providers. The data shows that parents use a range of information and resources, as well as personal experiences, when choosing provision. The next section presents the reasons why parents use their current pre-school provision.

4.2.2. Nursery Use

Parents were asked to confirm the reasons why they used the nursery, by ticking all those that applied.These reasons and parents' responses are presented inFigure 2.

Figure 2
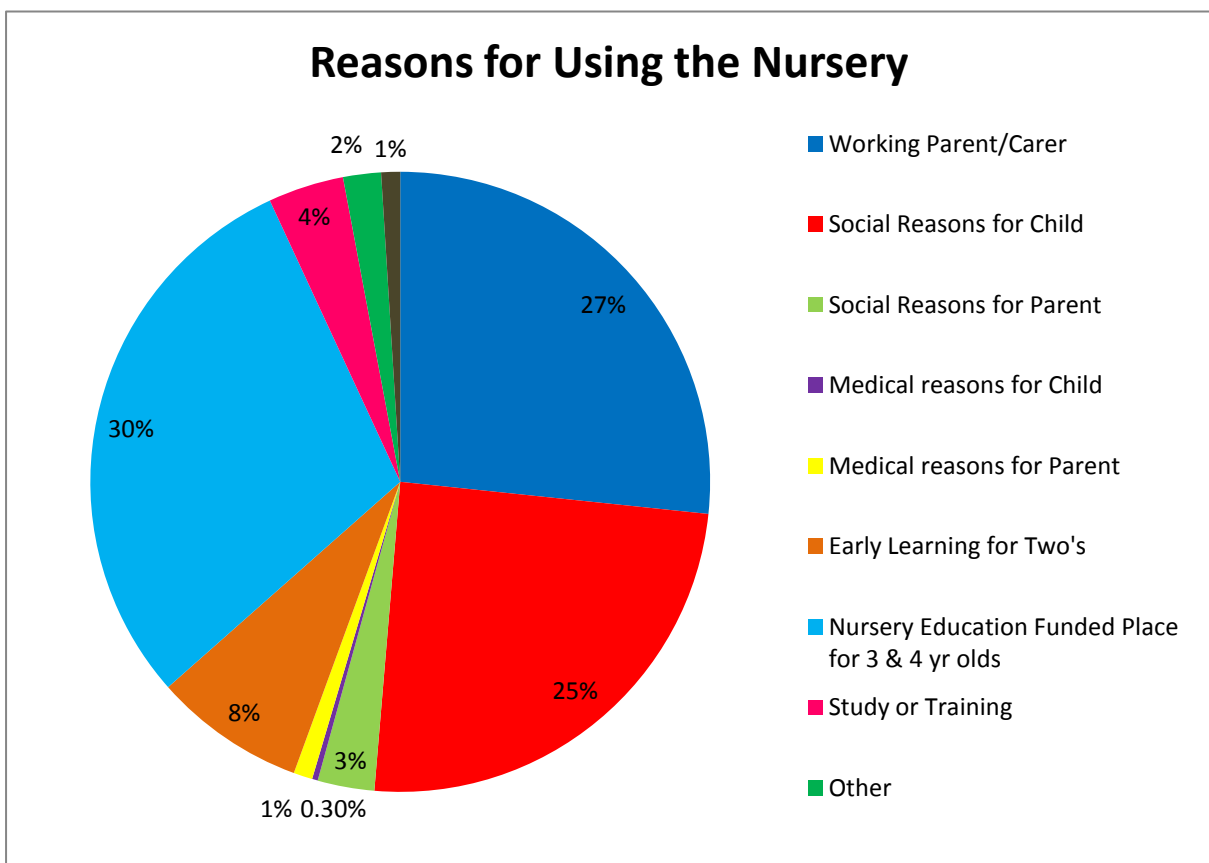
Out of the 614 responses, about a third of parents (30% with 3 and 4 year olds and 8% with 2 year olds) were using the nursery specifically for their child's free entitlement to nursery education. This was to be expected as all the providers are registered for NEF, which helps working parents with their childcare costs, offering

care integrated with the free early education. Slightly above a quarter of parents (27%) mentioned being a working parent as one of their reasons, and a similar proportion identified using the nursery for social reasons for their child (25%) and for the parent (3%). The significance of this will be discussed in Chapter Five.

However, from considering how parents found out about provision and their reason for using formal childcare, I will now move onto the factors that influenced their choices.

4.2.3. Main reasons for choice of childcare

Research Question Two: What are the main influences on parental choice of early education and childcare for their pre-school child in an area with high levels of deprivation?

Table 2

	Total Responses Factors 1-5	1	2	3	4	5		No Influence
Location	285	214	37	20	6	8		5
Cost / Value for money	197	79	37	48	19	14		51
Recommended	198	117	38	24	9	10		50
The building	206	88	53	42	17	6		37
The outside play area	229	94	49	54	22	10		23
Resources	233	108	65	42	13	5		16
Reputation	236	158	42	19	8	9		31
Staff qualifications	231	124	60	28	12	7		20
Staff attitudes and behaviour	263	198	35	18	3	9		9
Early Learning for Two's Place	123	78	14	11	7	13		111
Extended flexible offer for 3 & 4 yr olds	185	126	20	18	7	14		67
Other help with funding the place	82	42	7	12	9	12		115
No other choice	36	4	3	6	7	16		96

Other reason	62	11	0	4	2	45		77
Explain no other choice or other reason:			The other reasons for choice will be represented in a Wordle and discussed in qualitative analysis.					

Reasons for Choice of Current Childcare Provision

Parents were asked 'What were the main reasons why you chose your current childcare provision?' using a scale of 1-5 where 1 is rated as high influence and 5 is rated as low influence. These reasons and parents responses are presented in Table 2.

There are variables in the data analysis as a result of parent's leaving boxes blank, this specifically affects the 'No Influence' figures. Where all other reasons had been identified a blank box could have been interpreted as no influence. However only those factors identified have been included in the analysis. There is also the issue of parents mis-understanding the rating scale resulting in 5 being considered high rather than low. This has been counterbalanced by totalling all the responses, on the scale of 1-5, that parents identified as reasons for their choice of provision (see Table 2). The question may have been less ambiguous had parents been asked 'How important to you was each of the following,when you chose your current childcare provision?' allowing them to rank the importance of every item listed rather than, as in some cases, ticking eveything as of equal importance.

Figure 3
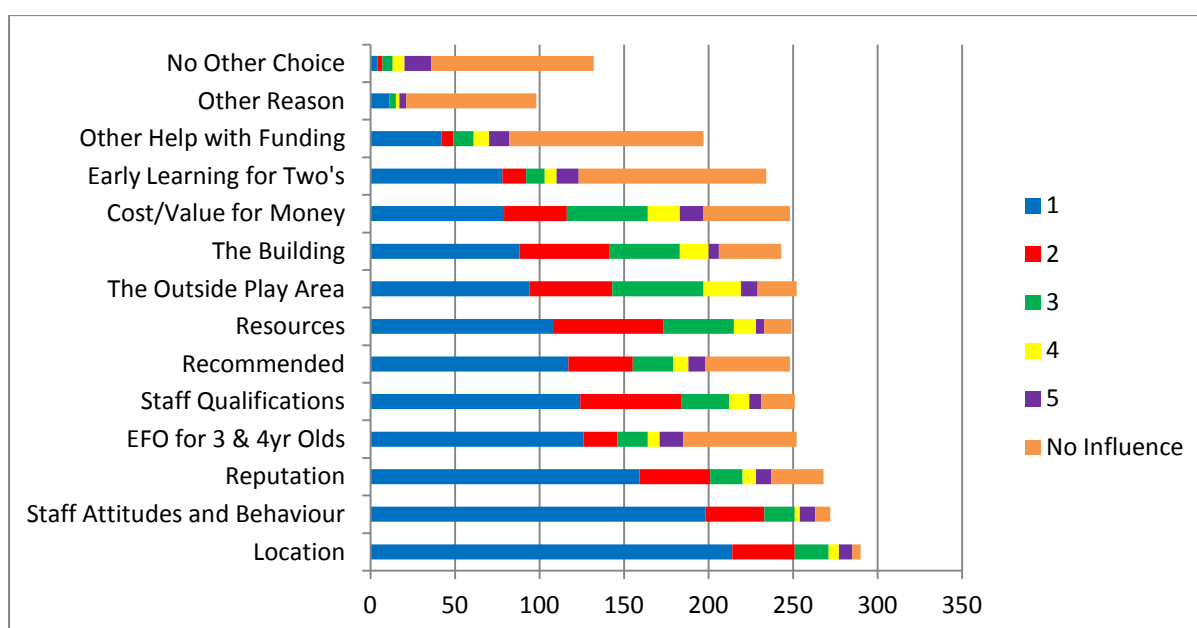
Factors that Influence Parental Choice

Based on the number of responses Figure 3 ranks the reasons for parental choice in order of importance. It shows that location has the highest influence on choice, followed by staff attitudes and behaviours, then reputation. There is only a possible 9% of respondents who failed to identify the importance location has on choice. It also shows that other help with funding, funding for 2 year olds (*ELT) and cost/value for money have less influence on choice.

For more effective presentation parents reasons for their choice of childcare have been grouped into three related domains, as identified in the literature review: cost, location and quality.

1. Financial Domain – This includes factors relating to the cost/value for money of the child's place, funding for disadvantaged two year olds (*ELT), the free entitlement for all three and four year olds (*EFO) and other help with funding the place (Figure 4).

Figure 4
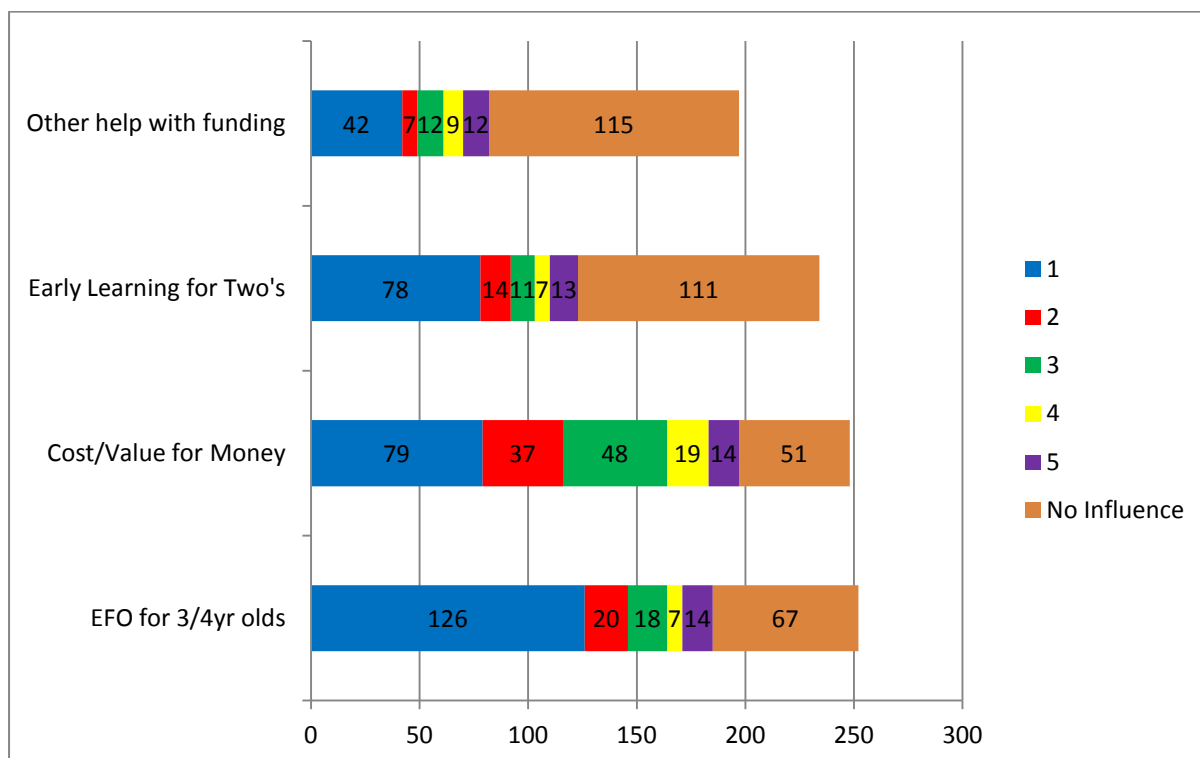
First Domain – Financial Factors

Figure 16 shows that the EFO for 3 and 4 year olds was rated as of high importance for choice of provision by 126 or 40% of respondents, and 59% of all respondents identified it as having some influence. This is followed by Cost/Value for Money with 79 or 25% of respondents selecting this as of high importance for their choice of provision. Overall 63% of all respondents identified Cost/Value for Money as having some influence, only one parent stated that choice was influenced by the child's place costing slightly less money.

The free places for disadvantaged two year olds (*ELT) influenced 78 or 25% of respondents with 39% overall identifying it has having some influence. One parent stated the fact that the provision accepted two year olds influenced their choice, another commented:

> *I feel the free place for 2, 3 & 4 yrs really helps parents, encouraged parents to get their child registered or attend pre-schools. Also helps the children develop all areas of their development. My child's preschool is very good, all staff are really good. All pre-school / nurseries should be like that.*

Parents' level of understanding of value for money is illustrated by this comment:

> *The amount of effort that goes in to making the pre-school a happy, safe, stimulating environment is quite amazing given the very low salaries and working conditions for staff - I wish I could do more to appreciate and value what they do.*

Finally, Other Help with Funding was of importance to 42 or 13% of respondents, with 26% overall identifying it as having some influence. The importance of other sources of funding would only be relative to those parents/children who were eligable to access them. These sources of funding could relate to children with SEN, low income families claiming WFTC or from employers who provide Childcare Vouchers/ Subsidies.

N.B. (*ELT/*EFO) The numbers responding to the survey were higher for parents of three year olds (66%) and four year olds (25%) as compared to two year olds (9%). This is representative of the number of free places available, with all three and four

year olds entitled to fifteen hours of nursery education, whereas the free places for two year olds are restricted to those meeting the Free School Meals criteria or those with specific or special needs. Although this has affected the distribution of the response, there were parents who identified that being able to access the free entitlement for three and four year olds at the same setting, had influenced their choice for their free entitlement to a two year olds place. Non-eligible parents also identified it had affected their choice when the child started nursery at two years of age. Although not included in the pre-determined reasons continuity did present as a factor in the parents comments, which will be discussed in the next section.

2. Locality Domain – as well as the geographical locality this domain includes the influence of what is known locally about the provision, relating to the wider community, friends and family, represented as recommendations and reputation (Figure 5).

Figure 5
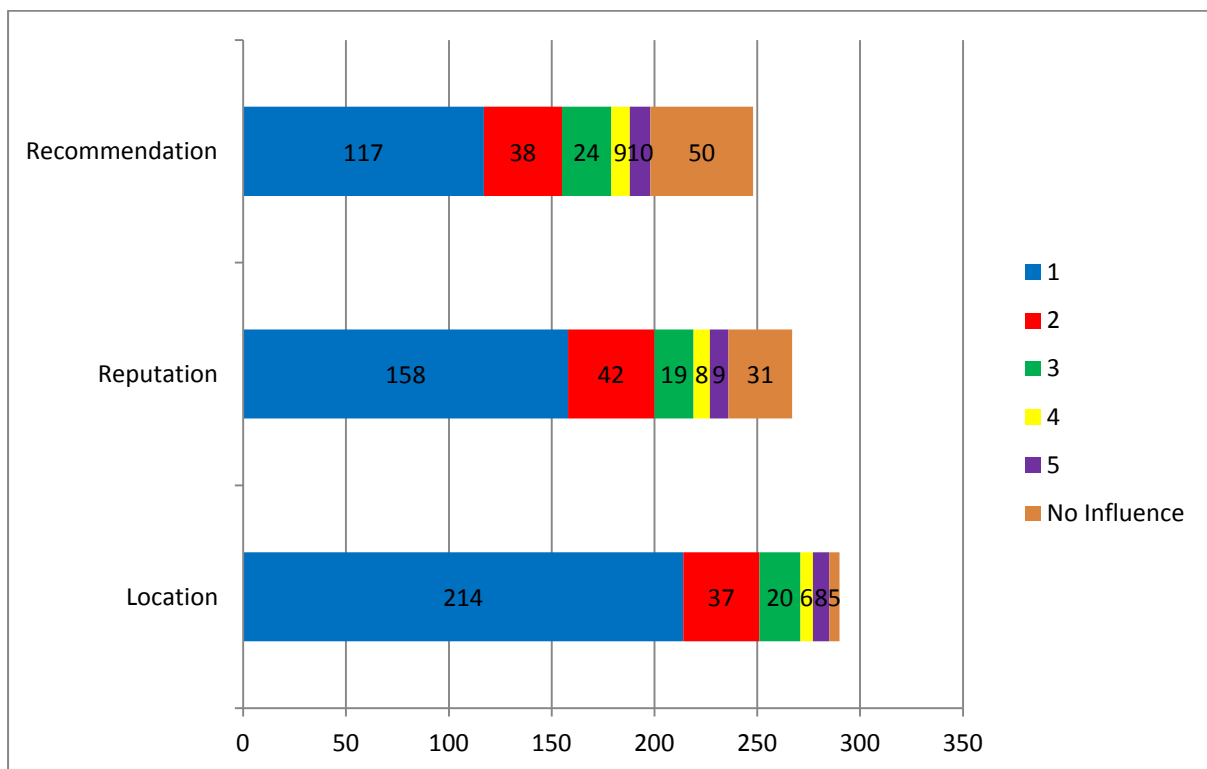
Second Domain – Locality Factors

Figure 5 shows that location was the most common reason for choice of childcare, with 214 or 68% of respondents rating it as high importance. Location was also rated

as being of high importance across all of the 14 factors listed, with 285 or 91% of respondents identifying it as having some influence. Reputation was of high importance for 50% of respondents, with 75% identifying it as having some influence overall. Recommendations were of high importance for 37% of respondents, with 63% identifying them as having some influence overall. Location was of low importance to less than 2% of respondents, with 12% rating reputation and 20% rating recommendations as of low importance.

Only 36 or 12% of the parents surveyed identified that they had no other choice available to them, with 4 or less than 2% identifying this as the main reason. A further 62 or 20% of respondents gave further reasons, with 11 or 3% rating them as of high importance, for their choice. This quantitative data is supported by written responses from parents, who gave further explanations under 'No other choice' or 'Other reason' for their choice. This text, created by the parents' explanations in relation to reasons for choice of provision, is represented in a Wordle (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Parents' Explanations for Choice

As can be seen from Figure 6, above, the theme of location was identified by parents' comments as an important factor influencing choice of childcare. This becomes more prominent when analysing the other key words, which explain location in the context of the basic logistics of getting children to nursery, older siblings to school, getting to work and finding childcare that fits in with working hours and work patterns. This is reflected in the Key Words and phrases such as: *nursery on school site, older sister at junior school attached, dropping children off at one location, workplace nursery, lunch time cover between sessions, attends childminder who services nursery, work commitments, opening hours, convenient to get train to work, work purposes, flexibility of hours.*

As a parent states:

Only really as it is close to where family live so they can drop off/pick up where necessary for my work purposes.

The need for full daycare and flexibility of hours/attendance are also referred to in parents' comments, which is reflective of the sample and the purpose of the survey to ascertain the views of working parents. The continuity that location offers is referred to in terms of the progression from nursery to school and for future after-school clubs/ Summer /holiday clubs, as well as how long families have been using provision, to quote parents:

> *Simply local, hours are good, useful for future summer/holiday clubs, after school clubs*

> *My son was there while I was on a course and he was used to everyone so I continued him going there.*

> *The staff have all been there for a number of years giving my child continuity and routine.*

As well as the geographical position, location includes the context that the provision operates within. This influence primarily concerns whether the nursery is on a school site, or is part of a children's centre, compared to stand-alone private or voluntary provision. This aspect of location may be related to parents' perceptions of quality,

which are also expressed in the additional comments parents made at the end of the questionnaire.

Although parents commented on the location in relation to their needs as working parents the needs of their children were also factors influencing choice. These included health, safety and education aspects, with staff identified by several parents, as being influential on choice. The factors relating to quality will be presented in the next section.

3. Quality Domain – The factors relating to quality are influenced by items in the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales – Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms et al., 2005). These include human resources, such as staff knowledge, skills and competencies, represented by staff qualifications, attitudes and behaviour; as well as physical resources (toys and equipment), the building and outside play area (Figure 7).

Figure 7
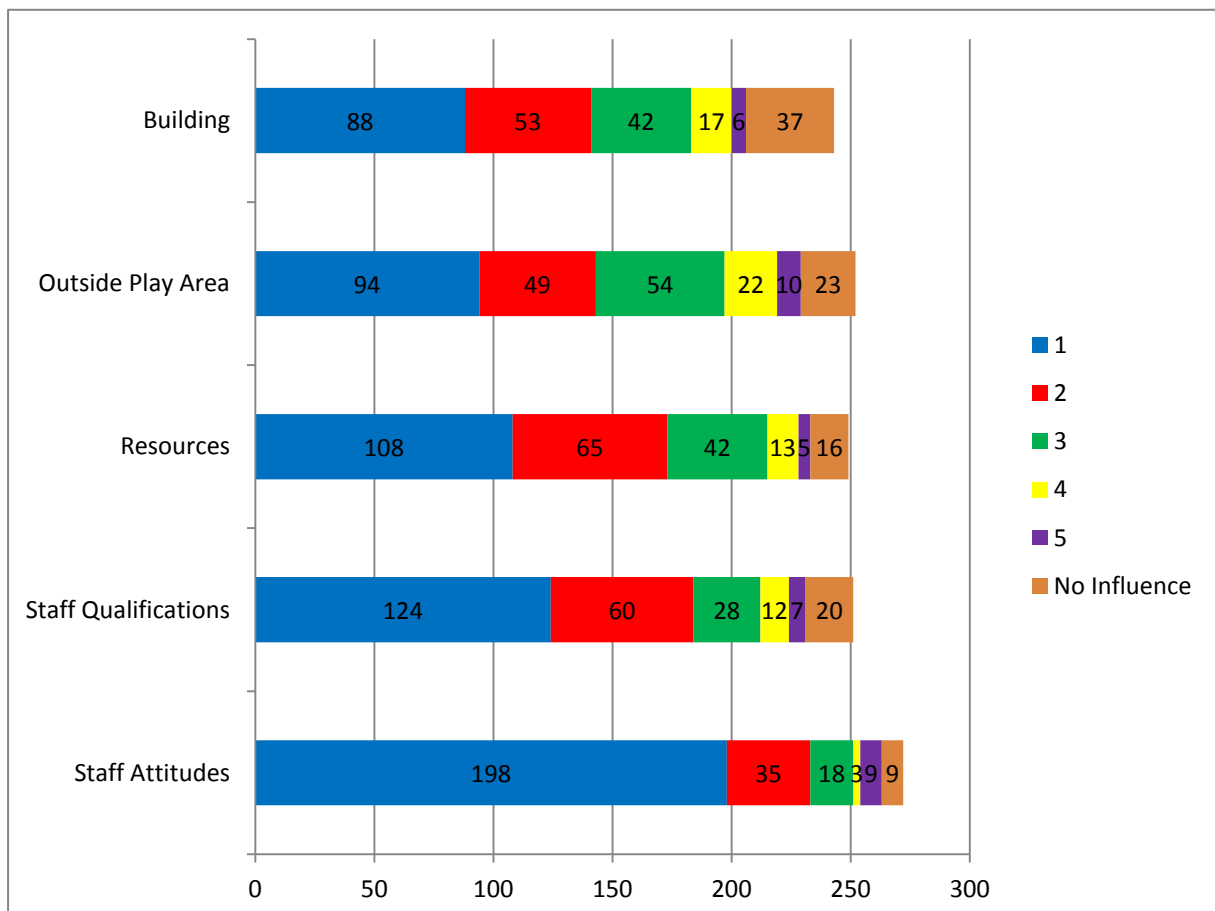
Third Domain – Quality Factors

Figure 7 shows that 198 or 63% of respondents selected Staff Attitudes and Behaviour as of high importance when choosing provision. With 272 or 84% of respondents identifying them as having some influence overall. Staff Qualifications were of high importance for 39% of respondents, with 74% identifying them as having some influence overall .Resources were of high importance for 35% of respondents, with 74% identifying them as having some influence overall.The Outside Play Area was of high importance for 30% of respondents, with 73% identifying them as having some influence overall. Finally the Building was of high importance for 43% of respondents, with 65% identifying them as having some influence overall. Staff attitudes and behaviour were of low importance to less than 4% of respondents, with 8% rating staff qualifications, 6% rating resources, 9% rating the outside play area and 15% rating the building, as of low importance. The same factors apply as those noted in the first domain, not all respondents ticked every box on the 1-5 factors identified, neither did they tick the 'No Influence' box.

