

Recruitment and Retention of Childcare, Early Years and Play Workers: Research Study

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National Institute of Economics and Social Research

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Pamela Meadows***

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

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A central aim of the study was to find examples of good practice from Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships which other Partnerships and providers might use to improve recruitment and retention. These findings have been published separately as guides to good practice for Partnerships and for providers.

Executive Summary

Background to the study (Chapter 1)

This report presents the findings of a predominately qualitative study of recruitment and retention of childcare, early years and play workers. The Department for Education and Skills commissioned the study to identify issues surrounding recruitment and retention, from the experience and perspective of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs)¹, childcare providers and workers themselves.

The study was intended to inform the national recruitment campaign by identifying successful and less successful approaches to the recruitment and retention of childcare workers, by EYDCPs and providers, and by obtaining childcare workers' own perspectives on the features of the work which drew them to the sector and encourage them to remain. A central aim of the study was to find examples of good practice which other Partnerships and providers might use to improve recruitment and retention rates. These findings have been published separately as guides to good practice for Partnerships and for providers (DfES 2002).

The research was carried out in 3 stages:

- Stage 1: A review of existing literature on recruitment and retention of childcare workers and secondary analysis of the Labour Force Survey in relation to the sector;
- Stage 2: Interviews with 8 Early Years Development and Partnerships;
- Stage 3: interviews with managers in a range of childcare settings, including day nurseries, out of school and holiday schemes, pre-school play groups; and interviews with 39 workers in the same settings, and 14 childminders.

Key findings

The Labour market (Chapter 2)

Existing research on the childcare sector notes that it is an expanding sector, which is reliant on both a good supply of labour and its retention for the quality of its provision. A number of studies refer to high levels of satisfaction with intrinsic features of the job, particularly contact with children, but that low pay and the low value attached to the work makes it vulnerable to high levels of turnover. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data shows median pay for childcare workers substantially lower than those with similar qualification levels working elsewhere. Some

¹ Local Authorities have a statutory duty to establish an Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) as a forum for consulting and involving a full range of local partners in planning and monitoring early years and childcare services. The EYDCP, or 'partnerships' referred to in this document, and references to Lead Officers or others carrying out the work on developing early years services locally (generally local authority employees), should therefore be recognised as being part of local authority delivery structures.

day nurseries visited paid some of their staff at the level of the minimum wage, including the ‘development’ rate for young workers of £3.50 an hour.

Men, ethnic minorities and older workers are currently under-represented in the childcare labour force. Literature on diversity within the workforce has not addressed the issue of the under-representation of ethnic minorities in childcare occupations. Existing research has looked at barriers to the employment of men in childcare, exploring some of the possible issues for providers, prospective employees and for parents. However, research from the perspective of men, both current and prospective employees, is limited. It may be particularly useful to know the views of boys of secondary school age on working in the sector, in order to identify any gaps in knowledge or misconceptions about the work.

Research has looked in some detail at the experiences of nursery workers and childminders, but other sections of the childcare, early years and play workforce have been given less attention. Therefore, relatively little is known about the motivations and experiences of workers in after school and holiday schemes, playgroups and schools. More information about these groups might help to identify differences in employment conditions and other features of the work that affect recruitment and retention.

One of the main gaps in evidence concerns the recruitment process and how it can help to create a stable workforce. Existing research shows the importance of ‘word of mouth’ to some types of providers, but reasons for the widespread use of this method are not explained. Moreover, research has not looked in any detail at the methods used by providers to