Within the qualitative data, the importance of staff competencies is reflected in range of comments relating to preparing the child for school; the significant impact the pre-school provision has had on the child's development; parents wanting their child to learn at an early age; children being well cared for and, for a child with medical conditions, that they were safe.

Although Ofsted Reports were not included in the researcher determined categories parents did refer to good and excellent Ofsted Reports. Additional to specific reference to Ofsted, education standards were identified by parents as being influential on choice. This included reference to a specific pedagogical approach:

> *We wanted a Reggio Emilia approach and this setting was offered as a good example of this.*

> *To help prepare my child for primary school which is on the same site.*

> *A further reason is due to the standard of education provided by the nursery in terms of Early Years education.*

As well as continuity and access to early education being important influences on choice parents also referred to care and learning standards in the additional

comments made at the end of the questionnaire. These comments are presented in the next section.

Additional Comments

Out of a possible 313 respondents 95 parents (30%), across 41 settings (57%), made further comments (Table 3). Of these 54 parents (57%) made positive comments about the care and early learning that their child/ren experienced, 6 made positive comments specifically about the staff, 2 about the benefit of funded places and 1 about the management of her child's food allergy.

The other comments that were made were particularly negative about the learning experiences within the nurseries, with 17 parents (18%) complaining about children being bored and frustrated and not being prepared for school. Most of these complaints related to older children, those about to be four or five years of age. Other negative comments related to staff (4), food (5), safety issues (2) and provision of information (3).

Table 3

	Positive			Negative	
Care and Learning	54	57%	Care and Learning	18	19%
Staff	6	6%	Staff	3	3%
Free Places	2	2%	Costs	5	5%
Food	1	1%	Food	1	1%
			Safety	2	2%
			Information	3	3%

Analysis of Additional Comments

Overall parents were positive about care and learning, for example:

> *I am really happy with their care and learning because my son wasn't speaking properly. He is very active but with staff support he is trying to make*

words and sentences. He says few songs and rhymes, he is learning a lot. I am satisfied with this nursery.

However there were also negative comments about children's care and learning:

When a child has a dirty face or is upset I wish the staff instead of brushing them off would give them the attention. When walking through the nursery seeing the babies crying and staff engaged in conversation frustrates me. I also understand you have guidelines to follow etc, I feel sometimes the kids are not encouraged enough, for example lunchtime, sit with the children and help them instead of rushing them.

My child has a nice time generally and I have no concerns about her academic ability. I am never informed of areas of learning my child is working on or made aware of topics / projects. She never has things to do at home or books to borrow. Other friends who use nurseries are made aware of this and are then able to support their child at home. The paperwork is not kept up to date and does not reflect my child's ability. My child is cared for but not stimulated to learn in a more formal way. Activities do not seem to be planned around a theme.

These comments from parents show that while the majority of parents who responded are happy with the quality of care and learning others are aware that standards are not acceptable. Why parents continue to use provision that is not to the standards they expect is unclear. My findings suggest that while there are many practical issues that influence parental choice of childcare the reasons for those choices are more complex and warrant further exploration. This leads into the next section on quality of early learning and care in terms of parents' levels of satisfaction and the relationship between their child's happiness (emotional well-being) and staff competencies. By considering the influence that these aspects have on parental choice, the relationship between the notion of personal choice and quality is explored.

4.3. Quality of Early Learning and Care

This section is structured around parents' levels of satisfaction with both learning and care aspects. The material is organised into three main parts: overall satisfaction, well-being and access to staff.

Research Question Three: What are parents' levels of satisfaction, with the quality of care and learning, in relation to their child's experiences of pre-school provision?

4.3.1 Overall Satisfaction

Parents were asked if overall, they were satisfied with the quality of the care and learning provided at the nursery. The figures show that the majority of parents were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied, collectively 98% for care and 90% for early learning (Figure 8).

Figure 8
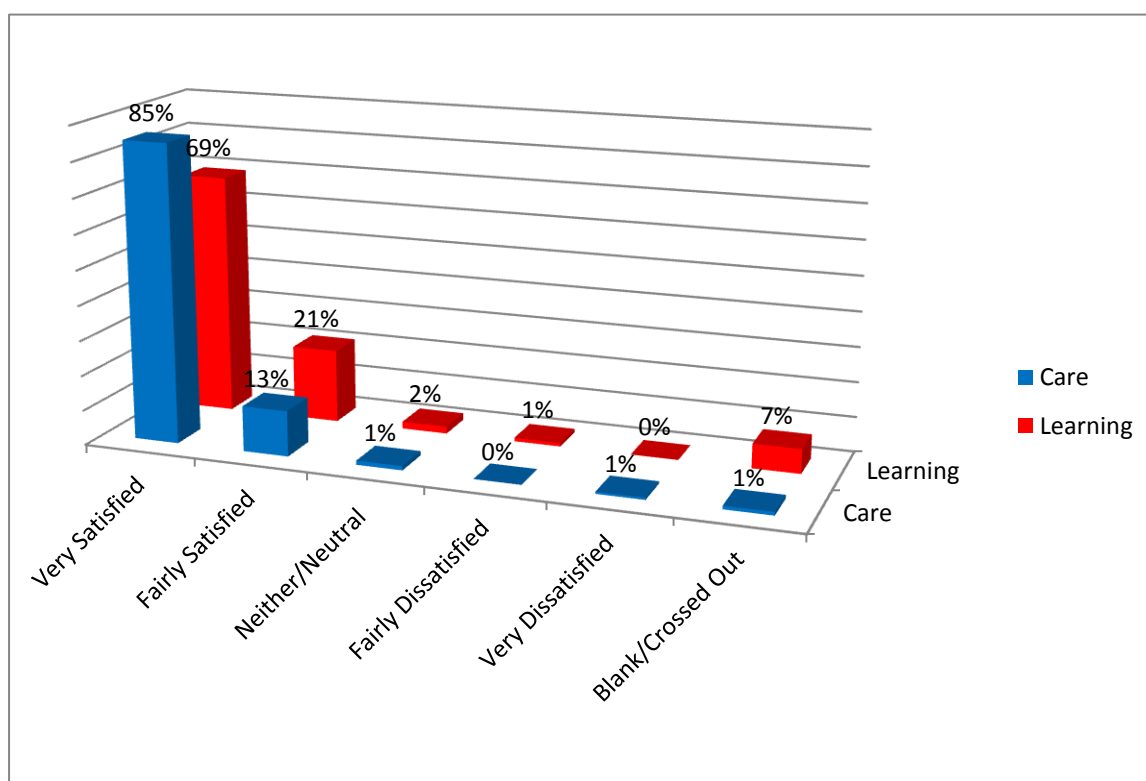
Satisfaction with Quality of Early Learning and Care

There are differences in the levels of satisfaction between care and learning, with fewer parents (69%) being 'very' satisfied with learning, compared to care (85%). However more parents (21%) were 'fairly' satisfied with learning, compared to care

(13%). Only 1% of parents were fairly dissatisfied with learning and 1% very dissatisfied with care. Although parents' experiences vary across the settings surveyed additional comments, at the end of the questionnaire, give an indication of their level of understanding and expectations regarding the quality of early education and care that their children access.

There were concerns raised about continuity and staff competencies and the impact these have on the quality of provision. This is reflected in these comments from parents who were dissatisfied with staffing changes, which they felt related to cost cutting:

> *I feel staff retention of highly qualified and experienced staff would have led me to ticking the very satisfied box, since their departure my child has different key carers and assessments have not been up to date. There has not been continuity in her care, compared to when she started there as a baby. The setting had very high standards when my child began there and I would like to see this level be achieved again.*

> *I think the nursery is very good but I do think that they got rid of some very good staff members and then replaced them with teenage girls who are not qualified to save money, I do understand that cuts have to be made, but I think the nursery was better when those staff members were there and once the teenage girls are qualified they will do the same to them because it's cheap labour.*

However when staff were competent parents' experiences were positive:

> *It is a worrying time when a parent has to rely on someone else to look after their child – the Day Nursery staff put our minds at rest immediately by their thoughtfulness, care and competency. They took our son and us through the process one step at a time; we are so impressed we are sending our second son to the nursery.*

4.3.2 Well-being

In order to consider the aspects of quality that influence not only parental choice but also continued use of provision, parents were asked if they felt that their children were happy to attend the nursery (See Appendix 2 - Question 10).

Of those who responded to the question, parents considered that 74% of children were always be happy to attend, 24% usually happy and 1% only sometimes happy. The reasons for this are reflected in the comments made in response to the question regarding what parents think affects their child's emotional well-being (being happy, sad, frustrated) when they are in nursery.

The importance of childrens' emotional well-being is reflected in the high number of comments made by parents. The comments show that parents have a good understanding of what their children experience at nursery, the value of attending, as well as the negative effects that formal childcare can have on childrens emotional well-being. Parents identified positive effects of childcare such as mixing with other children of all ages and backgrounds, positive relationships with staff and the facilities provided. While the negative effects of childcare included sadness and frustration when separated from parents and wanting to be collected by parents rather than grandparents.

> *Sad to see mummy kissing goodbye / frustrated at the concept of being left at nursery / happy while there and when picked up.*

> *Currently being collected by grandparents but would like me to collect more often which is not feasible given the hours operated.*

Consequently the results have been categorised into three themes in relation to early learning and care, as determined by the parents' comments. These are: - Personal, Social and Emotional development (PSE) (Figure 21), Learning and Activities (Figure 22) and Physical Care (Figure 23). These themes elaborate findings from the Quality Domain and will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Figure 9

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Parents view friends for their children as being of high importance for their PSE development (Figure 9). The importance of friends supports the findings from responses to the reasons why parents use the nursery, with 25% of respondents identifying social reasons for their child. This comment reflects parents' understanding of what impacts on childrens' emotional well-being:

The friendships they make with other children and staff and how they move through the stages with their friends makes sure they continue to be happy with their environment / The movement of staff could cause sadness when the child takes a particular liking to someone but as all staff are involved with children at start and end of day it helps enormously / The whole environment is a pleasurable experience and talked about at home so obviously works well (Private Sector provision.)

Staff friendliness and attitudes were important, based on interactions that are loving, caring and supportive. There is an emphasis on staff qualities rather than qualifications, which reflect the responses as to why parents chose their current childcare.

The importance of friends is set within the concept of learning, through the activities provided and children's level of engagement, which leads to the second theme relating to the learning and activities that children experienced in the nursery.

The analysis of word frequency (Figure 10) shows parents consider that the type, range and variety of activities available to their children are of high importance for their child's emotional well-being. Parents were aware that children are happy when there are lots of different activities available and frustrated when there are not. This understanding of the need for stimulating and interesting activities is evident in parents' responses. However parents' descriptions, as in the purpose of activities, varied from keeping children entertained or occupied to having a more structured approach to learning that is varied and stimulating.

These contrasting views are exemplified in the following comments made by parents.

New activities to keep them entertained.
My child is happy when she has lots of different activities to do at nursery to keep her occupied.

Frustrated by lack of more structured learning, at almost 5 yrs of age she is ready for school.

This nursery has provided emotional, mental and physical stimulation by providing varied occupational interests through the day - happy days.

Figure 10

Activities for Effective Learning

There were both negative and positive comments from parents:

> *As my child gets older she is frustrated and says she is bored, nursery does not seem to challenge her enough.*

> *I am very happy with my child's pre-school; they provide a varied range of activities for her to take part in. She really enjoys attending and has lots of friends. Her confidence has grown as has her knowledge of numbers and sounds. The nursery involve us in her care by inviting parents to 1:1 parent*

*meetings, sending home what I did at the weekend sheets, sending the
preschool teddy home for weekends and sending numbers and letter sounds
home to practice. We really appreciate that they want us to be involved.*

*My son is happy with the different toys available inside and how there are
different areas to play / My son is happy with the outside area where he loves
to play on the bikes and scooters / My son is happy with the extra activities
such as the walks to shops etc, which he loves to tell me about, and he
always remembers the places when we pass them.*

The importance of the environment both indoors and outdoors is reflected in
comments and adds to the factors that parents indentified as influencing their choice
of provision. These influences are evident in the third theme which relates to
children's physical care, with parents again placing high importance on the
environment. (Figure 11)

Figure 11

Physical Care

Comments show a level of understanding of what affects their child's well-being in
terms of physical care and experiences. Mealtimes were deemed important both
socially and nutritionally as well as considerations related to sleeping, toileting and

general safety. The environment, particularly outdoor play, is a key aspect of parents understanding of what affected their child's well-being.

Comments from parents:

> *They are usually very happy as the key workers provide a good environment for them both indoors and outdoors.*

> *My child is also happy when they get to play outside in the garden with all the outside toys and her friends.*

The importance of child rearing practices is evident in the comments about food, toileting, sleep, safety and cleanliness, for example:

> *I do think the quality of food is very important. At this nursery the food is the best I have seen at a nursery, but even there are days when they have chicken nuggets, pizzas and other processed foods. My daughter's previous nursery was worse in terms of food and even took her to McDonalds on a trip.*

> *My 1st child has a very serious egg allergy, the staff at preschool always ensure my child doesn't come into contact with egg products and I'm confident that if he should have an allergic reaction they would be able to deal with it safely and quickly which gives me an enormous confidence in his safety whilst there. The staff have also tried to explain to the other children the dangers of my child eating eggs which helps him feel less excluded and obviously cuts down on risk.*

The importance of care, both emotional and physical is reflected in comments across all three aspects of emotional well-being. The importance of parental engagement is evident, with relationships and communication key to parents' negative and positive experiences. How staff relate to parents and how parents perceive staff are key elements in effective communication. The next section considers if parents feel staff are approachable and competent in their role (Figure 12).

4.3.3. Access to Staff

The majority of parents who responded to Question 11(258) (See Appendix 2) considered all staff approachable, with some (48) considering most staff approachable. Very few parents (3) stated that only a few staff were approachable. The majority of parents (224) considered all staff as being competent, with others (48) considering most staff competent. Very few parents (4) considered only a few staff as competent. Overall 11% (41) made no response to the question.

Figure 12
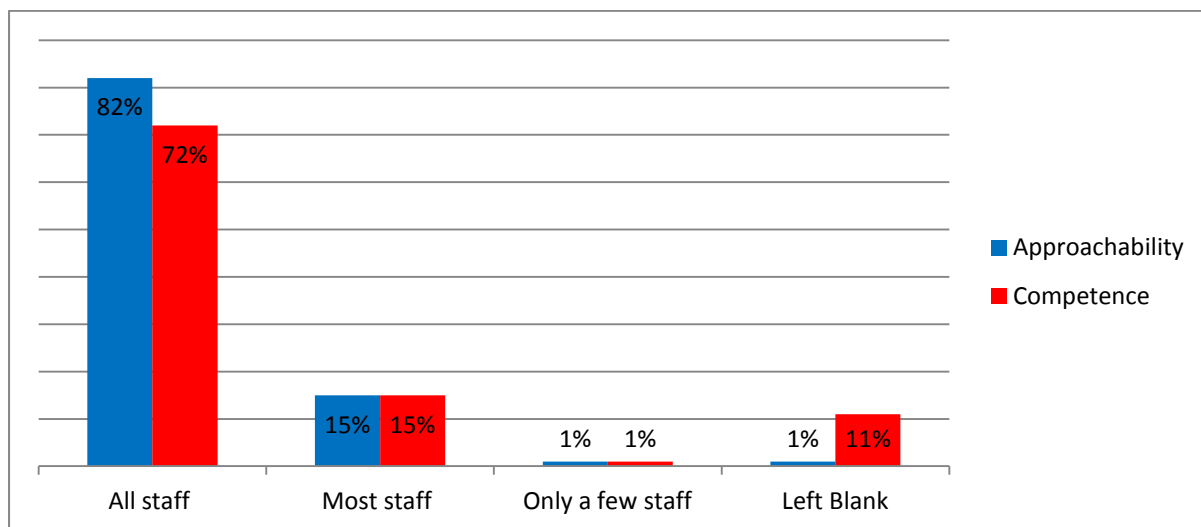
Approachability and Competency of Staff

Parents were asked to comment on their answers to Question 11, responses are both positive and negative, as expressed in the following Wordles (Figures 13, 14, 15, 16).

The positive comments made by parents (Figure 13) show the importance placed on staff being approachable. That staff are friendly, helpful, supportive and caring has a direct impact on children and parental involvement and engagement.

Figure 13
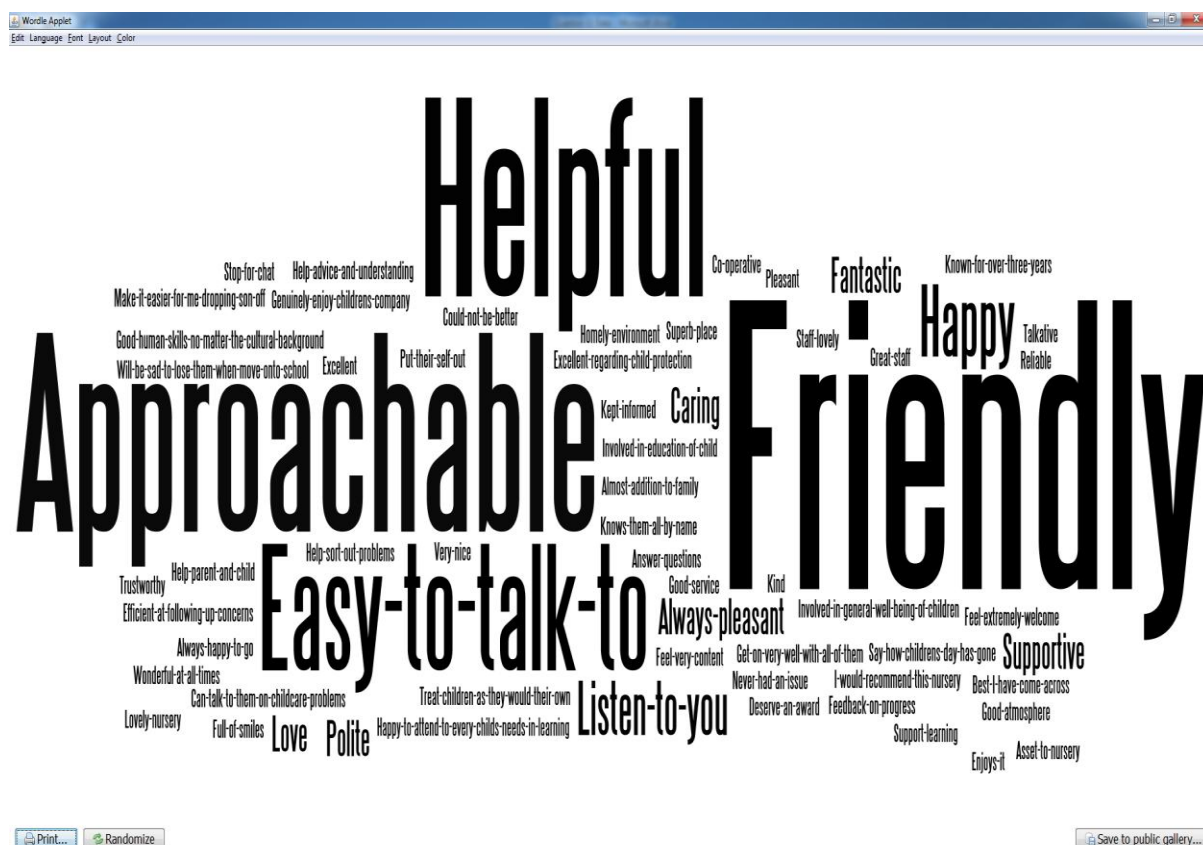
Approachable - Positive Comments

Parents mention that staff are approachable and easy to talk to with exchange of information at the centre of relationship building for parents and children.

For example:

> I can always approach the staff at the beginning and end of the session for help and advice or make an appointment to speak to them. They involve me in the education of my child and their life in the nursery.

> Being a first time mum I found it difficult to transcend in trusting others with my child. The girls have shown me I have nothing to worry about, I needed security and I received that.

The negative comments (Figure 14) reflect the difficulties that arise when staff are less approachable. Dissatisfaction arises from not knowing who staff are, with lack of information sharing impacting on relationship building.

For example:

> *You tend not to be introduced to staff and there are lots of them so you don't always know the names of those looking after your child.*

> *Some staff who do not work with my daughter seem less approachable but may be due to the fact that we have not yet built up a relationship with these workers.*

Figure 14

Approachable - Negative Comments

The positive comments made by parents (Figure 15) reflect a range of measures that they use to judge staff competency. These include staff knowledge, commitment, organisation, teaching, care and communication. The quality of the relationships staff have with parents and children appear to influence parents perceptions of

competence. Overall the friendliness and helpfulness of staff engenders confidence and faith in parents that provision will meet the needs of their children.

For example:

> *The staff are wonderful, my daughter has really come on and her behaviour has improved since starting nursery. Staff work hard and their work pays off when we see our children and their achievements.*

> *Staff are always very helpful and knowledgeable. They always make us feel at ease. My child adores them especially her key worker.*

> *Staff at first were not ready to deal with him because of his tube, but now a care plan is in place and staff are brilliant.*

Figure 15

Competence - Positive Comments

Negative comments by parents regarding the competency of staff (Figure 16) show that lack of continuity affects parents' relationship with staff, especially when staff are young and lack confidence. It is clear that parents have certain expectations regarding food, cleanliness, personal presentation and information sharing.

Feel that the nursery has a high staff turnover and not due to maternity reasons, which is concerning for continuity.

Since the cook left last year I do not feel that staff are competent to cook fresh, quality meals, they are not trained to do so and have no time for this to be included in their daily duties.

Sometimes things are forgotten, you have to remind staff.

Figure 16
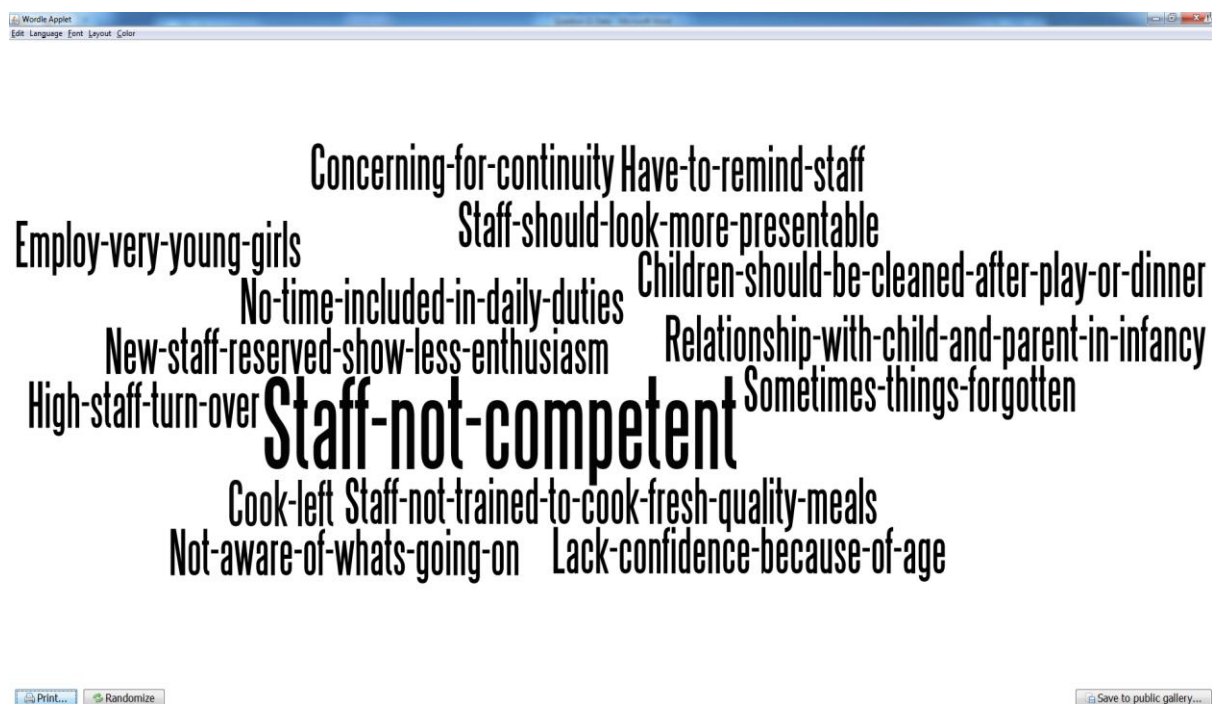
Competence - Negative Comments

The importance of parental engagement is clear from comments regarding staff being approachable and competent. The next section considers parental engagement from the concepts of consumerism and partnership.

4.4. Parental Engagement

This section considers parental engagement and has been organised into two main parts: engagement and partnership. First of all parents are considered as consumers in respect of meeting their needs and handling of complaints. Secondly as partners, making suggestions and being involved in the management of provision.

Research Question Four: What are parents' levels of engagement and involvement in the pre-school provision they have chosen to use?

4.4.1. Parents as Consumers

Parents were asked if the nursery met their needs and the options given where:

Yes/ Wholly, No, Partly, Mostly

Figure 17
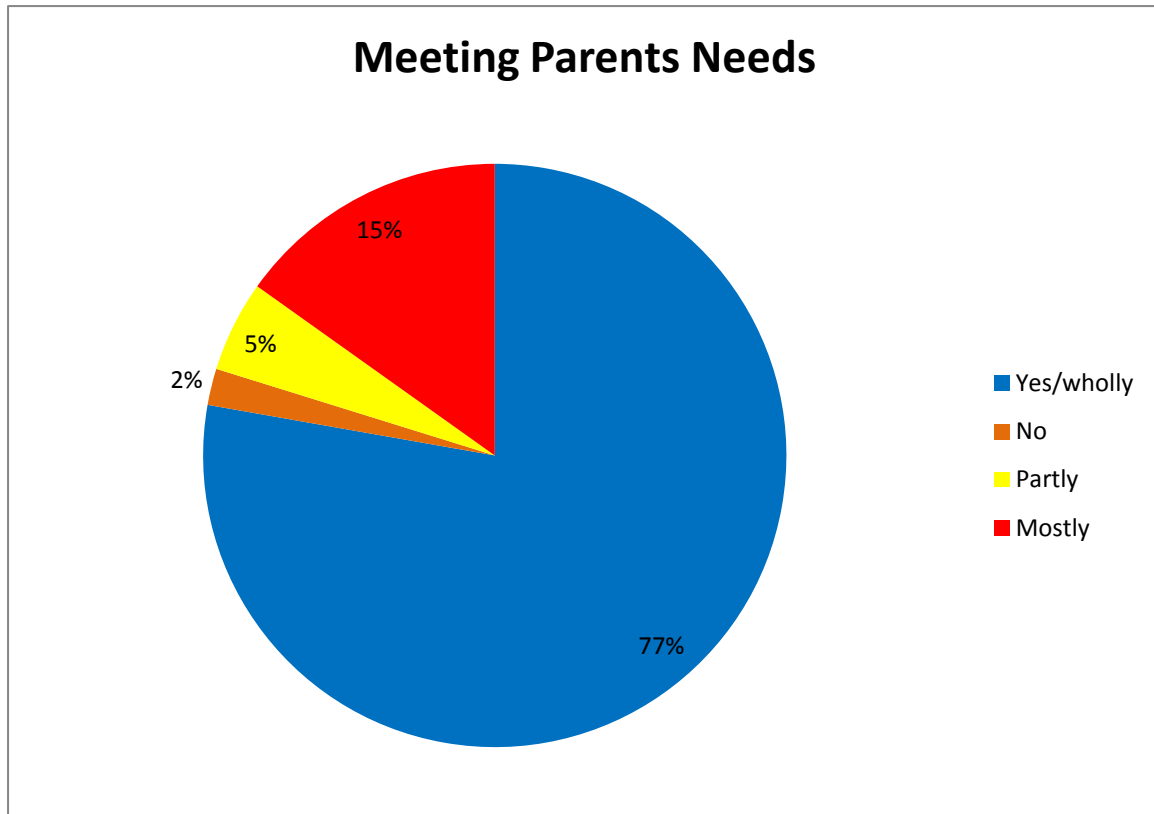
Parents were then asked to comment on how their needs could be better met (Figure 18).

Figure 18
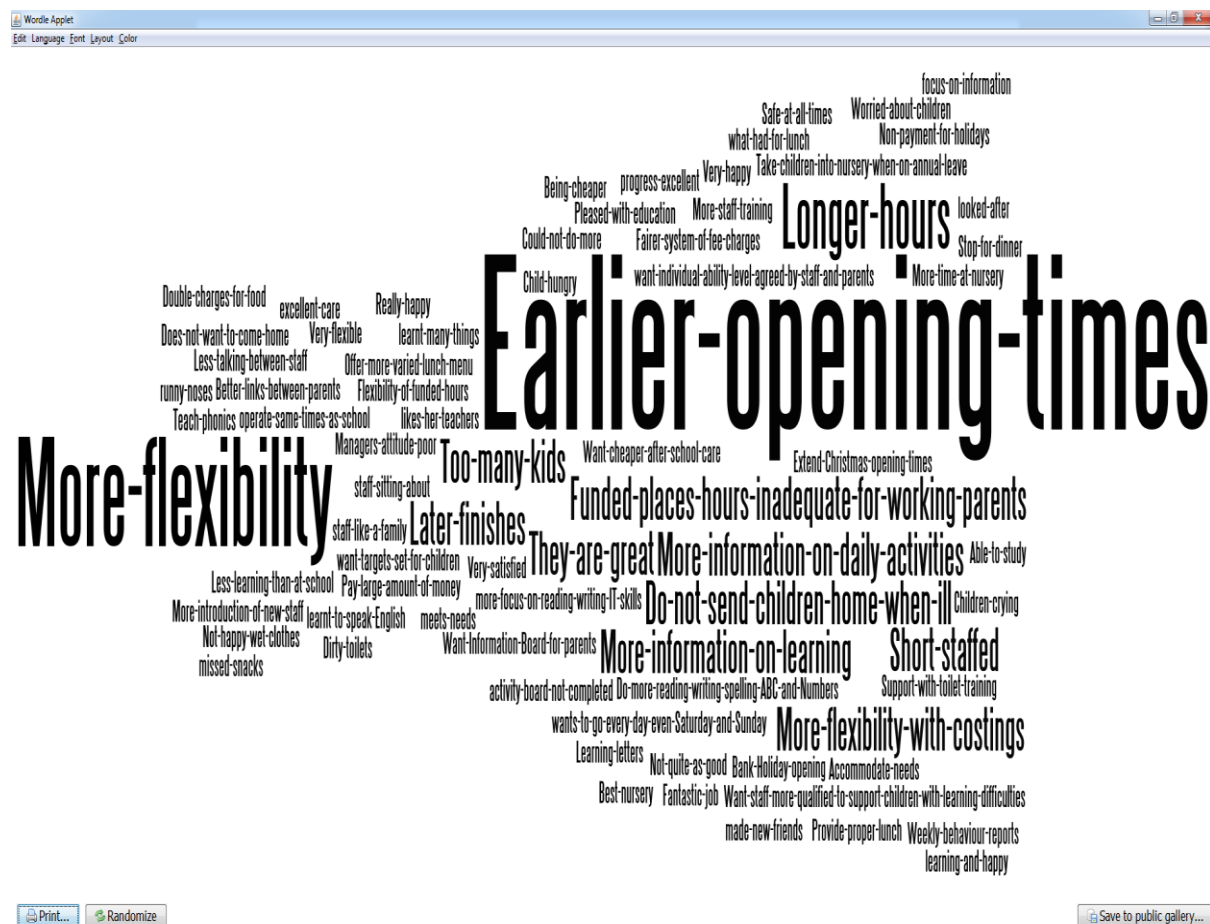
Parents' Comments on Meeting their Needs

Comments made by 90 parents (29%) have been categorised and standardised in order to analyse word frequency. Numbers of parents responding in each category are - opening hours and flexibility 26 (29%), happy consumers 10 (11%), cost 9 (10%) and quality factors 23 (25%). Only one comment was totally positive regarding quality. This was in relation to 37 nurseries which equates to more than 50% of the provision represented in the survey.

 28% of parents thought their needs could be better met with extended hours and more flexibility, in relation to working parents and fee structures, 25% of parents raised issues about the quality of the provision for their children.

Parents were asked if they had reason to complain about any aspect of the nursery. If they had complained they were then asked how satisfied they had been with how the complaint had been handled. From the responses 40 (13%) of parents had

complained, with over 50% being satisfied with how the complaint had been handled and the rest, apart from 1 parent, being partly satisfied with the outcome.

If parents had been only partly or not at all satisfied they were asked to comment on why they were not completely satisfied and how they thought the complaint could have been better handled. Twenty parents responded as follows (Figure 19).

Figure 19
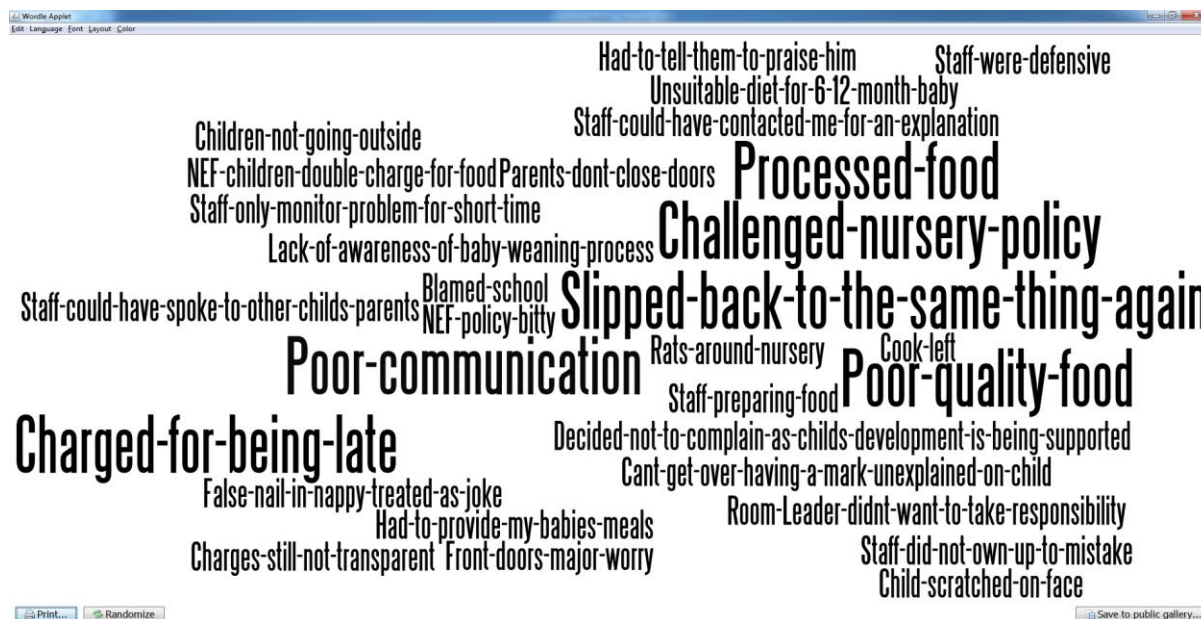
Parents' Complaints

The comments show that parents complained about a number of safety issues, cost issues and the actions and attitudes of staff. The issue around parents' expectations of food is exemplified in these two comments:

> *I raised a concern at the nutritional value and quality of the food since the cook left, I was informed she wouldn't be replaced due to money reasons, staff who care for the children seem to be preparing food which is not of the same quality and is more processed than fresh. A typical tea for example may be fish fingers, spaghetti hoops which I do not feel constitutes a balanced meal. I have opted to send my child with packed lunches as no changes have been made as a result of my concern.*

> *I complained when my daughter was a baby that she was being given unsuitable processed foods (pureed fish finger / arctic roll) I requested she*

> *was fed unprocessed foods only (veg, meat and fruit) but found not all staff had had this communicated to them and unsuitable food was still given. Ultimately ended up having to cook and provide her meals myself, but felt this could have been avoided if communication was better and staff had had more awareness of baby weaning process & suitable diet for a 6-12 month baby.*

One reason given for not making a complaint is an overall satisfaction with the child's progress.

> *Have had reason to complain but chose not to as the main reason for nursery is to develop his social development and independence and I feel that is being supported.*

Some expressed the view that, even though they had complained things had 'slipped back' to how they were before.

> *Staff only monitor problem for short period of time.*

> *Term dates and change of dates for attendance/ closure of the nursery are often handed out last minute, having a knock on effect for parents working or have already made commitments - then have to find childcare.*

No parents commented on the role or involvement of Ofsted or if they had considered removing their child from the provision following an unsatisfactory outcome of their complaint. Consideration of parents as consumers, as a means of driving up quality, will be contrasted with parents as partners in the next section.

4.4.2. Parents as Partners

Parents were asked if they had made any suggestions to the nursery regarding any aspect of the service. Only 20 (6%) of parents had made suggestions, with 10 (50%) identifying that their suggestions had been acted upon. Among parents who had replied 'no' or 'partly' when asked if they thought there had been a valid reason for this, only two said 'yes'.

Comments show that over half of the suggestions made were actually complaints. These included having to pay for Bank Holidays, and being charged for food; lack of opportunity for children to play outside or go on outings and a safety issue regarding pushchairs being stored in the hallway.

The parents complaining about Bank Holiday charges had referred their complaint to the LA administrator for the EFO; although the LA has no jurisdiction over fees there is a legal requirement for the 15 hours entitlement to be free. The charges made for food and additional hours can constitute 'top-up-fees' when providers experience a short-fall between the government funding and actual running costs. Parents who require extra hours because they are working, including meals for their children, do complain that they are not receiving the free entitlement as they are being charged more to compensate for any short-fall.

The level of dissatisfaction with staff not utilising resources is reflected in this comment:

> *Nursery were lucky enough to win a grant last summer to renovate the existing garden, it is a beautiful space now for all children to play in, it has different all weather areas, however I feel it is completely under used and on many occasions my child does not get to play outside.*

The actual suggestions parents made related to practical issues such as a rota for staff to answer the door and dietary concerns, as well as the revision of nursery policy.

For example:

> *Healthy diet has always been my main concern. I have indicated to the nursery that I felt this could be improved (the children receive mostly processed food with very little fresh fruit and veg but it has not been acted upon. I can only assume this is due to cost as meals provided are low cost / cheap ones usually same products / ingredients.*

However this comment shows that parents can influence changes by working in partnership with staff.

> *After a meeting with nursery manager and head teacher they revised part of their policy with regards to children accessing an NEF place. A cover letter is now attached for school children.*

Parents were asked if they were involved in the support, management or delivery of any aspect of the nursery. Examples given were fund raising, management

committee, member of staff or volunteer or member of parents' forum. Of the 313 parents who responded only 22 (7%) said yes. Parents were then asked to explain how they were involved with the nursery (Figure 20) or, if they had said no, why they were not involved.

Figure 20

Parental Involvement

The most common reason for parents being involved was fund raising through involvement with committees or forums. Reasons given for not being involved included: lack of time or loss of interest because of the belief that the nursery does not work in partnership with parents.

For example:

> *Don't know of parent forum and lack of time.*

> *Until recently I was working full time and did not have anything to participate.*

> *Have lost all interest in the nursery and do not believe that it acts fairly or in partnership with parents, I am removing my child from the nursery setting as a result.*

The last comment is the only example of a parent taking action following dissatisfaction with the provision. I will discuss the key themes and points arising from the findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

The overall aim of this study was to consider the factors that influence parental choice of early education and care in order to explore the relationship between the notion of personal choice and quality. This chapter will outline how the research outcomes can contribute to generating further understanding of how parents can be effectively involved in improving the quality of early education and care.

Research Question One: What information do parents use when making choices about early education and childcare provision for their pre-school children?

Research Question Two: What are the main influences on parental choice of early education and care in an area with high levels of deprivation?

Theme One: The Benefits of 'Local and Known'

Location, the 'local and known' is the main influence on choice of early education and care. The influence of location related to personal knowledge of the area and the provision available, through personal history, such as attending the local school, having other children at the school or having used the same provision before. There were also parents who had personal experience from working in the nurseries or children centres.

Although parents' identified the internet as a main source of information the use of 'word-of-mouth' information sharing was clearly evident.

Locality has been considered in a negative light, in that family income and parents' education influence choice of childcare, resulting in families being less likely to access good quality care (Cryer and Burchinal, 1997; Torquati et al., 2011). However, location is open to a more positive interpretation as it may relate to parental engagement (Bryson et al., 2006) and involvement within their community (Vincent et al., 2010). Parents are aware of the choices available and are influenced by access, staffing, continuity and the needs of siblings as well as the benefits of children being cared for in their local community.

In making a choice, parents also visited settings and talked to the staff. The connection with staff, and the role and impact of the Key Person (Elfer et al., 2003), were important.

Knowledge about the benefits of early education may be reflected in the parents' expectations of staff regarding assessment of their children's needs and abilities. Parents gave priority to staff attitudes and behaviour ,with less emphasis on qualifications, contrary to Government policy (DfES, 2006b).

Socialisation of the child was important and is also related to location with the local and known, in providing the stability of continuity of care, also associated with good educational standards. Rather than cost and location marginalising parents in less affluent areas, as suggested elsewhere (Cryer and Burchinal, 1997; Vincent et al., 2010), this study suggests that few parents reported they had no choice, a factor which may reflect increased provision over the last 15 years, especially NNI's and Sure Start Children Centres (SSCCs) established in deprived areas.

By surveying all parents who chose to take up the free entitlement to early education in the non-maintained sectors the focus has been on parents using provision in areas with high levels of deprivation, rather than focusing on 'disadvantaged' groups of parents. I feel this approach has reduced bias and enables the results of the survey to be considered from the perspective of how personal choice reflects on and influences quality, rather than social class differences.

Cost may begin to matter more for low-income families in work (Daycare Trust, 2011; Family and Childcare Trust, 2013) and, certainly US studies show cost being a deciding factor in choice. The economic circumstances of parents have also been the focus of previous research in the US, with cost of childcare being a deciding factor in choice (Shlay et al., 2005).

Although childcare is not fully funded in the UK the subsidies through NEF and 2yr olds' funding are important. The free entitlement allows parents to access early education integrated with childcare, giving more flexibility and reducing costs. Although parents considered the free entitlement a major influence on their choice of provision, the study shows that the needs of working parents could be better met with earlier opening hours and more flexibility with attendance and fee structures.

The data also reflects the dichotomy (Daycare Trust, 2009; Waldegrave and Lee, 2013) between providers being able to offer 'free' places, which the hourly rate for NEF does not always cover, and parents being able to afford the additional costs to cover the hours they work. If costs are to be kept low, staff need to be lower paid resulting in less experienced staff with lower qualifications (Mathers et al., 2012; Mathers and Smees, 2014), a circumstance commented upon by parents noting replacement of qualified and experienced staff with young trainees. Even here, cost was less of an issue than concern in the abilities of those young staff to meet the needs of the children and communicate effectively with parents.

On cost influences, parents placed greatest importance on the funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds with only 5% making additional negative comments, about costs, which related to the additional charges for funded hours, late collection and food.

 The data indicates that factors that influence parental choice not only relate to cost and locality but also the quality of provision, and is reflective of the literature (Fuqua and Schieck, 1989; Harrist et al., 2007; Katz, 1993; Noble, 2005; Zellman and Perlman, 2006). Geographical convenience is also supported by the type of environment that parents consider as suitable to meet the child's needs, with access and continuity influential on their choice.

Research Question Three: What are parents' perspectives on the quality of early education and care in relation to their child's experiences at nursery?

Theme Two: The Happy Child

Parents' comments on quality and their child's emotional well-being overwhelmingly referred to their child's happiness, defining what they understood influenced happiness, sadness or frustration. Happiness has been linked with children being successful which is a key objective of government funding to close the gap in children's attainment levels (Sylva et al., 2010). Practitioners' definition of the successful child considers success to be based on how happy the child is within the pre-school environment (Alexander, 2010). While in schools practitioners defined success by conformity, in the integrated care settings success is defined by the child's ability to be an independent learner. Alexander's findings are reflected in parents' comments, with most wanting their child to be independent learners

choosing activities they enjoy both indoors and outdoors, although some wanted a more formal structure in preparation for school.

There were clear indications that, for these respondents, quality meant friends and friendships with activities and physical care also being important.

The data provides an insight as to the knowledge of parents (Hughes and MacNaughton, 2000) with quality, represented by human and physical resources, as an important factor in parental choice. Parents' perceptions of quality mirrored those of professionals based on experience, not preferences, as in Shlays' study (Shlay et al., 2005).

Parents' concept of happiness is influenced by friendships and the friendliness of staff, so that quality is defined by social interactions rather than a standardised, externally-regulated and qualification-led model (Dahlberg, 2007). The social interactions with staff form the basis of parental involvement and satisfaction, which is discussed in the next section.

Research Question Four: What are parents' levels of engagement and involvement in the provision they choose to use for their child's free entitlement to 15 hours of early education?

Theme Three: Parent Power

The main engagement with parents takes place at the start and the end of the day and its success depends on having access to approachable and competent staff. Sometimes parents felt they had little control over staff behaviours and attitudes.

Viewing parents as consumers, how complaints were dealt with may reflect their influence on service quality. Complaints about food reflected concerns about healthy eating, with the poor quality being attributed to cost cutting. Parents also expressed dissatisfaction with the range and access to activities, especially outdoor play, which are quality factors assessed by Ofsted and ECERS audits (Harms et al., 2005). However, parents' comments reflected a feeling of having little long term influence on changing practice.

Viewing parents as partners may be reflected in the response to suggestions. Greenway (Greenway, 2011) suggested this communication is influential on the

quality of provision. Parents made practical suggestions but felt these were not always acted upon.

Those parents who do have time to participate by attending Parent Forums and Management Committees are mainly involved in fund-raising activities. This could be interpreted as having no influence on delivery aspects although, if funds provide resources and activities, this can be considered as contributing to the quality of the provision. Limits to parents' involvement arise from the demands of work, home and family commitments.

Whether viewing parents as consumers drives up quality has to be understood in the context of growth in childcare provision and heightened awareness of choice; this may create greater competition, a change which could benefit parents and children if it raises expectations and then drives up quality.

These aspects are reflected in parents' comments:

> My daughter used to go to the [previous provider] who were not able to do NEF funding therefore I got more and better childcare for slightly less money.

> Visited 3 other local nurseries but none came close to [current provision].

> Have lost all interest in the nursery and I do not believe it acts fairly or in partnership with parents, I am moving my child from the nursery setting as a result.

5.1. Conclusion

In this final section I will consider the implications of the findings relating to the factors that influence parental choice: access to information; aspects of quality; and parental engagement. I will also consider their contribution to knowledge and potential for further study.

Parents' choice of early education and childcare is not determined by one factor, although location and reputation is of greatest importance. As well as the physical aspects of location, what is known locally about provision by family and friends and the wider community is influential. The study shows that accessing informal networks

such as friends, neighbours or family was the most likely way that parents found out about nurseries and therefore was an influential factor on choice.

Decisions are made based on both practical considerations, reflecting the pressures of parents' family and work commitments, and on the requirement for care and educational standards that meet parents' expectations for their children. This is in the context of the 'here and now' but also with consideration for their child's progression through the education system and the future childcare needs of working parents.

Parents value the socialisation of their children, viewing friendships, activities and physical care as affecting their child's well-being. The friendships children make at pre-school, and the friendliness of staff towards parents and children, are highly valued. On a practical level, communication skills are a key influence on parents' perceptions of competence and approachability, more so than staff qualifications.

Parents acknowledge the pre-school environment and access to outdoor play as having an impact on children's well-being and influencing parent's impressions of quality. The care of children, as in eating and sleeping, are key aspects of parental satisfaction or complaints and the importance of the children's activities and their need for stimulation and variety are highlighted as affecting their child's well-being or happiness. Parents in this study primarily defined happiness as having friends, caring staff and stimulating environments.

The free entitlement is valued by parents, improving access and reducing costs. There is, however, a short-fall in opening hours, flexibility and covering the full cost of high quality early education. There is still more that the Government can do to support parents regarding the use of formal childcare, this could be by ensuring the true cost of the free entitlement is reflected in the funding allocated. However, unlike the Third Sector (Denney et al., 2007) there is no policy decision to ensure that all NEF providers are entitled to full cost recovery on places. The allocation of funding sits with the Schools Forum, rather than Commissioning, based on the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) (House of Commons, 2010a). This has provided a minimum funding guarantee; with the aim of improving fairness and transparency in the way that funding is allocated to providers, with more consistent funding arrangements for the maintained and non-maintained sectors. Although the underlying principles of the EYSFF are sound parents still face additional charges to

cover shortfalls and providers face inequalities in being able to recruit and retain experienced, qualified staff. In reality this means that there are still inequalities between the maintained and non-maintained sectors and the different types of provision.

In order to address inequalities, additional funding is more likely to be through the universal credit system or tax relief, to make childcare more affordable for low income families, rather than a universal increase in NEF. There is also the option of increasing the free entitlement from 15 to 25 hours; however, this would not address the issue of the shortfall between full cost recovery and the EYSFF.

There has already been a call for the introduction of a long-term strategy to support families on low incomes (4Children, 2014) and the Coalition Government is planning to differentiate between disadvantaged areas and those in more affluent areas by extending the pupil premium to early years (McCardle, 2014). The implication for increasing funding is that early education would have to be valued as much, if not more, than any other stage of education and while this is professed to be the case, the experience of parents differs from the rhetoric.

A clear implication of the findings of this study is the need to support practitioners in developing their understanding of consumerism, as a way of improving the quality of childcare provision, particularly in areas with high levels of deprivation. This can help legitimise parents as equal partners, regardless of social class, in contributing to the improvement of quality within the social context of the services they use.

In considering the notion of consumerism in relation to quality, parental engagement and involvement provide the framework for everyone to work on a preventative rather than interventionist approach to address inequalities through early education and care. The first step towards achieving this is to enable parents to access information about the quality of early education and care, what they need to be aware of, what they need to ask and advice on how to voice their opinions and express their hopes, needs and concerns. What is local and know has a major influence on parental choice and the growing use of technology has a key role in joining together the fractured information market for families. The findings from this and other related research could be used as the basis for initial training and continuing staff development , raising practitioners' awareness of what it is that

parents look for and what they value, as well as informing LA staff of what information parent's value and how they prefer to access that information.

In order to use this information to support the 'co-construction' (Cottle and Alexander, 2013; Dahlberg, 2007) of high quality early education and care, access to staff is fundamental to the involvement of parents and the improvement of the quality of pre-school provision. This can ensure an exchange of information but more than that it can help build relationships based on trust and co-operation. Effective communication provides the basis for child-rearing environments that meet the needs of parents but more importantly provide children with the cognitive, emotional, social and physical stimuli required for high quality care and education.

This small scale study has enabled parents to have a voice and has enabled me to reflect on my changing positionality in the field of early childhood studies. I have considered the future possibilities to disseminate my findings, both for my own personal and professional development but more importantly to support parents and practitioners to achieve better outcomes for children. This study hopefully adds to the research base on what influences parental choice and specifically their understanding of what constitutes high quality care and education. Understanding and responding to these influences can help re-shape provision so that it more effectively meets needs and improves quality.

I do not presume to have identified all the issues that parents face in choosing childcare, acknowledging that the use of questionnaires only provide a baseline from which to work. The management of data has been a key issue in terms of both volume and analysis. The tensions between quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection have tested my ontological and epistemological standpoints, especially in making decisions about which of the two should precede the other during the study. There is a balance to be achieved in wanting to produce a thesis but also wanting to support the practical application of research into the daily lives of children, families and practitioners.

6. List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form

Appendix 2: Questionnaire Survey

Appendix 3: Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Questionnaire

Appendix 4: Overview of the Users and their Circumstances

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Appendix 1

Date:	13th May 2010
Please ask for:	Lynn Beckett
Telephone No:	▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Dear Parent/Carers

I am writing to invite you and your child to take part in a research project that is going to be carried out as part of ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The Family Information Service would like to know what parents of 2, 3 and 4 yr olds think about the quality of early years provision in the borough. A summary of the findings will be published as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Annual Review, available on the council website and in hard copy by request.

With your permission the data collected will also be used as part of a doctoral research project through the University of Birmingham. As data will include ages of children, ethnicity, gender and any identified special needs, I need parental consent to use the data as part of my research. This means I will refer to it as part of my thesis, and for academic papers or journal articles. I will of course be happy to share my findings with parents/carers, within the council's Data Protection Policy. This means that access to the data is restricted if it is of a personal nature.

I want to reassure you that no child or member of staff will be identified; all data will be anonymous, whether represented in words or numbers. All data collection, storage and presentation will comply with the Data Protection Act which means that no personal information can be disclosed and will be securely stored. Parents/carers will have the right to withdraw any information, relating to themselves or their child/children, from the research project at any point in the study. You and your child do not have to take part in the research project, and can withdraw at any time you wish, this would not make any difference to the care and education that your child/children receive.

I value your co-operation in supporting the research project, which I hope will give a better understanding of parents' views of early years and childcare provision in the Borough. If you agree to data relating to you and your child/children being used as part of the research project please complete the consent form which is at the end of the attached questionnaire and return as requested.

If you require any further information, please discuss with the manager of the nursery/pre-school your child attends or contact me at the Early Years & Childcare Unit on ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮ Alternatively you can contact ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ at the University of Birmingham on ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Yours sincerely

Lynn Beckett

Strategic Manager, Early Years and Childcare Unit
Part-Time Student – University of Birmingham

'Quality of Early Learning & Care'
Research Project 2010 – 2012

CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS /CARERS

Dear Parents/Carers,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research project, this questionnaire is designed to find out a few things about yourself, your children and your views on the nursery. Please answer truthfully; there is no right and wrong answers. All information will be held in confidence, unless children would be placed at risk by doing so. If you want any further information please contact: Lynn Beckett on ███████████
Please return the questionnaire in freepost envelope provided:

*Please tick or circle the appropriate answers

SECTION 1
Question 1. How many of your children are attending the pre-school/ nursery? Please complete for each child attending.

2yr	**29**	**8.7%**
3yrs	**220**	**65.9%**
4yrs	**85**	**25.4%**

Male	**178**	**53.2%**
Female	**156**	**46.7%**

SEN	**12**	**3.6%**

Ethnic Categories

1	**White-British**	**190**	**57%**	**11**	**Sikh**	**30**	**9%**
2	**White - Irish**	**1**	**0.3%**	**12**	**Other Asian**	**6**	**1.8%**
3	**Any other White background**	**5**	**1.5%**	**13**	**Caribbean**	**9**	**2.7%**
4	**Mixed White & Black Caribbean**	**21**	**6.3%**	**14**	**African**	**4**	**1.2%**
5	**Mixed White & Black African**	**5**	**1.5%**	**15**	**Any other Black background**	**3**	**0.9%**
6	**Mixed White & Asian**	**10**	**3%**	**16**	**Chinese**	**0**	**0%**
7	**Any other mixed background**	**7**	**2.1%**	**17**	**Yemeni**	**0**	**0%**
8	**Indian**	**24**	**7.2%**	**18**	**Other**	**3**	**0.9%**
9	**Pakistani**	**10**	**3%**	**19**	**Don't want to say**	**2**	**0.6%**
10	**Bangladeshi**	**4**	**1.2%**				

Question2. Please give more details about your child's Special Need or Disability in the box below

Speech delay X 4
Fragile X
Deafness & SEN from meningitis
Hearing loss
NG tube & awaiting kidney transplant
Lactose intolerant
ADHD/ Autism
Hemiplegia Right side)

Question 3. How did you find out about the nursery?
Tick all that apply. (see raw data at end of questionnaire)

Family Information Service   X 33

School   X 43

Friend / neighbour / family   x 122

Newsletter / publication / flyer   x 21

Other   x 117

Blank   x 2

Question 4. Does/Do your child/ren attend: Please circle all that apply.

Term-Time only	All year round	Flexibly	Left blank
128	89	11	106
38%	27%	3.3%	32%

Full-time	Part-time	Left blank
86	235	13
26%	70%	4%

Question 5. How long you have been using the nursery?

Under 6 months	6-12 months	13-18 months	19-24 months	25-36 months	Over 36 months
50	94	44	34	56	34
16%	30%	14%	11%	18%	11%

Question 6. Do you use the nursery for any of the following reasons
Tick all that apply

	Total number of Answers
1 - As a Working parent / carer	169
2 - For social reasons for child	154
3 - For social reasons for parent	18
4 - Medical reasons for child	2
5 - Medical reasons for parent	3
6 - Early Learning for Two's (Free for Two)	46
7 - Nursery Education Funded place for 3 & 4 year olds	186
8 - Study or Training	26
9 - Other	10

No Answers	1 Answer	2 Answers	3 Answers	4 Answers	5 Answers	6 Answers
3	161	85	62	19	3	1
0.9%	48%	25%	18%	7%	0.9%	0.2%

Question 7a. If you are a working parent how many hours and over how many days per week do you normally work? Average hours – 29hours

Question 7b. How many hours, over how many days, does your child attend the pre-school /nursery

Child in nursery more than parents worked	Child in nursery less than parents work	Child in nursery same as parent works
72	112	30
22%	34%	9%

Child has 15 hrs entitlement	Child has more than 15 hrs	Child has less than 15hrs
116	155	33
35%	46%	10%

SECTION 2

Question 8.As a parent/carer, does the nursery meet your needs?

Yes / Wholly	No	Partly	Mostly	Blank
241	6	16	47	3
77%	2%	5%	15%	1%

Please comment on how your needs could be better met

0001 - For me to get to work at 7.45am the nursery would need to open at 7, however it doesn't I am late and have to leave late which means my husband picks twins up.

0002 - The nursery my child attends couldn't do anymore, they're great

0003 - Earlier opening times / more flexible with costings / half a day is only 4hrs? Nursery run 11hrs daily

0004 - As a foster carer I can sometimes be told about a meeting I have to attend the day before and then I'm unable to book extra hours of childcare, as you have to give a weeks notice, it would be better if I were able to book extra hours at short notice.

0004 - They should charge per hour instead of morning/afternoon sessions as I go to work part time but have to pay for a full day

0006 - earlier starts / later finishes / bank holiday opening

0010 - More training to staff, need to make a list of what they've got to do on their shift, sign for them, less talking to each other, more working and watching the behaviour of every child, make a report weekly as to which child was well behaved, bad, pushy, too loud / I saw so many times children crying, runny nose when my child was young I was worried this would happen to my child, as he is growing up he is ok but I am worried about other children. Staff always short - Why?

0015 - Although pre school ▇▇▇▇▇▇ not quite as good as ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ site, activity board not always completed

0015 - Children should be set targets according to the individual ability level, this should be achieved with the help of staff and parents

0015 - Further information on daily activities and focus ion education rather than just what they've done

0015 - In nursery she learnt many things, she learnt to speak English because she was born in India, she's made new friends, learnt animal names, she likes her teaches and wants to go every day, even Saturday and Sunday

0015 - The nursery and pre school are very flexible to my working needs as I do sometimes have to work afternoons. Given plenty of notice they usually can accommodate my needs

0017 - Do more in reading, writing, spelling ABC and Numbers

0017 - I am really happy with ▇▇▇▇▇ nursery. They feed my child well and look after him properly, he enjoys every min in nursery

0017 - The free placement means that I can work in the days as I am a student and I often have a lot of research to do

0022 - A longer day or after school care that's cheaper than the current wrap around scheme

0022 - I would like the nursery to open at 7am instead of 8am

0022 - They could offer more varied lunch menu for children

0023 - I would like to see better links between parents e.g. Perhaps an information board for parents to share information

0025 - The nursery my daughter attends are great, I cant think of any ways or means they could be better

0025 - They already do the best they can from what I've seen my son doesn't want to come home sometimes because he loves it there to much

0028 - Well at the moment, I am very satisfied - very very good

0029 - ▇▇▇▇▇▇ is the best nursery, they provide my son with excellent care and his learning has progressed excellent

0029 - my child is looked after she is learning she is safe at all times, this is due to people

needing a password to pick her up, she is happy

0029 - Sometimes too many kids and staff sitting about

0029 - Staff more qualified to deal with and support children with learning difficulties

0032 - I am very happy with the pre-school and it meets my needs

0032 - The funded places for 3&4 yr olds is 2 1/2 hours a day this is inadequate and leaves little room for parents to work or find employment

0035 - I need childcare after nursery when I am at work. It would be more useful if the pre-school was open for longer

0038 - It would be better if the pre-school provided the same times as the primary school, especially with siblings in the primary school

0040- More feedback to parents on children's behaviour etc at school / There is not a parents meeting until the end of the year

0041 - Fairer system of fees charged to parents who take advantage of NEF place and have additional hours - double charges for food are unfair

0041 - Would like to see more of an informed view at the end of each day i.e. highlights, lowlights, development against EYL (early years learning) more focus on reading / writing / some IT skills

0041 - Would prefer 9-12 hrs

0046 - Often send children home unnecessarily when ill, attitude is sometimes that they are doing us a favour and not that we pay a large amount of money for a service (this was especially so when part time) This is from the manager, the carers are great

0047 - I don't think my child is learning as much in nursery pre school as she would at school

0048 - could do with more hours for my son, find that 15 hours is not enough for my son and also me being a carer

0048 - My daughter attends a nursery on the days I work as the preschool only offers morning or afternoons 2.5 hr session, which are not manageable if you work all day.

0050 - To many children not enough staff

0051 - to teach phonics

0053 - If the nursery could open a little earlier; say 7.30am

0054 - open slightly earlier - 0715 to allow me more time to get to work

0055 - I think the nursery does a fantastic job, the staff are more like a family and both my girls love the staff and nursery

0056 - It would be nice to know what they had done that day, activities etc, what they'd had for lunch etc

0057 - It would be good of my child attends morning nursery could stop for dinner, I would be more than happy to pay for this

0057 - I would like further support with toilet training my 2yr old boy

0058 - cheaper / to be open from 715am

0058 - the flexibility of the 15 hrs changed, fees changed (lunches etc) more introduction of new staff

0058 - When my daughter is sick, me or my husband would go on emergency leave to look after her. What if we don't have any annual leave left? Will they look after a sick child

0061 - Overall, I am very pleased, education wise I have no concerns, my daughter is learning her letters and coming on very well, the only 2 concerns that I have is the cleanliness of the toilet facilities (they are frequently very dirty) and the snack time arrangements, my daughter very often does not have a snack as she says that she wasn't told and missed it, or that there was none left

0062 - If it can open earlier than the usual times and if parents can take the children on holiday and away without paying for the time away

0062 - They shut early for Christmas which means I have to find alternative sitter/ carer while I'm still having to go to work

0063 - Are not very flexible with requests, only when 4 weeks notice is given but this is not always possible. Do not want to negotiate half day pick ups if child attended school nursery

0063 - Maybe provide a proper lunch instead of just snacks (my child attends 12.30 - 3.30 and is quite hungry when he returns)

0065 - Sometimes I am not happy that my child has wet his clothes when he is asleep and they say the staff they have put on his nappy for sleep time

0066 - If I could choose the hours for example if I could have 7hrs for 2 days then I wouldn't have to rely on family for childcare while I'm at work

0066 - More time at nursery

0067 - Opening half day for lone parents who work on Saturdays

0068 - More information on what child has done during time there on a day to day basis

0070 - if I am on annual leave I am not allowed to take my children to the nursery even though I pay for 52 weeks inclusive

0070 - If there were some flexibility with allowing children to attend when parents not at work - not as the norm as this could be abused - but as an additional support e.g. if need to attend appointments/funerals/sick leave etc (however is situations have arisen the crèche have been very understanding and accommodating.

0072 - Flexible hours of childcare, even though I think this is unachievable due to staff ratio levels. Flexible hours and days of childcare to meet my working hours

Question 9. What were the main reasons why you chose your current childcare provision?
Please rate your reasons on a scale of 1-5, 1 being high, 5 being low.

	1	2	3	4	5	No Influence
Location	214	37	20	6	8	5
Cost / Value for money	79	37	48	19	14	51
Recommended	117	38	24	9	10	50
The building	88	53	42	17	6	37
The outside play area	94	49	54	22	10	23
Resources	108	65	42	13	5	16
Reputation	158	42	19	8	98	31
Staff qualifications	124	60	28	12	7	20
Staff attitudes and behaviour	198	35	18	3	9	9
Early Learning for Two's Place / Free for Two place	78	14	11	7	13	111
Extended flexible offer for 3 & 4 yr olds	126	20	18	7	14	67
Other help with funding the place	42	7	12	9	12	115
No other choice	4	3	6	7	16	96
Other reason	11	0	4	2	4	77

Explain no other choice or other reason:

0002 - The staff have all been there for a number of years giving my child continuity and routine

0003 - Simply local, hrs are good, useful for future summer / holiday clubs, after school clubs

0003 - the best nursery in our local area

0004 - We wanted a Reggio Emilia approach and this setting was offered as a good example of this

0006 - Opening hours

0009 - I work at the nursery

0010 - Visited the nursery and was impressed, the children looked happy and contented and well cared for. The manager and all her staff seemed very competent and have exceeded all expectations. There are photos on the wall of the nursery and children painting and getting messy, they looked like they enjoyed every minute of it.

0014 - She was attending ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ but after turning 3 lost her place so had to find somewhere new, some were reluctant to give just a few hrs (7.5) so chose place very close to home

0015 - Flexibility of hrs due to work commitments

0015 - My daughter used to go to the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ who were not able to do NEF funding therefore I got more and better childcare for slightly less money

0015 - Ofsted report
0022 - The facilities for help with toilet training were of significant impact when my daughter started school
0026 - Its convenient for me to drop son and get the train to work
0029 - Good Ofsted reports
0038 - Older sister at junior school attached
0038 - TO help prepare my child for primary school which is on the same site
0040 - Visited 3 other local nurseries but none came close to ██████████
0048 - We chose ██████████ as it was the closest nursery who would accept 2 year olds
0049 - My daughter was the first to go to pre-school when they first opened pre-school. Staff and everything is just wonderful
0050 - No space for him at the school his was attending for 1st year and I want him to be learning at an early age
0057 - Nursery being linked to ██████████████, ideal for using paid nursery / school. Dropping children off at one location, excellent OFSTED, nice staff
0061 - Lunchtime cover offered so children can attend full days without coming home between am & pm sessions
0066 - My child attends a child minder who services this nursery
0068 ██████ was there while I was on a course and he was used to everyone so I continued him going there
0069 - A further reason is due to the standard of education provided by the nursery in terms of Early Years education
0070 - ██████████ nursery most convenient and appropriate place to have my child
0072 - Medical reasons so ██████ is safe
0072 - Only really as it is close to where family live so they can drop off / pick up where necessary for my work purposes

Question 10. Do you feel that your child/ren are happy to attend the nursery?

Always	Usually	Sometimes	No Answer
246	80	5	3
74%	24%	1%	1%

Can you briefly explain, what do you think affects your child's emotional well-being (being happy, sad, frustrated) when they are in the nursery?
(See raw data at end of questionnaire)

Question 11. Do you feel that on the whole, staff are approachable and competent in their role?
Please tick relevant boxes.

All staff are approachable	Most staff are approachable	Only a few staff are approachable	No Answer
258	47	4	4
82%	15%	1%	1%

All staff are competent	Most staff are competent	Only a few staff are competent	No Answer
224	47	4	38
72%	15%	1%	12%

If you wish to, please comment on your answer in the following box.

0002 - Since the cook left last year I do not feel that staff are competent to cook from fresh, quality meals, they are not trained to do so and have no time for this to be included in their daily duties.

0002 - The staff are very friendly and that is visible on entering the nursery and the atmosphere

0002 - Then staff at ▇▇▇▇▇▇ are that of the best I have come across. It is almost an addition to my family

0003 - All staff are very approachable and always pleasant

0003 - Excellent management, however some newer staff do not give the impression of being competent. Issues are always dealt with efficiently

0003 - To date there have bee no big issues regarding the care of my son

0003 - Wonderful staff at all times, very friendly and helpful

0004 - All staff are friendly and easy to talk to, very helpful with any situation

0004 - The children should be cleared after they have played or eaten dinner / The staff should look more presentable

0004 - The nursery employs some very young girls who are very nice but lacking in confidence because of their age

0004 - When ▇▇▇ joined all staff there was friendly over the last year all the old faces are being replaced with younger girls, which are less approachable and tend not to talk to the parents

0010 - Care of the child is ok, but some do not seem to be aware of what's going on, activities etc or about the working of the nursery

0011 - Happy / Homely environment / They love ▇▇▇

0014 - the staff are fantastic at ▇▇▇▇▇▇, the care they give is exceptional, they are well recommended by myself as a parent they are very friendly and well organised

0015 - Staff are always very helpful and knowledgeable. They always make us feel at ease. My child adores them especially her key worker

0015 - They are all very caring they know the children's needs and likes / dislikes. They maintain their cleanliness and teach them

0017 - All the staff re friendly and very helpful. They have helped my child very well in everyway. My child loves all the staff and is happy there

0017 - I am always kept informed and can always stop for a chat with any member of staff

0017 - ▇▇▇▇▇▇ and all the staff very good - always happy

0018 - Talking with members of staff regarding my son being a bit 'bored' we all realised he was quite forward for his age and staff moved him forward with his learning

0022 - All staff friendly and helpful

0022 - I have been really impressed with all the staffs interest and commitment to the children

0023 - Staff are very good

0025 - All the staff are friendly and talkative, I feel at ease talking to them and have no problem asking questions that involve my daughter

0026 - Some staff hardly say anything positive about the child, they only report negative and yet when you ask what the cause was they so not give you a satisfying answer. For some you can tell the do not or prefer other kids to others

0028 - All the staff of the nursery excellent, very nice - polite

0028 - Pre school manager ▇▇▇▇▇ is an asset to the nursery. She make me feel very content and always gives feedback on progress - fantastic - superb place

0029 - They are a lovely nursery with great staff, they deserve an award

0030 - If there are any queries / questions I feel some of the staff go immediately on the defensive

0032 - The staff are friendly and very approachable as if there is a problem then I can talk to them

0032 - The staff are very approachable which is good for myself and ▇▇▇▇

0032 - The staff are wonderful, my daughter has really come on and her behaviour has improved since starting nursery. Staff work hard and their work pays off when we see our children and their achievements

0033 - Sometimes things are forgotten, you have to remind staff

0034 - All staff are easy to talk to if I've any concerns about my daughter. I know they can help sort out the problems

0034 - All the staff are approachable, friendly and very helpful, I would recommend this nursery

0035 - Some are more enthusiastic than others but this only applies to 1 or 2 in the whole nursery

0035 - Unclear sometimes who is agency/temp staff so speak to faces I recognise

0038 - I am very impressed with the staff in a community run provision they go above and beyond their job description to care for children

0038 - I can always approach the staff at the beginning and end of the session for help and advice or make an appointment to speak to them. They involve my me in the education of my child and their life in the nursery

0041 - 95% approachable, varying degrees of close of day reporting and openness to talk about child's day and development overall 9/10 very good

0041 - The childcare team are always approachable and professional, the same cannot always be said for the management, particularly when challenging / questioning policies

0042 - Staff all seem competent / some staff who do not work with Isabel seem less approachable but may be due to the fact that we have not yet built up a relationship with these workers

0046 - All staff are extremely friendly and approachable. Always happy to help and support

0046 - The staff are lovely as a whole and treat all the children as they would there own

0047 - Some staff only speak and acknowledge you if they are in my daughters room. I have informed members of things my daughter should/should not have and they have not shared the information with colleagues

0047 - The more experienced and educated staff show themselves to be most competent. The new staff are reserved and show less enthusiasm possibly as the relationship with child and parent is in its infancy

0048 - All staff are approachable and friendly at all times

0048 - The staff at her pre school could n to be any better

0048 - The staff have always got time to spend answering any questions I may have and are more than happy to attend to every child's needs in learning

0051 - Staff are always friendly and happy

0051 - The staff are good and cooperative all give a good service

0053 - Being a first time mum I found it difficult to transcend in trusting others with my child. The girls have shown me I have nothing to worry about, I needed security and I received that

0053 - The staff are fantastic, make it easier for me when dropping my son off as he is always happy to go

0053 - They are so professional when it comes to doing their work

0054 - Friendly, reliable caring staff, very supportive to the child parent

0054 - Staff at first were not ready to deal with him because of his tube, but now a care plan is in and staff are brilliant

0056 - Happy she enjoys it

0057 - not everyone takes the time to speak with me upon taking my child and collecting her again

0057 - Nursery staff are always pleasant, some give feedback as to what the child has done that day, which is useful, but not all staff do this voluntarily, but if asked will give it

0058 - All the staff at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ day nursery have made me and my daughter feel extremely welcome and have supported her throughout her learning. I feel that they are very easy to approach and very helpful if needed

0058 - I have never had an issue with the staff. My daughter knows them all by name and they all seem to know her. I have always been able to approach any of the staff and always receive a warm friendly response

0060 - I have every faith in the staff at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ and we are extremely happy with the care our son receives

0061 - Every member of staff appears involved in the general well being of the children - very friendly orientated and very approachable

0061 - Some days we have found that the teachers are tired and can't wait to get the kids out of class. As a result they don't have time to answer parents' questions. As a parent we have to find the right time to ask our questions (when teachers aren't as busy

0061 - Staff are very approachable, understanding and knowledgeable. They are particularly efficient at following up concerns and are excellent regarding child protection

0062 - All the staff have good human skills, no matter the cultural background, full of smiles and always happy to be of service and to listen to you

0062 - I find all staff and temp staff to be very helpful and will put there self out to help you / your child

0062 - There seems to be a high turnover of staff and it takes time to develop a good relationship with staff

0063 - You tend not to be introduced to staff and there are lots of them so you don't always know the names of those looking after your child

0064 - I had some difficulties when I first took little one on, I found help, advice and understanding with all the staff, especially the manager. I could and still do talk to them on childcare problems

and I find them all competent and trustworthy and friendly. I and little one will be sad to lose them when terms over and we move on to school

0066 - We had a few issues when our child attended and staff worked hard to resolve these issues and kept us up to date at all times

0067 - I have every confidence ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ staff are more than competent and very approachable hence why I am sending my second
 child there

0068 - All staff are friendly and always ready to help and listen

0068 - All the staff are very helpful there, my son and myself get on very well with all of them

0070 - I have always felt comfortable speaking to all staff, each day they say how the children's day has gone and genuinely seem to enjoy their company

0070 - Known staff for over 3 years, they are all caring, kind and easy to discuss anything with and are willing to listen

0071 - Feel that the nursery has a high staff turnover and not due to maternity reasons, which is concerning for continuity

0071 - I always find staff are pleasant since ▮ has been at this nursery, I have no problem approaching them about anything

0071 - Staff are always approachable, easy to talk to and polite, have had any problems with competently

0072 - Any issues staff are helping in any way

Question 12 Have you had reason to complain about any aspect of the nursery?

Yes	No
40	273
13%	87%

If yes go to Q.13. If no go to Q. 14

Question 13a Were you satisfied with how the complaint was handled? Tick relevant box.

Completely	Partly	Not at all
21	17	1
54%	43%	3%

Question 13b.Were you satisfied with the outcome? Tick relevant box.

Completely	Partly	Not at all
19	17	1
51%	46%	3%

If partly or not at all can you comment on why you were not completely satisfied and how you think the complaint could have been better handled?

0002 - I raised a concern at the nutritional value and quality of the food since the cook left, I was informed she wouldn't be replaced due to money reasons, staff who care for the children seem to be preparing food which is not of the same quality and is more processed than fresh. A typical tea for example may be fish fingers, spaghetti hoops which I do not feel constitutes a balanced meal. I have opted to send my child with packed lunches as no changes have been made as a result of my concern

0003 - Issue of false nail in nappy. Staff member told and apology given via manager, however felt like it was a joke

0022 - The staff could have contacted me for an explanation

0023 - Number of complaints about rats around the nursery - unfortunately they were aware but said they were limited in what they could do

0026 - When I approached the nursery about change in behaviour for my child the staff were just defensive and could not come to finding the causes but to blame the school he had just started of which he was only going to the school for 3 hrs per day. I told them to praise him when he does good and then his behaviour improved

0029 - Staff only monitor problem for short period of time

0030 - I felt the member of staff did not own up to a mistake being made with my sons dietary needs - she no longer works at the nursery so the problem is no longer there

0041 - I had to challenge nursery policy to get the full free NEF entitlement for parents. The charges are still not transparent and parents accessing NEF plus additional hours are double charged for food

0041 - The policy is still very bitty for children accessing NEF place only, my child cannot attend at 8.45 so goes in at 9.00 but because we were 7 minutes late picking him up we were charged £10 for a first offence. When asked what would happen if we were 2 minutes late told its £1 per minute - so therefore there policy contradicts and they overcharged me - even though they still disagree

0041 - Yes I was 5 min late picking my daughter up after sorting my other 2 children out and I was charged £5 so that is £1 per min. It's the only school I know of that does this out of all the other schools my older children have attended (its ridiculous) and when we are outside the school doors pressing the bell, sometimes we could be standing outside for 10 min before being let in, especially if its raining so we should charge them!

0042 - Complained when ████ was a baby that she was being given unsuitable processed foods (pureed fish finger / arctic roll) I requested she was fed unprocessed foods only (veg, meat and fruit) but found not all staff had had this communicated to them and unsuitable food was still given / Ultimately ended up having to cook and provide her meals myself, but felt this could have been avoided if communication was better and staff had had more awareness of baby weaning process & suitable diet for a 6-12 month baby

0045 - Communication to me was poor on one occasion. This was rectified ASAP with Staff meeting

0046 - Complained not going outside enough, this did increase but they still do not go out every day, even on fair weather days. I asked for the outside policy and this was not provided

0050 - The front doors are a major worry. Parents don't close the door. There should be a second set of doors which are not double glazed , a porch with spring doors that shut behind you

0054 - I felt the person I spoke to was too quick to put the blame on somebody else (this person has now left) she did not want to take responsibility even though she was room leader

0060 - It was handled well, just slipped back to the same thing after a few weeks

0063 - They take notice for a week or two after the incident then things go back to the way it was

0065 - My child was scratched in his face by a child, it happened over a year ago and my child still has a mark on his face, I did tell staff a few times before my child has scratches on his face, I just wished I had spoke to one of the managers straight away so they could have spoke to that child's parent.

0068 - Have had reason to complain but chose not to as the main reason for nursery is to develop his social development and independence and I feel that is being supported

0072 - You cant get over having a mark unexplained on a child no matter what

Question 14 Have you made suggestions to the nursery regarding any aspect of the service?

Yes	No
20	293
6%	94%

If yes go to Q.15. If no got to Q. 17

Question 15. Were the suggestions acted upon?

Yes	No	Partly

10	6	4
50%	30%	20%

If no go to Q.16. If yes got to Q. 17

Question 16. Do you feel there was a valid reason for this?

<div align="center">Yes   2   No   6</div>

If you wish to, please comment on your answer

0002 - Nursery were lucky enough to win a grant last summer to renovate the existing garden, it is a beautiful space now for all children to play in, it has different all weather areas, however I feel it is completely under used and on many occasions my child does not get to play outside.
0017 - Nursery is doing very well and staff is playing excellent role for that
0023 - Takes a long time to answer the door - I suggested there should be a rota to who has responsibility to answer it each day
0041 - After a meeting with nursery manager and head teacher they revised part of their policy with regards to children accessing an NEF place. A cover letter is now attached for school children
0041 - I am still pursuing this through the local authority but still awaiting contact ' ███ who has taken over responsibility - nursery are seeking to impose charges for food on bank holidays when nursery is closed?!
0041 - We now have to pay for bank holidays, which I feel is unfair. Also I expect a reduction at holiday periods at least for the food that would not be required
0042 - Healthy diet has always been my main concern. I have indicated to the nursery that I felt this could be improved (the children receive mostly processed food with very little fresh fruit and veg but it has not been acted upon. I can only assume this is due to cost as meals provided are low cost / cheap ones usually same products / ingredients
0047 - 2 suggestions were given, one I believe would be for valid reasons, the other would be easy to act upon
0054 - More outdoor activities weather permitting, outings to the zoo, park, walks, swimming
0065 - too many pushchairs in the hallway, I was thinking about if there was a fire how would all the children get out

Question 17. Are you involved in the support, management or delivery of any aspect of the nursery? E.g. Fund raising, management committee, member of staff or volunteer, member of parents' forum.

<div align="center">Yes   24   No   310</div>

If yes would you please briefly explain how? If no can you briefly explain why?

0015 - Help with fundraising activities - on committee
0016 - member of parent forum
0017 - Involved as parent with management committee regarding any care of my child and any suggestion related to nursery service
0018 - I am the treasurer of the parents committee along with other parents and staff
0018 - Parent committee
0022 - don't know of parent forum and lack of time
0023 - Until recently I was working full time and did not have anything to participate
0032 - sometimes the teachers ask for toys / outfits and any other things suited to 3-4 yr olds which I am more than grateful to help with also taking things in when Christmas parties and helping
0034 - fundraising
0035 - I try to help with fundraising activities where I can and support these activities
0038 - Committee member - help with fund raising
0041 - attend parent forum as much as possible
0041 - Have lost all interest in the nursery and do not believe that it acts fairly or in partnership with parents, I am removing my child from the nursery setting as a result
0045 - Fundraising/ Provision of educational information / Helping out on parent craft days

0056 - Through working there if I thought an aspect of the nursery could work better another way, would bring matter up to the manager at the staff meetings or whenever saw her.
0058 - I work at the ▮▮▮▮▮ Childcare group, sister ▮▮▮▮▮ day nursery (Feb 2011)
0058 - When the nursery were talking about jobs, we arranged for my sister in law to visit to show what doctors do, we also support any fundraising days
0060 - We do help with fund raising activities throughout the year
0062 - Parents forum attends bi-annual meetings to suggest improvements fundraising etc
0062 - Yes, since I get to meet other parents and know their children. Contributions, suggestions are raised and put together in a simple manner at al times
0067 - Attend the parents in parents meetings
0072 - I participate and help with most if not all fundraising for ▮▮▮ or other joined organisation

Question 18. Overall, are you satisfied with the quality of the care and early learning provided at the nursery?

Care				
Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
266	40	6	0	3
85%	13%	2%	0%	1%
Learning				
Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
216	65	28	4	0
69%	20%	9%	2%	0%

Question 19. If there are any further comments you wish to make please write them in the space provided or attach a separate sheet.
(see raw data at end of questionnaire)

Section 3.

Question 20. Finally could you give me some information about yourself so that I can put your replies into context, please tick or write in as appropriate

Age Group

Under 16	16-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+
0	0	27	53	100	77	44	7
0%	0%	9%	17%	32%	25%	14%	2%

Gender

Male	Female
22	286
7%	93%

Single Parent

Yes	No
84	229

27%	73%

Question 21. Are you aware of Working Families Tax Credit?

Yes   275   No   35   Blank 3

If yes, go to next question.

Question 22. If you are a working parent do you claim the Childcare Tax Credit element towards any the fees you pay at this nursery?

Yes   82   *No*   175   Blank 56

Question 23. Do you claim the Childcare element of Working Tax Credits for any other children / childcare provision?

Yes   29   No   236   Blank 48

If yes please identify by ticking where you claim your tax credits

Childminder	2	Provides care for children in childminders own home
Day Nursery	22	Provides care for more than 4hrs (usually 7am- 6pm)in a community setting
Out-of School Club	3	Provides care and activities after school hours
Pre-school /Playgroup		Provides care for less than 4 hrs in a community setting
Voluntary Registered Activity		Provides activities for children over the age of 8yrs
Holiday Playschemes	2	Provides care and activities during the school holidays

Question 24. Were you employed before the introduction of Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) in 1998?
Yes   151   No   132   Blank 30

Question 25. If no, did the WFTC support you in making the decision to return to work?

Yes   28   No   204   Blank 81

****

Question 3. How did you find out about the nursery?

0001 - Elder son attended
0001 - Knew from local area
0002 - Its on my road.
0002 - Live close by
0002 - Visiting different nursery's in the area
0002 – Website
0003 - Daughter attended prior to full time school
0003 - Going past
0003 - I live in the area
0003 - Internet search
0003 - Local to me
0003 - Website
0003 - Live close by - visited personally
0004 - doing my own research
0004 - Health Visitor
0006 - council website
0006 - seen locally
0009 - University
0009 - I work at the nursery
0010- Google search
0011 - UCAS website
0015 - Internet
0015 - internet search
0015 - Through stay and plays at Community Centre
0018 - Health visitor
0018 - Internet search
0021 - internet
0022 - Children's centre recommended
0022 - Playgroup at Church
0022 - Internet
0023 - Internet
0023 - OFSTED
0023 - OFSTED Website
0023 - visited the nursery along with others in the area
0025 - SLT
0026 - I just saw it and popped in
0029 – Internet
0029 - Internet
0029 - Internet - Direct Gov
0029 - Surestart
0030 - two other children attend
0032 - Internet
0034 - Other children went there
0034 - Older son goes to same school
0035 - Work at the children's centre where nursery is based
0035 - Attended antenatal class at centre
0038 - Previous use
0040 - Internet search
0040 - I went to same school
0041 - Early Years Team
0042 - searched local information
0042 - Internet
0045 - Nursery linked to work
0045 - work
0046 - Drove past daily
0046 - Drove past the nursery then read up about it

0047 - The owner worked at the nursery my eldest daughter went to
0048 - Council Website
0048 - through parish church
0048 - Wanted to go to the school
0050 - College
0050 - College
0050 - Internet
0050 - Internet
0050 – Internet
0050 - Yellow Pages
0051 - Advert outside building
0054 - Internet
0055 - work
0056 - I used to live opposite the nursery
0056 - I work there
0056 - Live nearby
0057 - playgroups
0058 - walked past
0058 - Saw it in area
0058 - viewed when passing
0058 - Council Free for 2 scheme
0060 - Direct gov website
0060 - local to nursery
0060 - Pass on way home
0062 - Saw the nursery and called in
0062 - Surestart and Library
0062 - Yellow Pages
0063 - Internet
0067 - Driving past it
0068 - a course I was on gave me childcare there
0068 - former client
0069 - done my own research
0069 - Internet
0069 - located close to home
0069 - Walking past nursery
0070 – Workplace nursery
0070 - Workplace nursery
0070- Workplace nursery
0070 – Work colleague
0070- Workplace nursery
0070- Personnel
0071 - family support worker at Children's centre
0071 - Research
0071 - walked past
0072 - My support worker
0072- word of mouth/advertising
0072 - attended stay and play in same building and enquired in person

Question 10. Do you feel that your child/ren are happy to attend the nursery?
Can you briefly explain, what do you think affects your child's emotional well-being (being happy, sad, frustrated) when they are in the nursery?
0001 - Can be clingy and sometimes doesn't want to go in, I don't think this is a reflection on nursery as he is happy when he is in there
0001 - What activities they are doing
0001 - What's for lunch/ tea
0001 - Whether they end up fighting with another child over a toy
0001 - Whether they have slept well the night before
0002 - Amount of sleep night before / Genuine affection / Stability of staffing / Enough physical activity

APPENDIX 2

0002 - feeling loved , cared for.
0002 - Going outside
0002 - Her friends are he main influences
0002 - My child is also happy when they get to play outside in the garden with all the outside toys and her friends
0002 - My child is happy because he knows who is taking care of him everyday, he knows all the nursery staff by name and is cared for in a professional and loving environment.
0002 - He comes home very happy from nursery and very well behaved
0002 - Happy - being with other children and interacting with them. Friendly and helpful staff and nursery assistants
0002 - I feel good communication between staff and the child is key to a happy child
0002 - Opportunities to play in rooms other than the 'home room' where she wants not be stuck in one room
0002 - My child is happy when she has lots of different activities to do at nursery to keep her occupied
0002 - Very happy if friends are there as interacts well / staff are friendly
0002 - Sad - When her favourite member of staff is on holidays or off sick / Frustrated - if they don't do different activities
0002 - She looks forward to going to nursery everyday and always talks about their day with her teacher and friends
0002 - the environment / Being allowed to play
0003 - Familiarity with staff is important, staff changes can be disruptive and can cause unhappiness
0003 - Being happy , involved at what is going on
0003 - As an only child she is happy to be at nursery to mix with other children of all ages and backgrounds. She likes the staff and the facilities they provide
0003 - Doesn't like being left at nursery by mum for first 5 min sometimes but is fine most of the time
0003 - Children he is around and in a happy place / Nice areas to play / friends and learning new things
0003 - Happy - fun, a great selection of activities
0003 - Happy - Staff attitude / games they play / garden / other children
0003 - Having to share toys, carers / when you leave & collect child
0003 - Sad to see mummy kissing goodbye / frustrated at the concept of being left at nursery / happy while there and when picked up
0003 - Staff are friendly and loving
0003 - Staffs attitude to the child / Whether the child likes the meal cooked on the day
0003 - stimulation / exercise / Lack of attention / care
0004 - Being happy
0004 - Care from adults / friendships / upset when other children hurt her
0004 - Gets upset when being asked to leave bathroom, always being told to leave when needs toilet / is happy when reading stories and painting
0004 - I think they are both happy at nursery playing with other children and they do like the staff
0004 - I've noticed not having his own way or not being able to have something taking turns etc but he is improving with help from her
0004 - My child likes nursery and they have very good staff which my daughter likes. My daughter likes to get to know staff become friends so she knows them and the nursery has recently got rid of some staff members which I think upset her a little but apart from that she overall enjoys going and playing with her friends and learning new things
0004 - Staff being kind and friendly and having quality time for my child, children get angry and frustrated if they aren't listened to
0004 - Staff give them the attention when needed / children being able to play nicely / What's planned into the daily routine
0006 - Staff / environment
0006 - staff attitudes / friends / activities
0006 - The other children / staff are friendly
0008 - being welcomed / being known individually
0008 - Very high staff-child ratio - lots of attention and any problems quickly dealt with
0009 - Friendly welcoming staff / routine / low staff turnover
0009 - Other children / Staff attitudes / Structure of activities / Variety of opportunities
0009 - Peers , attitude of nursery staff / activities during the day
0010 - Environment around her contributes to how she performs emotionally / practitioners as role models / other children & friends can impact on her behaviour / food & resources
0010 - friendly staff
0010 - Lack of learning opportunity / lack of 1-1 time with carers
0010 - Quiet tired, thirsty / sometimes happy, sometimes sad

0010 - Sometimes she's a bit daunted by louder, more lively children - she is very quiet. / She really loves the one to one attention from the staff

0010 - Stability - familiar staff, friends and surroundings make my child happy, frequently changing staff and increasing no of students are unsettling / As my child gets older she is frustrated and says she is bored, nursery does not seem to challenge her enough / Occasionally the behaviour of other children makes my child sad and she will comment that someone hurt her.

0010 - The mannerism of staff is very impressive, they take note of child and try their best to work in partnership with parents to still meet the child's needs

0012 - Being separated from parent

0014 - My child is always happy in nursery

0014 - My child is extremely happy when at nursery, she has lots of friends and really likes the teachers

0015 - Being happy / lots of stimulation / lots of activities / interaction with other children

0015 - Being happy and comfortable in his environment

0015 - confrontation - from other children she becomes unhappy / Can get upset if pressured to eat food she doesn't like / Happy at new activities introduces e.g. cooking

0015 - First child took longer to settle in, second child getting a little bored now

0015 - Group participation with peers / secure and stimulated environment / Staff involvement

0015 - Happy having friends to play with / learning things / developed from being shy to being outspoken and outgoing

0015 - He is happy when he tells his news and everyone listens / Sad when one of his friends isn't there

0015 - I feel my child is very happy and content at nursery this makes her confident and learn

0015 - If she is comfy in her surroundings / If people he is with are happy with her

0015 - my daughter is happier during group activities and trips and only gets upset when other children are mean to her

0015 - My daughter very happy in the nursery because they like her teacher ▮▮▮ she has made new friends, learnt new English words and will eat in a proper manner

0015 - My eldest sometimes moans about going this is because he is ready to go into reception class / They are usually very happy as the key workers provide a good environment for them both indoor and outdoors

0015 - When my eldest daughter started she cried a little due to new place, my youngest now sad until holidays

0016 - Attitude of staff / facilities / attitude of parents / relaxed atmosphere

0016 - Happy relaxed atmosphere

0016 - Needs catered for and are listened to, easy for children to approach staff

0016 - Positive and friendly interaction of staff / Environment & building / Stimulation & activities / Socialisation with peers

0017 – Of course being happy

0017 - Friendly staff who are parents themselves / close to home, feels safe / attends with younger cousin / activities focused around his abilities, not babies or made to feel left out

0017 - Getting help / attention from staff when needed / Getting along with other children / Not feeling left alone

0017 - Happy because the way she wakes up and prepare her self to go to school early in the morning, picking up her coat and bag. She can read some words, count and knows colours and angles etc

0017 - My child is always happy, very excited to go to pre-school every morning

0017 - My son is happy when at nursery, it's a shame he only goes 3 hrs per day

0017 - ▮▮▮ is always happy at nursery, he gets up and gets ready to go very happily, he loves all the staff and staff love him very much too

0017 - The staff are very caring towards my son and help him to settle in

0018 - Happy / Playing with other children / Relaxed / Better communication

0018 - My daughter is always looking forward to going to pre-school, even on weekends she wants to go

0018 - New children / staff starting

0019 - I see what my baby every time happy in the nursery

0021 - He likes playing with other children

0022 - Change in routine can cause sadness / happy when given praise and encouragement / Sad if ill / frustrated when being left out

0022 - Friendliness of staff / plenty of fun / Staff interact well with the children

0022 - Happy - friends, teacher ▮▮▮) playing out, creative play

0022 - ▮▮▮ is always happy and excited to go and only comes out unhappy when he is overtired or had a falling out with a friend

0022 - If clothes are not kept clean at school

0022 - My child is very happy at her nursery when she is with older children and has a lot of toys to play with and outdoor area makes her happy / She is sad when she may want to play with things that others are playing with / frustrated when she does not get to the bathroom on time and wets her clothes, this can sometimes be because other children are in the bathroom

0022 - My children are always happy at nursery. The staff are always so happy and encouraging so it makes my children happy

0022 - My son is happy with the different toys available inside and how there are different areas to play / My son is happy with the outside area where he loves to play on the bikes and scooters / My son is happy with the extra activities such as the walks to shops etc, which he loves to tell me about and he always remembers the places when we pass them

0022 - She is happy, only sometimes sad when she doesn't want to play

0022 - The staff's acceptance of them regardless of behaviour, temperament / Lots of praise / They have fun with their friends / The security they feel from a structured environment with clear boundaries set.

0023 - attention from staff (attitudes) / Staff availability / having enough space / having good food

0023 - Changes in staffing in the past adversely affected her wellbeing this was for a short time and is no longer an issue / Welcoming attitude of all the staff means that she is happy to go to nursery / She enjoys the opportunity to play with her friends

0023 - Having enough fun and interesting activities to do / making friends and playing with classmates, she is very sad if she falls out with her friends / having access to kind, loving and caring teachers

0023 - She is almost always happy due to the friendly and caring atmosphere

0023 - The teachers / their friends/ activities / food

0023 - To be completely honest he is always happy and lively when going to and from nursery, he enjoys his nursery

0024 - Happy

0024 - He's happy at nursery as he is making friends and learning new skills

0024 - How staff interact with the children / How the children interact with each other / The safety of the nursery / The activities

0024 - ▮▮▮ is happy to go to playgroup

0025 - Happy, playful, social

0025 - He gets frustrated when he is trying to do what the other children do and he cant / he is easily happy but can be quickly distracted from a task

0025 - I think the staff go out their way to make my little girl happy, she never seems sad to be at nursery

0025 - My son is always happy and excited to go to nursery / He enjoys his time at nursery , staff always comment on how well he is doing / Always talks about his time at nursery / Overall he really enjoys nursery

0026 - Being confident

0026 - Its the carers - if he spends time with the staff who like him he is happy / He gets frustrated when he doesn't get any attention or is ignored / He gets really upset if the staff get his toys and not give him back at end of the day / he is not happy and tearful if he is hungry

0028 - My child is happy, learn so many things in nursery

0028 - Not being able to talk

0029 ▮▮▮ is still at an age where he is sad to go and be picked up from nursery, he has his staff favourites who I think make all the difference to ▮▮▮ happiness at nursery ▮▮▮ does like being very active so being outside to play and socialise with other children make him happy / ▮▮▮ does not like to see other children crying or having tantrums, it makes him sad and nervous and very clingy

0029 - Being happy and involved

0029 - Happy

0029 - Happy when playing indoors and outdoors, enjoys role play, singing, playing with car's & trucks / Becomes sad and frustrated when in unfamiliar surroundings and around unfamiliar people / Can become irritable and frustrated when tired

0029 - Happy, looks forward to returning

0029 - Making sure she's involved she don't like children smacking, she'll get frustrated whether to retaliate so she'll shout

0029 - She is always happy to attend nursery and enjoys it / She is excited to tell me everything she does

0029 - Very happy / talkative / making friends / enjoys company of teachers and staff

0030 - Being Happy

0030 - Other children / staff / facilities / stimulation & learning

0030 - She's very happy when in nursery

0030 - staff / other children / activities / surroundings

0030 - They are familiar with the surroundings and staff / He looks forward to being with his friends

0030 - Very happy

0032 - Its so good for ▮▮▮ being with other children, we need to be separated, its good for both of us, he's with staff that care about him and encourage him, I'm delighted

0032 - My child is quite happy at nursery - participates in lots of activities / Is quite happy when I pick her up in the afternoon, my child is emotionally very happy and well cared for. The behaviour system that is in place

works well. If my child is on amber (traffic light system) she is sad but this implements good behaviour and will help my child to improve her behaviour

0032 - She is very happy and loves playing at pre-school, she has built a lot of confidence

0033 - Being happy with friends / Learning things other than we teach them at home

0033 - The staff have a good rapport with the children and each other which promotes a positive environment

0034 - Happy / 1st to go thought he gates / likes the teachers

0034 - Likes doing a variety of things to keep her occupied / Sad fighting with other children (normal for children) / Frustrated - is very independent and wants to do things herself or first

0034 - Playing with her friends and learning makes my daughter happy, having trouble doing things can frustrate her as when close friends aren't there this can make her sad

0034 - Their relationships with peers / environment / staff

0035 - Happy

0035 - ▓▓▓ is happy during show and tell, she enjoys socialising with friends an is happy with the staff / She has never given me any indication of being frustrated or sad, if she had I would have taken her out of nursery

0035 - Staff interaction and activities / Other children / Freedom to explore and learn in a safe environment

0035 - Their ability to speak with staff and feel comfortable to do so / Plenty of activities to keep him entertained / ability to get on with fellow friends / knowing he feels safe and if a problem arises its resolved calmly

0038 - Currently being collected by grandparents but would like me to collect more often which is not feasible given the hours operated

0038 - feeling secure / knowing staff and pupils / having a good morning at home / feeling well

0038 - My child is happy at nursery because she is comfortable in the setting and with staff and her friends. She also really enjoys the varied range of activities she takes part in and looks forward to going

0038 - Staff treating him as his own unique little person = valued / nice group of peers = happy and settles / interesting range of activities = stimulated

0038 - Staffs behaviour towards children / Other children's behaviour / Games and tasks

0038 - The staff

0040 - ▓▓▓ likes to play with his friends and likes his teachers / ▓▓▓ doesn't like some of the food he has been given for dinner

0040 - always happy

0040 - Friendly

0040 - Good environment / friendly atmosphere / engaging activities / encouraging members of staff

0040 - Having a variety of things to do

0040 - Interacting with other children her age

0040 - My so enjoys going to nursery and is always full of stories about what he did when he comes home

0040 - Staff who are interested and caring for him make him feel settled / The surroundings - clean and colourful / He knows what's expected of him

0041 - Happy / Making friends well / Learning / Respecting Adults

0041 - Happy- other people around her to play etc / Getting her used to other people and children before she starts primary school

0041 - Having a day where they have interacted and played with others as opposed to isolated play / Activities drawing, painting, singing, making things/ food -good snacks & variety / Achieving a sense of working or making something and recognised and rewarded

0041 - Nursery nurses very friendly & supportive / Playing with friends / making and learning i.e. crafts etc / Drink fruit offered

0042 - Being able to play with other children / staff listening to children's problems / superb empathy from staff to children and parents

0042 - ▓▓▓ feels secure with staff and peers that she has come to know well / happy in known environment with established routine / Frustrated by lack of more structured learning, at almost 5 yrs of age she is ready fro school / Happy when she is given tasks or praise / encouragement by staff

0045 - Home environment / Interaction with other children / Play activity

0045 - Staff being friendly and encouraging / safe and happy environment

0046 - Being listened to, stimulated and motivated, having opportunity to play outside, a mix with other children, smiling, pleasant staff stimulation and space to explore and learn

0046 - He's happy when he is playing with his friends / He enjoys playing with the outside equipment as our garden hasn't got the room for them things.

0046 - Relationship with carers / Chance to experience new things - stuff we don't do at home / other children

0047 - Being happy / being sad / social interaction

0047 - Interaction with other children / various activities / Being away from home and family / learning social skills

0048 - Being in a safe positive environment / being stimulated by the activities / having other children her own age to play with

0048 - Being in a supportive, caring environment where learning and education is made fun / The high quality of staff care and involvement / good resources and tings to play with / The other children - social development

0048 - Ensuring she is occupied all of her time at pre-school and that she is kept interested

0048 - Happy, loves playing with the other children

0048 - Mixing with other children - being shy

0048 - My child is very happy and enjoys all the activities that are available

0048 - Previously frustrated due to speech not too good but since attending nursery, speech is excellent hence not so frustrated

0048 - Sharing

0048 - They are both happy as the staff are very caring

0048 - Very happy / enjoy playtime / enjoy learning / really like teacher

0049 - Happy

0049 - Very happy always / looks forward to being there / enjoys it very much

0050 - Happy

0050 - Happy

0050 - He loves going to nursery, he's always happy to go

0050 - I am unable to answer this question as I do not see him during the day. If my son is feeling any of the above or anything else then the staff always tell me.

0050 - Other children's behaviour towards him

0050 - Willingness of teachers to listen

0051 - At beginning she wasn't too keen but now she really enjoys it

0051 - Being happy

0051 - Being happy to play with her peers / Happy with friendly staff

0051 - He gets on well with staff / He has an established set of friends

0052 - Being happy

0053 - Friendly staff, great outdoor space, plenty of equipment (indoor & outdoor)

0053 - Friendly, happy smiley staff / a structure of activities each day

0053 - She's always happy to go to the nursery, I think this is due to quality of service she received

0053 - Very happy

0054 - Saying bye to parents - sad / frustrated because eh cannot speak for a child of his age due to illness/ Happy when he sees other children and when parents come to collect him

0054 - Staff mood - happy and positive, create happy positive children / The environment, new activities to keep them entertained / Other children - learn to mix and behave well in a group

0054 - Very happy, learns a lot at nursery / great understanding of gestures, lacking in speech

0056 - My daughter is happy when she is learning - she enjoys stimulation / When she was younger 1-2 she would be upset if key worker wasn't there / She was once bitten on the finger by another child and she was reluctant to go to nursery for a few days afterwards

0057 - Feeling safe and secure in his environment / behaviour of other children towards him, learning to interact with others / Encouragement and praise for doing well / being taught right from wrong

0057 - Having friends there - happy / Having same regular teachers - happy / Having variety of activities - happy

0057 - how well behaved the other children are / The attitude of the staff towards my child

0057 - I think he is always really busy something, always well fed and all his needs are met

0057 - Likes to join in and play which makes him happy / Can feel rejected or sad if children refuse to play with him

0057 - My son loves going in the nursery, there's plenty to play with and loads of activities for the children to do, the staff are always doing things with the children and are very kind and patient

0057 - Secure and caring environment / Clear guidelines and praise system /

0057 - Sometimes they feel frustrated / sad when they are being pushed by a certain boy / they are happy playing outside

0057 - Unable to share toys

0058 - Children playing nicely, sharing, getting along - she gets quite upset when children don't. / loves all the staff and activities - very happy after nursery

0058 - Feel safe and secure with people they like. The staff are friendly and approachable and know my child / My child is stimulated with interesting activities that are suited to her and her needs / she loves playing with the other children at nursery / She sometimes seems frustrated at lack of outdoor space but I believe this is being addressed at present

0058 - Her happiness reflects how happy she is at home

0058 - I feel that all the familiar faces (staff and children) has helped ▇▇▇▇ become more settled in nursery / Key workers- this helps as ▇▇▇▇ formed a close relationship with her key worker and feel confident to speak out when needed

0058 - It depends what mood they are in when they arrive

0058 - ███ is very happy at nursery. Never seem to have any complaints there

0058 - My child is very close to his key worker, he flourishes in her presence as is very aware of how to manage his additional need. Whilst he is happy in her absence he can be frustrated if other staff are unable to manage his additional needs appropriately

0058 - She is very happy. She likes nursery and teachers

0060 - Friendly atmosphere / range of activities / food given plenty and often / More friends to play with

0060 - Happy

0060 - Happy due to friendly staff / Engaged and encouraged to get involved due to the staffs encouragement / Only time he is sad is when he has to come home early

0060 - Initially when I drop my child off she is clingy to me, although she has been going there since she was 6 months old, she is happy when I pick her up. / She will only go to certain members of staff

0060 - Most of the time my child is happy he only says he doesn't want to go when he is tired

0060 - My daughter is mostly happy at nursery, she enjoys going each week

0061 - Atmosphere / caring from staff / good mix of children

0061 - Being happy to see the children at all times since she is the only child in the house

0061 - Engaged, motivated learner / happy to explore social relationships and physical environment / Access to fantastic resources especially interactive white board and outside area

0061 - Having friends to socialise with (she is happier when she has plenty of other girls to play with rather than the boys) / Having friendly and approachable teachers who she enjoys being with / Being happy in her surroundings, with plenty of resources to keep her occupied

0061 - How they are treated by the teacher s and teaching assistants or student teachers / The other children who are there and out of those the number of friends they have / the types and nature of activities they encourage on a daily basis / The weather, for example if it is raining too much then they may stay indoors to play, rather than being outdoors

0061 - Their social interactions with other children / Their ability to have turns on the outdoor play equipment / The staff interacting with then as an individual

0062 - He is really happy

0062 - My child gets frustrated when having to mix in an enclosed space with children who are much younger than him / My children gets upset by loud noises and screaming by other children / My child gets bored easily and has outgrown the activities provided

0062 - think he doesn't get on well with other child - rare for my son

0062 - when she sees other children doing things that she can't do because of her disability

0063 - Having friends to play with / opportunity to play outside

0063 - Knowing that she can talk to staff

0064 - This nursery has provided emotional, mental and physical stimulation by providing varied occupational interests through the day - happy days / This nursery has encouraged self worth and team work within a happy environment - more happy days / Sad- the only time little one is sad is when its time to go home / Mealtimes - my little one loves the well prepared and presented nutritionally well thought out meals and snacks on offer (4/5)

0065 - The only thing my child will get emotional if he is tired, also he doesn't like loud noise, he gets scared

0066 - Being happy / Familiar friends / teachers / Routine /being safe

0066 - Kind, happy, gentle staff / Welcoming Environment / Children allowed to develop at their own level

0067 - Attitude of the staff has a big impact, the staff care about the children's welfare and are genuinely concerned about he child's wellbeing / Staff adapt play to child's preference e.g. outside learning role play

0067 - Being separated from parents / Being tired in afternoon / Getting hungry

0067 - She is always with different kinds of activities such as singing, dancing, reading and anything interesting really / She gets frustrated and sad when she wants to play with a particular toy and another child has got it and they begin to struggle with the toy

0067 - They play and communicate well with peers

0067 - Well cared for, friends at nursery, fun place to be / Stimulating environment, well looked after

0068 - happy

0068 - ██████ always happy to go to preschool and looks forward to going so he learns and enjoys it a lot better

0069 - He is mostly happy at nursery and finds interacting with other children fun / He is only upset at nursery after he has spent a long weekend at home with parents

0069 - ███ has always settled into nursery well. He is very happy when they have outside play as he enjoys playing with the football / ███ is happy when all his little friends are at nursery the same time / The only time I can recall ███ being sad or unhappy about going to nursery is he isn't well

0069 - Other children sometimes upset my child, I think the last class has got the best teachers which make my child wan to go to the nursery

0069 - Very friendly staff that get on well with my child which makes my daughter want to go to nursery

0070 - Approximately 6 months ago my son would come home saying he was being pushed by another child, this had a negative effect which lasted around 4 months

0070 - ██████ enjoys the social interaction that is fostered in the nursery / Also the wide variety of toys and activities and especially mentions the outside play space / he enjoys the trips to parks or to the pet shop / There is the occasional unavoidable fracas with another child, often over sharing toys

0070 - Happy with his friends, being creative at schools and happy with the teachers / Sad that some days he cant eat meat with his friends due to religious days

0070 - My daughter is very confident and loves going to nursery, she has attended since she was 9 months old and I feel that to her she has never known any different and she seems happy

0070 - ██████ happy at the crèche, she has lots of friends and gets on well with all the staff

0070 - Routine is important to ████ l, understanding what and when to do it - happy / Belonging ████ is happy when he feels part of the group and that he has friends / Consistency - the learning staff are consistent this helps ████ l to build relationship and trust / Caring - All staff seem to genuinely enjoy being around the children , promoting a happy atmosphere

0070 - The friendships they make with other children and staff and how they move through the stages with their friends makes sure they continue to be happy with their environment / The movement of staff could cause sadness when the child takes a particular liking to someone but as all staff are involved with children at start and end of day it helps enormously / The whole environment is a pleasurable experience and talked about at home so obviously works well

0070 - When they are well looked after / plenty of activities / encouragement to develop their skills

0071 - After term break ███ may be a little upset when returning back to nursery after a week or so but usually is quite happy to go into nursery on a regular basis

0071 - Friendly staff, good contacts with other children

0071 - Happy / sad / frustrated

0071 - tiredness

0071 - Very happy to see all his friends / Sad when he has to come home

0072 ████ gets frustrated as some children within the nursery are very strong characters. ████ is very shy and doesn't integrate well. This is why I sent him to nursery but he struggles in social situations

0072 - My daughter loves going to nursery / She's always happy

Question 19. If there are any further comments you wish to make please write them in the space provided or attach a separate sheet.

0001 - I am very pleased with ████ nursery, my twins have thrived since they started, they are well behaved, polite and their learning just comes on leaps and bounds, they really enjoy going to nursery. I would recommend to other parents

0001 - This nursery is outstanding. I have no concerns and have always been very happy, it has a feeling of being a family

0002 - I couldn't fault anything in the nursery, I'm very confident and relaxed in my daughter being in the care of the nursery and staff 'excellent service' would defiantly recommend to other parents

0002 - My child has a nice time generally and I have no concerns about her academic ability. I am never informed of areas so learning my child is working on or made aware of topics / projects. She never has things to do at home or books to borrow. Other friends who use nurseries are made aware of this and are then able to support their child at home. The paperwork is not kept up to date and does not reflect my child's ability. My child is cared for but not stimulated to learn in a more formal way. Activities do not seem to be planned around a theme.

0002 - My child has been attending for nearly 2 years, but now he's turned 3 I'm a little unsure about the learning side and what's changed from before, and what would be the difference from keeping him in private nursery or going to school, not had enough advice.

0002 - The staff make learning and attending the nursery fun, my child comes home happy and wanting to go back the next day / It is preparing him for school in September

0003 - A wonderful nursery provided a whole range of activities and facilities for children and parents. They are very flexible and helpful to parents - would well recommend

0003 - Excellent nursery - appreciable staff, receptive to suggestions.

0003 - I am to date happy with the nursery as I was when my daughter first attended, I am sure my son will grow to enjoy the new opportunities of learning and developing social skills in work and play thorough the nursery and will continue to be happy

0003 - I feel more parents evenings for parents to be informed about what their children's developmental strengths and weaknesses would be an advantage - currently only been 1 in a year and half - plus it keeps lines

of communication open between the carers and parents and indicates to parents where they can help development at home

0003 - Think costings should be more equal (nursery runs 11 hrs however half a day is 4 hrs?) therefore you pay a full day if your child is there for 5-6 hours. Had payment issues and was not informed about certain costs resulting in arrears nine months later!!!!

0004 - ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ day care is a lovely nursery and very stimulating for my son. He is always excited to go and he has made a few friends by being there

0004 - I feel staff retention of highly qualified and experienced staff would have led me to ticking the very satisfied box, since their departure my child has different key carers and assessments have not been up to date. There has not been continuity in her care, compared to when she started there as a baby. The setting had very high standards when my child began there and I would like to see this level be achieved again.

0004 - I think the nursery is very good but I do think that they got rid of some very good staff members and then replaced them with teenage girls who are not qualified to save money, I do understand that cuts have to be made, but I think the nursery was better when those staff members were there and once the teenage girls are qualifies they will do the same to them because its cheap labour

0004 - When a child has a dirty face or is upset I wish the staff, instead of brushing them off, would give them the attention. When walking through the nursery seeing the babies crying and staff engaged in conversation frustrates me. I also understand you have guidelines to follow etc, I feel sometimes the kids are not encouraged enough, for example lunchtime, sit with the children and help them instead of rushing them.

0006 - A good variety of skills taught, staff treating children equally and with respect

0010 - At an early age learning was very satisfying, but as my child has got nearer school age learning seems to have tailed off, having reached a standard and is now marking time until she goes to school. It would also be good if parents received better information about learning and then could tailor home learning to compliment what is being taught at nursery.

0010 - My child seems happy there which is the main thing, although I would be able to comment more after a parents evening so I can actually see what they are doing to help ease the transition from preschool to reception.

0010 - Need more assistants trained, should do more trips / awards if child done good that day / set homework for children

0014 - My daughter has come on very well since attending the pre-school, she really loves going

0015 - Both my children enjoy nursery they talk to me about their mornings and what they have been doing / They enjoy the meals, bringing books home, being outside / Nursery provides the opportunity for my eldest son to 'tell his news' about hobbies and interests

0015 - Quality of the nursery is fantastic staff are all excellent and well trained when dealing with the children and families

0015 - The nursery meet all my needs, I get more hours so my daughter can go 7.30am - 545pm enabling me to work full time, she gets all her meals and im informed how well she has eaten, my daughter will be going to school in Sept but I am looking to send my 4m old son, I just wish the costs were more affordable as I pay £63.01 per week for my daughter however for my son it will be £140 per week as no funding

0015 - The nursery my child attends requires a bigger outside space, I also feel they should have a separate room for bad behaviour children / more learning, less playing

0016 - I would recommend this nursery to other parents

0017 - I am really happy with their care and learning because my son wasn't speaking properly. He is very active but with ▉▉▉▉ and ▉▉▉▉, also with staffs support he is trying to make words and sentences. He says few songs and rhymes, he is learning a lot. I am satisfied with this nursery

0017 - I feel the free place for 2, 3 & 4 yrs really helps parents, encouraged parents to get their child registered or attend pre-schools. Also helps the children develop all areas of their development. My child's preschool is very good, all staff are really good. All pre-school / nurseries should be like that

0017 - I think it would be nice if some more education was built into the child's day i.e. using colours, numbers 1-10. This would give them a head start when they start school. The staff is wonderful

0017 - The nursery is well staffed and very homely. My child has always come home happy and smiling and I have noticed that other children run through the doors laughing and excited to begin their day. I applaud the staff - they are doing an amazing job

0018 - ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ is a very well run school, staff are lovely and it's a pleasure to send my child there as I know he is well looked after

0018 - I am really glad that I was recommended this preschool and will be sending my daughter who is already on there list

0018 - Our nursery is a lovely one and when my other daughter reached 2 I will be sending her there and have no fears that she will be very happy as my other daughter is

0022 - Since attending Free for 2's my sons development has grown, he has become a confident young boy, who loves to learn about everything. I know he has loved his time at his school and I know he will miss all the staff when he goes to reception

0022 -The nursery has done my children wonders and I can't thank them enough

0023 - I do think the quality of food is very important. At ▮▮▮▮▮▮ the food id the best I have seen at a nursery, but even there are days when they have chicken nuggets, pizzas and other processed foods. / ▮▮▮▮▮ previous nursery was worse in terms of food and even took ▮▮▮▮ to McDonalds on a trip

0023 - I have found ▮▮▮▮ to be an excellent nursery, my daughter has always enjoyed attending and the staff have always shown a great deal of love, care and attention to the children at the nursery

0025 - All staff made myself and my son welcome, it's a great nursery and have a wide range of activities for all children. In the short time he has been there his speech has improved, his behaviour and also can socialise a lot better with others, overall very pleased

0025 - Even though my son has been going to ▮▮▮▮▮▮ day nursery for just under a month I feel he has come on a lot in his talking and even his attitude towards his little brother has improved a whole lot too

0025 - I was very worried when I first took my daughter to nursery as she started at 8 months old, she is not 3 and she loves going to nursery, I have seen a big change in her from her attitude around other children and her overall educational skills

0028 - As a mother I am really very happy because my son start speaking in this nursery and well mannered boy and all teachers cooperate to my son - many thanks

0032 - I'm very happy that my child attends pre-school, she really enjoys it and is very supportive - thank you

0032 - Just a big thank you to all the staff and their hard work, my daughter has really come on at nursery, her behaviour has improved and speech ahs got better. There are positive and kind attitude has helped me to work with my child at my child's pace and has helped me understand my child's behaviour in a clear way. My child is enjoying her time at nursery

0032 - This is a very good nursery and my daughter has developed a lot and built up a lot of confidence since she has been going to the pre-school. Its friendly and they try a lot to involve children and parents together which is a lot of fun for parents and children

0034 - The learning and care at the playgroup is outstanding, sometimes I an shocked at how much my daughter is learning, it is a fantastic place for young children to learn

0034- Nursery needs a bigger area as it is quite cramped when all there / Play area outside is quite dangerous as there is a concrete step with sharp areas and corners

0035 - My daughter really enjoys attending nursery and being around the other children and staff. The staff are brilliant and I am always given feedback on her day. The activities are great and the outdoor space is lovely too for children to explore and play in. Its a great nursery and I'd recommend it to anyone.

0035 - The staff make the nursery what it is, they are fantastic and committed

0038 - I am very happy with my child's pre-school, they provide a varied range of activities for her to take part in. She really enjoys attending and has lots of friends. Her confidence has grown as has her knowledge of numbers and sounds. The nursery involve us in her care by inviting parents to 1:1 parent meetings, sending home what I did at the weekend sheets, sending the preschool teddy home for weekends and sending numbers and letter sounds home to practice. We really appreciate that they want us to be involved.

0038 - I feel it's a shame the nursery opens for 2.5 hrs a day, I feel this could be extended at least until lunch time. It does not prepare the children for full time school

0038 - The amount of effort that goes in to making the pre-school a happy, safe, stimulating environment is quite amazing given the very low salaries and working conditions for staff - I wish I could do more to appreciate and value what they do

0040 - My daughter started in January, she really enjoys her time there, staff are friendly and I feel at ease when I leave her in their care

0040 - Term dates and change of dates for attendance/ closure of the nursery are often handed out last minute, having a knock on effect for parents working or have already made commitments - then have to find childcare

0041 - I am very please with the level of care and the early learning provided. My son is continuing to surprise us day after day with the knowledge he is gaining

0041 - I believe the charges - double charges for food to parents accessing additional hours to NEF are contrary to the regulations though this is ignored. The nursery is the only Surestart setting to charge parents for food when children are accessing NEF and they are also seeing to charge parents for food contrary to the regulations and local authority guidance (Sept 10) when children are not accessing NEF because nursery is closed

0042 - I feel the preschool education could be improved upon as ▮▮▮▮ should be preparing for school. I think she becomes bored and frustrated through lack of academic educational stimulation and this contributes to he saying she does not want to go to nursery sometimes

0042 - we have been absolutely delighted with the level of care, enthusiasm and professionalism of the staff

0045 - I have 2 children in nursery ▇▇▇ (16m) and ▇▇▇ (3y) over 4 days, I had to drop my hrs because couldn't afford nursery fees so children now in nursery 2 days per week

0046 - I am extremely happy with the nursery and will be sad when my son leaves to go to school. They have taught him a lot and cared for him to a very high standard. I would recommend the nursery to any friends or family

0048 - As a first time parent I relied heavily on friends and family to help understand childcare provisions in the area. It would be helpful to get info direct to me regarding my options for my child and I felt there was a lot out there, but not together and useful

0048 - I am completely satisfied with the service I get from the nursery

0048 - my child loves pre-school, enjoys learning and likes teachers and enjoys playing with other children

0048 - My son does not speak much at nursery, find this a concern

0048 - The improvements to the outside play areas are fantastic. To have a preschool within the school premises is excellent, my daughter has met children that she will go to school with and will be familiar with the school prior to attending in September

0048 - The only complaint I have even though I will not be affected by it any more is that we have to pay for teacher training days and voting day on 5th May

0050 - Cannot fault the staff or nursery setting, activities planned well along with meals, my son has enjoyed his time at ▇▇▇▇▇▇ nursery

0050 - Love the nursery, if I had any doubts my daughter wouldn't go there, they are all lovely, never want to leave myself when I visit

0053 - My son leaves to go to school in September, however it has to be said the nursery has been a wonderful experience , great recommendations, they should celebrate their success both reputation/ respect. Wonderful people which has taught me trust

0053 - Nothing more to say than thank you to the entire management and staff of ▇▇▇▇▇▇ day nursery, my daughter enjoys every moment she spends there

0054 - Overall I am pleased with the setting my children attend, although I feel that they should have a wider range of activities on offer, also a better feedback system so you know what your child has been doing during the day

0056 - Since attending nursery my son's speech has improved greatly, which in turn helped with his behaviour at home as he can now make himself understood

0057 - Could do with a photo board (either just outside or just inside) nursery so you know teachers by name as when child first starts nursery you don't know who's who

0057 - The nursery has helped us to place 2 boys and find things out for themselves

0057 - When I stopped working and had to drop hours it was all dealt with brilliantly

0058 - Overall I am extremely happy of the care of my daughter ▇▇▇▇ who has attended the ▇▇▇▇▇▇ day nursery since April 2010. I have noticed a rapid improvement in her development as well as her confidence. She has learnt so much over the past year and half , and I am happy to say she will now be ready to start 'big school' in September - Thank you

0058 - the staff spend time with each child, and work to the pace they are on

0058 - We are very happy with the nursery and my daughter enjoys going

0060 - Previously felt our son was encouraged to learn and develop, we now feel that his is not encouraged as much and is not developing, ha has always been very advanced for his age but now he doesn't seem to be doing things to develop skills to make him ready for school, it feels more like a crèche than a nursery where children can develop and learn new things

0061 - On the whole we have been pleased with the nursery setting. Our son has grown a lot and learned a great deal due to the commitment of the teaching staff. There have been a few occasions where we have felt that the teachers cover each others backs so to speak. If there is an incident, and they don't know what has happened, then they will protect their own reputation rather than saying they made a mistake or didn't see what happened because they were chatting. Telling the truth is better than lying - Thank you

0061 - Provide fantastic care during pre-school and wrap around care within ▇▇▇▇▇▇. ▇▇▇▇ enjoys his time at both ▇▇▇▇▇▇ and ▇▇▇▇▇▇. His development educationally re numbers / letters / days of the week etc has come on leaps and bounds. Very happy.

0062 - I am very happy with the majority of staff and care provided. Also the food provided is excellent, I do feel that more space indoors and outdoors would benefit the children as the setting appears to be quite crowded. Also it would be nice to see a 'quiet' area for children to rest away from the activities if they don't wish to participate. Also it would be nice to have the option for children to go on outings i.e. educational trips or to the park

0062 - Re learning - lots of 2/3 year olds who will be heading into school - noticed knives and forks not being used much at meal / snack times and kids will need to know how to use cutlery at school

0063 - My child doesn't seem to learn too much through one to one time, there seems to be a lot of play and child doing their own thing, occasionally she brings books home to read but that's it.

APPENDIX 2

0064 - I am only too pleased to have found the ▮▮▮▮ nursery for little one to attend, she has developed and grown so well and so much over the last 8 months, so much that moving on to enter the education system has been an easy transition for her. I could not thank the staff enough for their care and considerations, help and loyalties. I would recommend the ▮▮▮▮ Day nursery to anyone

0066 - I feel that my child gets a lot out of attending this nursery and has come on leaps and bounds since attending. Staff are always helpful and polite and children are dealt with respectfully

0066 - My 1st child has a very serious egg allergy, the staff at preschool always ensure my child doesn't come into contact with egg products and im confident that if he should have an allergic reaction they would be able to deal with it safely and quickly which gives me an enormous confidence in his safety whilst there. The staff have also tried to explain to the other children the dangers of my child eating eggs which helps him feel less excluded and obviously cuts down on risk

0067 - It is a worrying time when a parent has to rely on someone else to look after their child ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ staff put our minds at rest immediately by their thoughtfulness, care and competency. They took our son and us through the process one step at a time, we are so impressed we are sending our second son to the nursery.

0069 - Since my 3 yr old daughter has attended nursery she has developed in every way possible. It has made my daughter happier and myself knowing she's safe and having fun

0070 - Another child due later this year and their name will be on the list to go to this nursery, so happy with the nursery support and help with my child. Informs me how to work with my child so he does not get confused with learning techniques in school

0070 - ▮▮▮▮ has made many friends at the nursery, his emotional, social and educational progress has often been remarked upon in our wider family. His social skills and vocabulary have been compared favourable with his cousin who is 3 years older for example. I attribute this to the dedicated and caring staff of the nursery. It is an excellent facility, I cannot recommend it enough

0070 - I am extremely pleased with ▮▮▮▮ progress since joining the nursery. ▮▮▮▮ key worker ▮▮▮▮ is good at encouraging him and fully explaining to me his progress and updating me on activities to push at home to support his learning. ▮▮▮▮ is happy to stay at nursery every day and the entire environment seems to perfectly suit ▮▮▮▮ needs. I equally am happy to leave ▮▮▮▮ everyday and am confident that he is very well cared for. On the whole the nursery is very good

0070 - I feel my son has been extremely lucky to have such a good start in life. His emotional, social, physical and communication skills are amazing and I feel he will adapt well when he starts school. The staff have always been approachable, ready to offer advice when needed and are always professional. The two way communication has been invaluable and the reports along with parents evening provide a real insight into a world which as full time working parents we don't always see. I know my son will miss the staff and the friends he has made but what a wonderful opportunity he has had

0070 - The progress reports that we have each quarter are brilliant and inform me of my child's development and their plans to progress. All reports are positive and honest

0071 - Car parking is a big issue

0071 - My son has come on leaps and bounds since attending the ▮▮▮▮ day nursery, his behaviour has changed for the better, and all round seems 'grown up'. He looks forward to going to nursery spending time with his friends and staff '▮▮▮▮ was a favourite. I have no problems with the nursery and am happy for my son to attend and am happy for my son to attend, it is a lovely environment and has great staff

0071 - No outside play area is a big minus for this nursery

0071 - Since my son ▮▮ has attended the ▮▮▮▮ nursery he has come on brilliant and feels comfortable with the staff which makes me comfortable and relaxed that he is ok in their care. I am always informed of what he has done and any incidents. Overall very satisfied with the treatment ▮▮ gets :-)

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Questionnaire

(N.B. Copied and anonymised and therefore not in original PDF format)
One of the duties under the Childcare Act 2006 is for Local Authorities to undertake an audit of childcare provisions within their area. The information obtained will be used to assess the current demand for childcare and will support us to meet future childcare needs.

It is very important that this questionnaire is completed and returned by 17th June 2010. Should you have any queries about the information required, please contact the Family Information Service on (telephone number).

All the information you provide is entirely confidential.

Please answer the following questions for all children you are responsible for aged 14 and under, even if you are not currently using childcare. Also include children up to the age of 17 if they have a disability. You do not need to provide names or addresses.

Always put your responses for each child in the same order i.e. make sure that the answers for 'Child 1' always relate to the same child.

Q1 How old is each of your children? *In years - if not yet 1 year old, write 0*

Child 1..
Child 2..
Child 3..
Child 4..
Child 5..
Child 6..
Child 7..
Child 8..

Q2 Does this child have a disability? *Yes /No*

Child 1 ....
Child 2 ....
Child 3 ....
Child 4 ....
Child 5 ....
Child 6 ....
Child 7 ....
Child 8 ....

For the purpose of this survey, we refer to childcare as the following:

Childminder - provides care for child in childminder's own home
Nanny / Home Childcarer - provides care in the child's own home
Pre-school / Playgroup - provides care for less than 4hrs in a community setting
Day Nursery - provides care for more than 4 hrs (usually 7am to 6pm) in a community setting
Breakfast Club - provides care before school starts
Out of School Club - provides care after school finishes
After School Activities - a range of activities (i.e. dance/drama/sport/homework club) after school on a regular basis
Holiday Provision - provides care during the school holidays
Family / Friend - provides care for your child for no reward

Q3 Do you currently use *any* of the above types of childcare? Yes   *If No* Go to Q10

Q4 Which types of childcare do you currently use? *Please tick all that apply*

Child 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Day nursery
Pre-school playgroup
Childminder

Out of school club
Breakfast club
Nanny or home child carer
Holiday provision
After school activities
Family/friend

If you use family or friends as your childcare please answer the next question. Otherwise, please skip the next question and go to Q6

Q5 My reasons for using family / friends are......... *please tick all that apply*

No other suitable childcare available...
Childcare costs are high.....................
Trust ....
Convenience with location...................
Convenience with times ....
Other reason - Please specify

Q6 What is your main reason for using childcare? *Please tick one only*

Employment..
Studying ....
Other ....

Q7 Where is your childcare located?

Within (the borough)l.................................
Outside (the borough)...............................
A mixture of both ....

Q8 Do you receive any of the following types of help towards the cost of childcare? *Please tick all that apply*

Childcare element of Working Tax Credits ....
Childcare vouchers.............................
Employer contribution.........................
Care To Learn ....
Other ....
Please specify

Q9 Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

Overall, I am satisfied with my current childcare arrangements
Strongly agree   Fairly agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Fairly disagree   Strongly disagree
The childcare is of good quality
There is a good choice of local childcare
Childcare is well located
Childcare caters for my children's needs
Childcare is good value for money
Childcare cost is reasonable
Travel or transport to childcare is not a problem
The times when my child is able access local childcare are reasonable
I would prefer to use family/friends to care for my children
My childcare arrangements are reliable

Q10 What are your reasons for not using childcare? *Please tick all that apply*

I am currently not working / training ....
I choose not to use childcare..............
My children are old enough to look after themselves ....
There is no childcare available at the times that I need it ....
There is no childcare with appropriately qualified or trained staff .
There is no childcare of sufficient quality ....
There is no childcare available that is suitable for the age of my child............
There is no childcare that is in the right location ....

There is no childcare that can be flexible in response to unpredictable attendance e.g. medical appointment, illness**….**
There is no childcare that can cater for my child's disability or additional needs....................................
There is no childcare that can cater for my child's cultural needs ....
Childcare is too expensive ....
I only use childcare on a short-termbasis and it is impossible to plan.........
Other, please write in below ....

Q11 Have any of the following reasons prevented you or your partner from working or training? *Please tick all that apply*
Cost of childcare..................................
Childcare unable to cover work/training hours.....................................
Lack of childcare locally ....
Childcare available does not offer the additional support that my child needs
No suitable employment available that fits in with childcare provision..............
Other ....
Please specify

Future childcare use

Q12 Which one of the following statements best describes your use of childcare over the next three years?
I use childcare now and will continue to use childcare for at least 3 years
I use childcare now and will continue to use childcare for less than 3 years
I do not use childcare now but expect to use childcare within the next three years
I do not use childcare now and do not expect to use childcare in the next three years-Go to Q14

Q13 What types of childcare are you likely to use over the next three years?
Childminder for a child aged 0-4.........
Childminder for a child aged 5-11........
Breakfast club ....
Out of school club ....
Pre-school playgroup...........................
Nanny / Home child carer ....
Day Nursery..
Holiday provision ....
After school activities ....
Family / friend ....

Nursery Education Funding / Free Early Learning and Care

This section will help us to plan for demand for nursery education. Every 3 and 4 year old is entitled to nursery education the term after their 3rd birthday. From September 2010, this free entitlement will be 15 hours per week (570 per annum) over a minimum of 38 weeks.

Q14 Are you likely to access nursery education for a child in the next three years?
Yes   *No* Go to Q19

Q15 How many days per week would you like your child to receive nursery education?
2 days..
3 days..
4 days..
5 days..

Q16 Would you prefer your child to access nursery education over...?
Term time: 38 weeks at a maximum of 15 hours per week..............................
All year round: Up to 52 weeks at reduced weekly hours.........................

Q17 Which of the following times would best meet you and your child's

needs for the delivery of nursery education?
Between 8am-6pm
Between 9am-4pm
Q18 Which of the following would you prefer your child to use for the nursery education, where applicable? *Child aged 3 years old   Child aged 4years old*
Day nursery
Pre-school playgroup
School
Accredited childminder
None of the above
Childcare Information
Q19 Where would you go to find out about childcare? *Please tick all that apply*
Family Information Service ....
Friend / relative....................................
Children's Centre................................
Health visitor..
School ....
Internet ....
JobCentre Plus.....................................
GP Surgery...
Library ....
Don't know..
Other ....
Please specify
Q20 Do you think that adequate information is made available about the type of childcare provision and other services / activities for children and families in your area?
Yes   No   Don't know
Q21 How do you prefer to access childcare / family information?
Post ....
Telephone ....
Text ....
E-mail ....
Internet ....
Face-to-face ....
Q22 Have you used any other types of services or support over the last 12 months to help you in your role as a parent or carer?
Supporting your child(ren)'s education.
Help or advice regarding the behaviour of your children....................
Help or advice with your child with special needs, disabilities or health problems
Help or advice on returning to training or work following a period of full-time parenting
None..
Other   Please state
Q23 What other types of services or support would you like to see to help you as a parent or carer?
And finally, about you..................
Q24 Are you:
Male   Female
Q25 How old are you?
Under 16..........
16 to 19...........
20 to 24...........
25 to 29...........

30 to 34............
35 to 39............
40 to 44............
45 and over......

Q26 Do you have a disability?
Yes .... No................

Q27 Are you:
Lone parent / carer ....
Two-parent family ....
Other   Please specify

Q28 Which of the following groups do you consider you belong to?
White - British......................................
White - Irish ....
Any other White background...............
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean ....
Mixed - White & Black African.............
Mixed - White & Asian.........................
Any other mixed background ....
Indian ....
Pakistani..
Bangladeshi ....
Sikh ....
Other Asian ....
Caribbean...
African ....
Any other Black background ....
Chinese..
Yemeni ....
Other ....
Don't want to say................................

Q29 What is your home postcode? *i.e.*

Q30 Which of these options best describes the employment status of you and, if applicable, your partner? *You   Your   Partner*

Employed
Voluntary work
Self-employed
Unemployed and available for work
Unemployed and not able to work (e.g. due to health issues)
On a training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship)
Full-time education
Retired from work
Looking after the home
Other

Q31 What is the normal working pattern of you and your partner (if applicable)? *Please tick all that apply   You   Your Partner*

Part-time (16 to 29 hours a week)
Part-time (less than 16 hours a week)
Hours within a standard working day (8am to 6pm)
Hours outside a standard working day (6pm to 8am)
Weekday working
Weekend work

**Q32 Please tick if you or your partner
work in the armed forces**

You ....
Your partner ....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
The results of the survey will be published in April 2011.
Please return your completed form by 17th June 2010 using the reply paid
envelope.

Overview of the Users and Their Circumstances

Population Profile

Of all children under 16, the highest number were the under 5s who made up 42% of the 0-15 age band (Source Mid-Year Population Estimates (MYE) Office for National Statistics (ONS). Just over a quarter of the population of the borough were of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) origin but accounted for almost a third of the population for the 0-15 age group. It was assumed this trend would continue and that the number and proportion of children in the borough who are not of white British origin will increase steadily in the coming years. This is based on the estimated birth rates of ethnic groups and on international and sub-national migration patterns. It is therefore important to consider the childcare options for diverse groups of parents, so that all children's needs are met.

The proportion of lone parents in work and out of work was balanced (49% - 51% split), substantially lower than the national profile estimated at a 1:2 ratio.

In the borough as a whole there were 276 children being looked after (LAC) at the time of the research with almost a third (31%) of LACs over 16 years of age, just over half of them (53%) of school age and 16% under 5 years of age.

Although children do not receive a statement of educational need until they reach statutory school age, to the knowledge of the LA early years team in 2011 there were 171 children under five with a learning difficulty or at least one other difficulty or disability.

The Children

Questions were posed in the survey about the age (figure 1), gender (figure 2) and ethnicity of 334 children (figure 3) and all these data were provided except for the ethnicity of two children. Twelve children were reported as having a Special Educational Need (SEN) or a disability.

Figure 1

Ages of Children

8.70%

25.40%

65.90%

- 2 yr olds
- 3 yr olds
- 4 yr olds
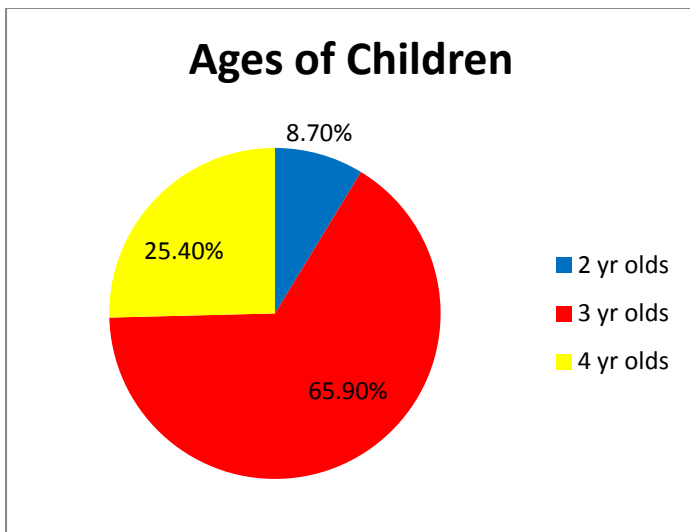
The number of parents responding to the survey was highest for three and four year olds, reflecting the number of free places available. There is universal entitlement for three and four year olds whereas free places for two year olds are restricted to those meeting the Free School Meals (FSM) criteria or those with specific or additional needs.
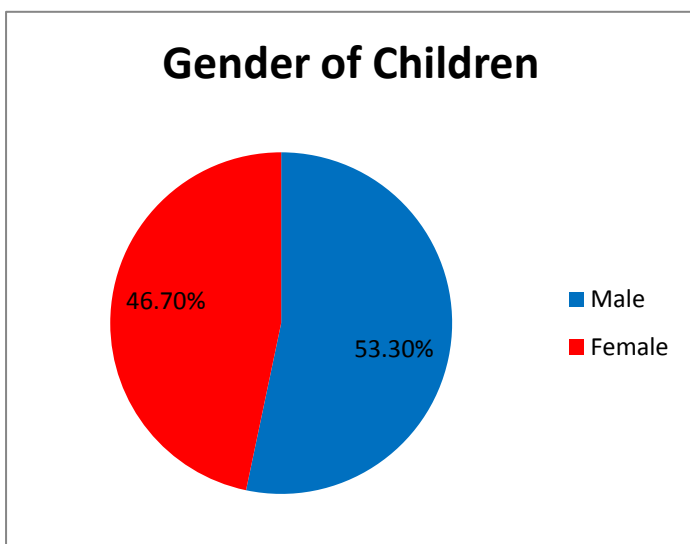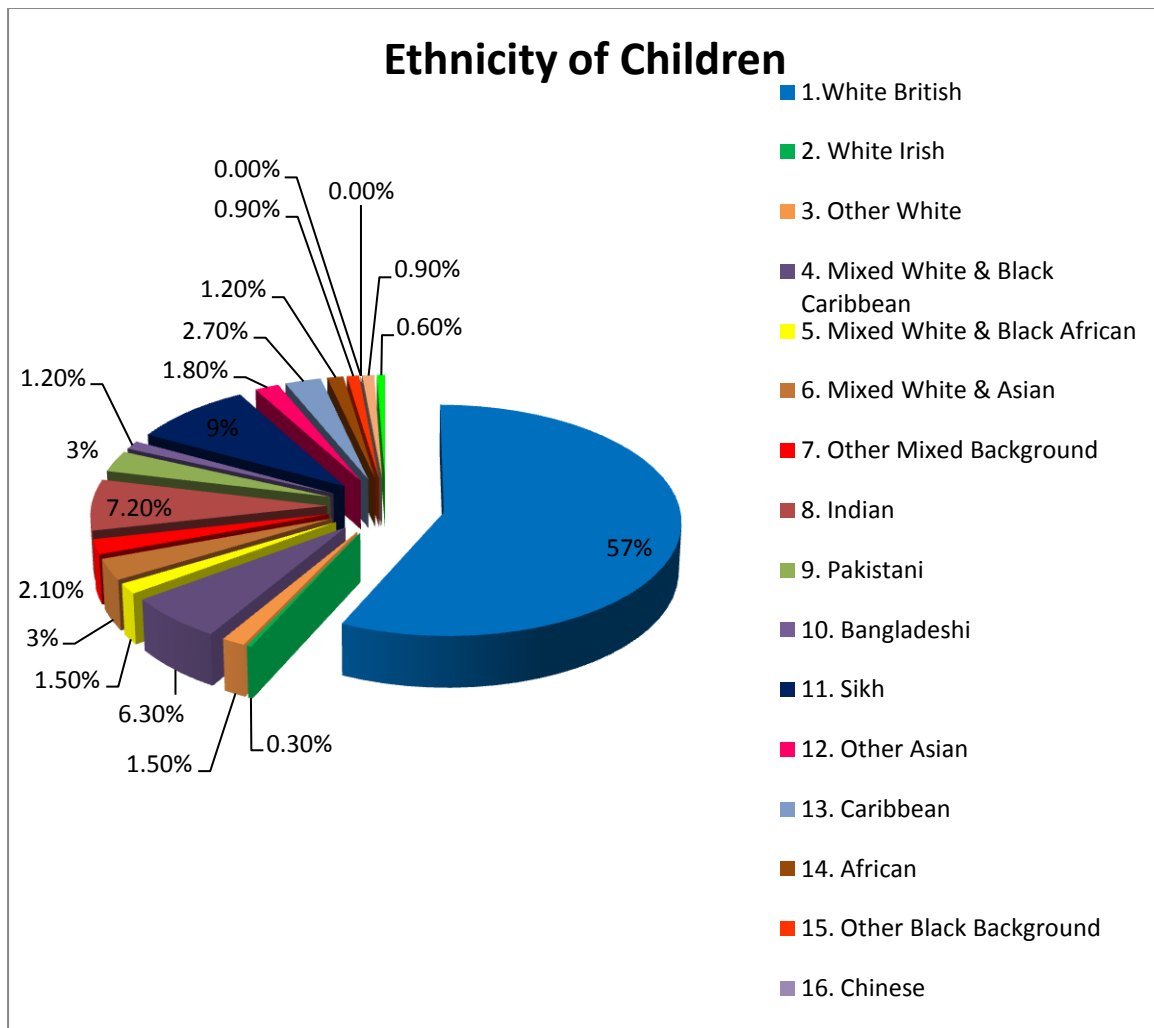
There were slightly more boys than girls.

Figure 2

Gender of Children

46.70%

53.30%

- Male
- Female

Figure 3

The ethnic breakdown of the children is representative of the numbers of BME children in the 0-15yrs age group and reflects the population trends of growth in numbers of children of BME origins.

Twelve children (3.6%) were identified by parents as having a special educational need or a disability. These included deafness and SEN from meningitis, hearing loss, Nasal Gastric Tube and kidney disease, lactose intolerance, ADHD/Autism, Right Side Hemiplegic, four children with speech delay and two identified as being 'fragile'.

Figure 4
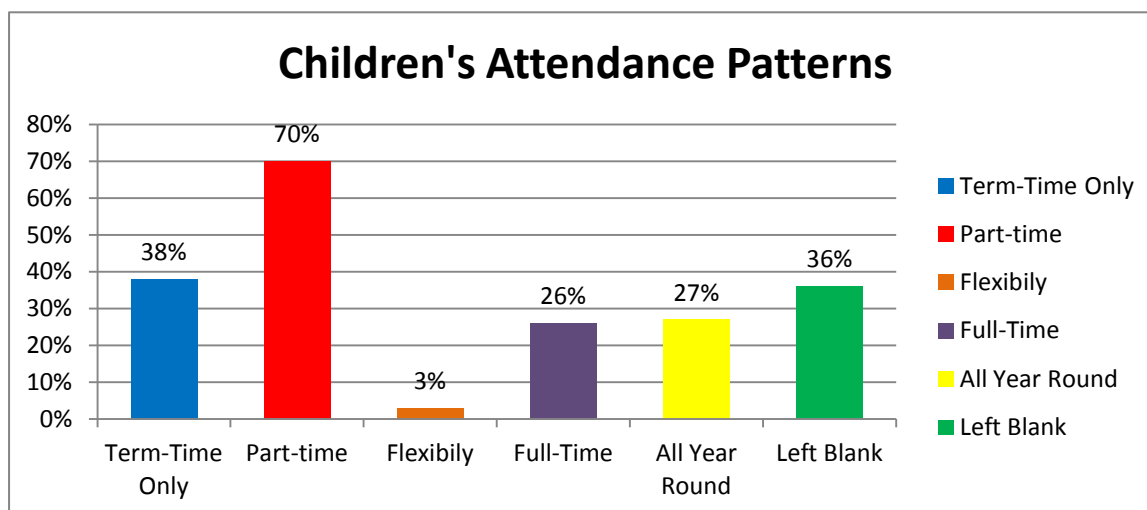
Figure 4 shows that the majority of children attended on a part-time basis which reflects the 15 hours of funded provision and term-time only attendance. Those attending all year round were a mixture of full and part-time places used by working parents who supplemented the free 15 hours by paying for additional hours or using alternative childcare such as childminders or family members.

N.B. Percentages total more than 100% as parents were asked to identify all that applied e.g. All-Year-Round and Full-time.

Figure 5
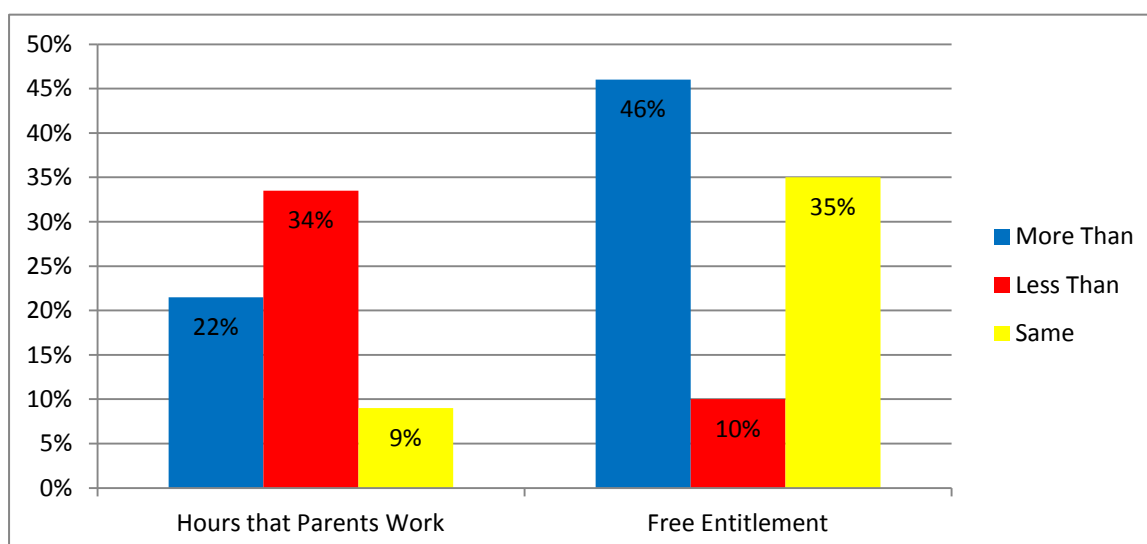
Comparisions of Hours and Days that Children Attend

Figure 5 shows that the majority of children, of those parents who responded, attended the nursery for less hours than their parents worked, reflecting use of

additional formal or informal childcare to meet the needs of working parents. Although over 20% of children were in the nursery for longer than their parents worked this could be accounted for by travel time or distance.It is also more cost effective to pay for full days rather than part days even if parents work part-time. The 9% of children who attended the nursery for the same hours as parents work can be accounted for by the parents who actually work at the nursery or Children Centre. Figure 5 also shows that nearly 50% of the children attended the nursery for longer than the 15 hours free entitelemnt while 35% attended for no more than the 15 hours. This could be affected by the pre-school provision that cannot offer more than fifteen hours due to building or staffing restrictions. Only 10% attended less that 15 hours which can be down to parental choice with hours split between the nursery and a childminder, or the special or additional needs of the child.

Parents and Carers

Of the 313 parents who completed the survey, 308 recorded ages and /or gender, of these, no parents were under the age of 20 (Figure 6).
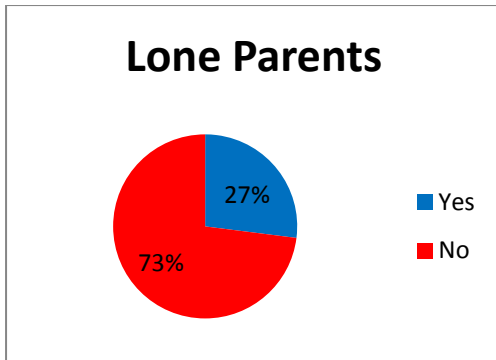
Figure 6
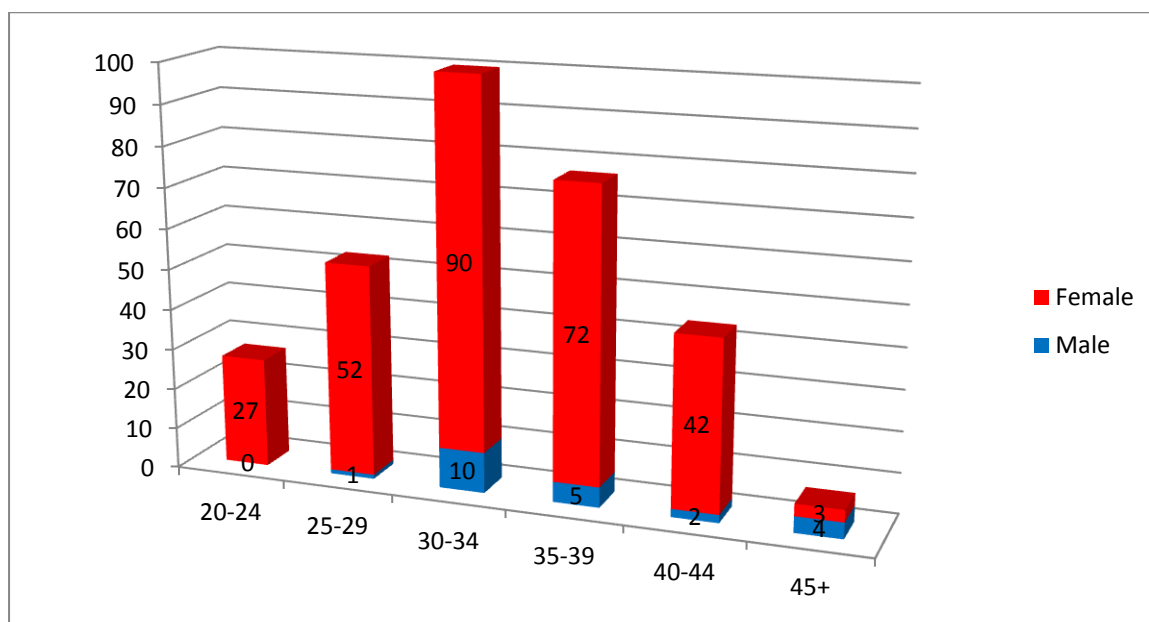
Age and Gender of Parents

The vast majority of respondents (92.8%) were female, presumably reflecting the traditional role of mothers being responsible for childcare. The most numerous age
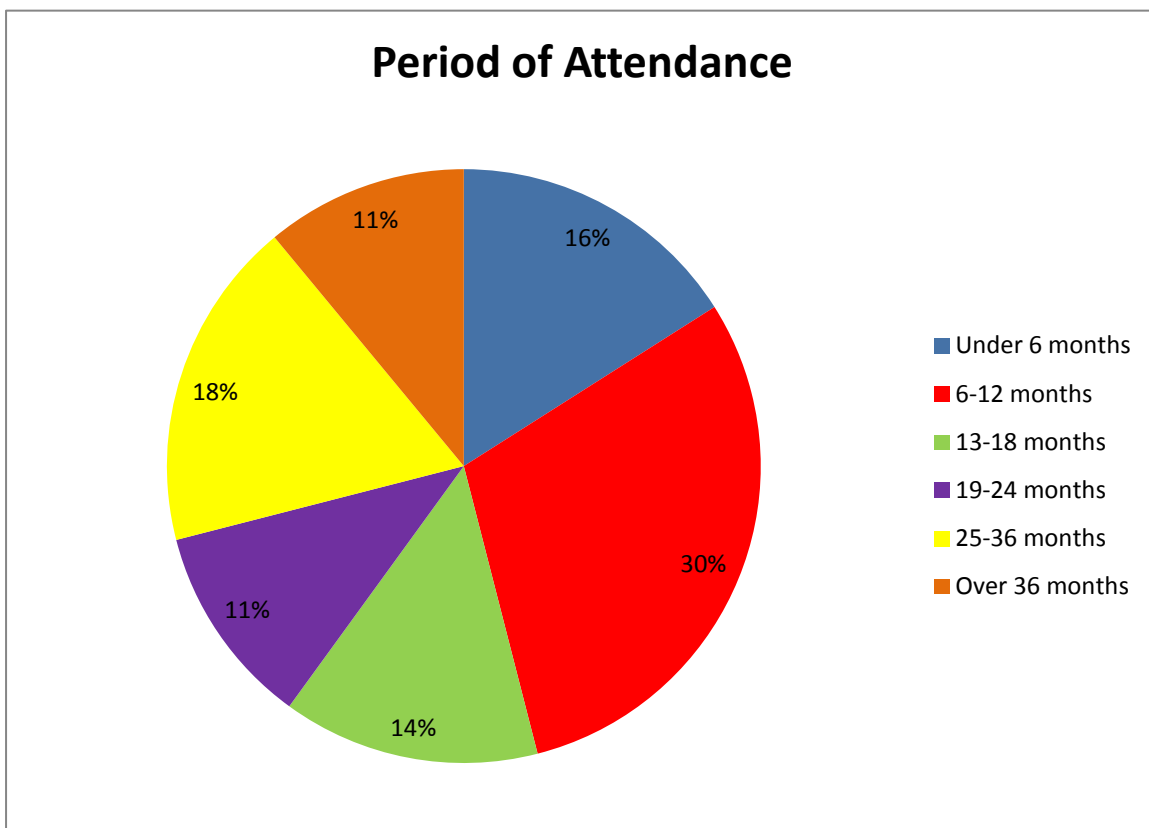
group amongst respondents were in the 30-34 age-band (a third), with the second most represented the 35-39 age band and the third being 25-29.

Figure 7

84 parents (27% of all respondents) declared to be lone parents, all female except for 5 who didn't declare their gender (Figure7).

**Figure 8**

Parents Use of Nursery

Figure 8 shows that, given the age of the children and the fact that the majority of parents responding were those with three year olds, 30% of parents had been using

the nursery since their child became eligible for the free universal entitlement (6-12 months). 11% had been using the nursery for over three years, which meant for the three and four year olds, since they were babies.

Finance

Parents' awareness of Tax Credits, specifically the Childcare element of the Tax Credit, is a prime concern for government. Due to take-up being very low (14%), it is used as a National Indicator (NI116) for LA performance. The WFTC are specifically for low income families and the childcare element is to help with childcare costs when both parents are working. Figure 9 represents parents' knowledge of WFTC.
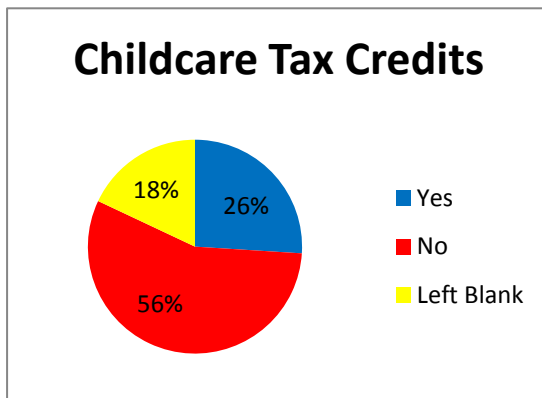
Figure 9
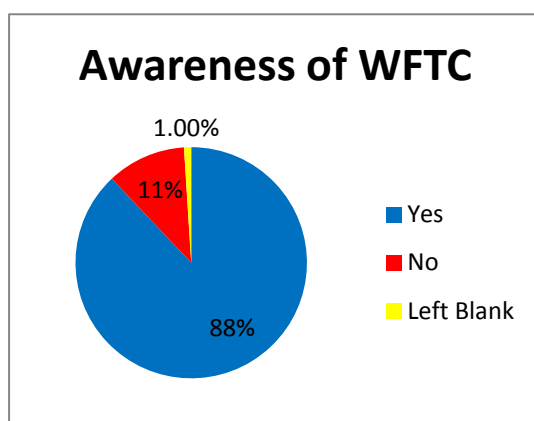
**Knowledge of Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC)**

Asked whether they were aware of the WFTC or not, the majority (87.5%) said yes, whereas only 11% said no, only 4 parents not responding. However, when asked if they claimed the childcare element of the tax credits towards the fees paid at the setting, the majority said they didn't, 26% saying they did and 18% not responding (Figure 10). It is not possible to say if this was out of choice or through eligibility criteria. The number of hours that parents work affects their eligibility, needing to work more than 16hrs per week. Parents identified a range of work patterns but the average was 29 hours over a five day week. However the high number of non-responses and a few contradictory answers (for instance, parents stating they were not aware of tax credits but saying they claim them), seems to indicate that these questions may not have been fully understood by respondents. This may have been due to the fact that the terminology used differed in the questions.

Appendix 4

Figure 10

Childcare Tax Credits

Claims for the Childcare Element of WFTC
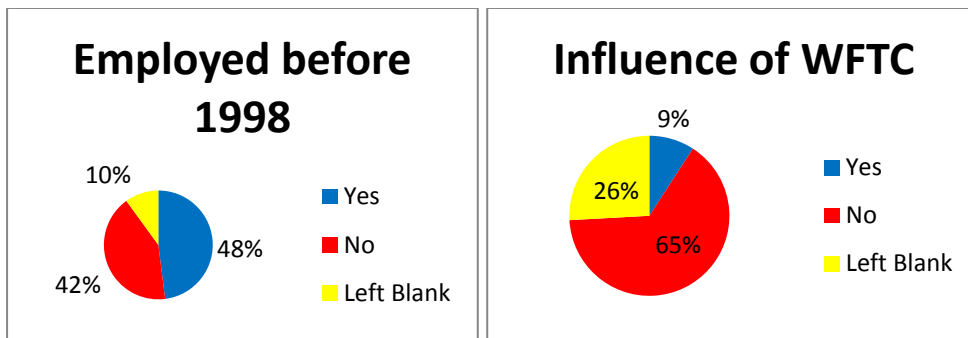
Figure 11
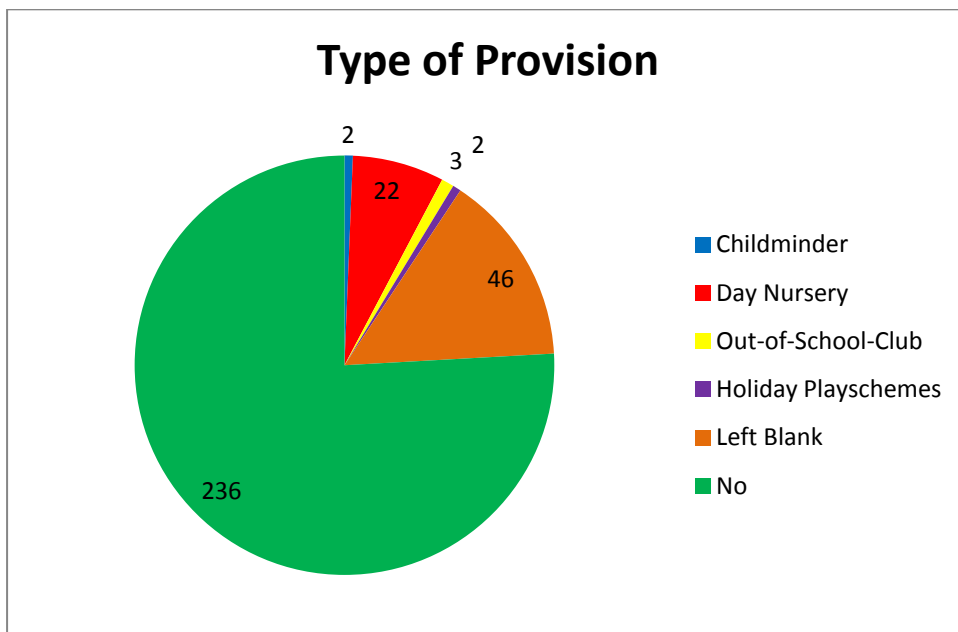
Claims for Other Children/Types of Childcare Provision

Asked if parent's claimed the childcare element of WFTC for any other children or other types of provision, the majority (76%) said no, 10% said yes and 15% left the question blank. Figure 11shows that, of the 30 parents who responded affirmatively, the majority (22) claim their tax credits at day nursery, 3 at out-of-school clubs, 2 on holiday play schemes and a further 2 with childminders. There were a few anomalies in the responses: one parent said he didn't claim but ticked childminder, two parents said they claimed but didn't specify where.

Figure 12a: Employment   **Figure 12b: Influence of WFTC**

Employed before 1998

10%

48%

42%

Yes
No
Left Blank

Influence of WFTC

9%

26%

65%

Yes
No
Left Blank

Impact of Working Families Tax Credits

Regarding the impact of WFTC on returning to work, 10% left the answer blank. Of the 279 remaining parents, 48% were in work and 42% not in work (Figure 12a). Of those not in work in 1998 (130) only 12 declared that the WFTC supported them in the decision to return to work, with the majority (85) answering that it did not and 33 left the answer blank (Figure 12b).

As the survey asks parents about their status in 1998, this question would not be applicable to younger parents and means the answer may not reflect the actual impact of WFTC in the current parental cohort.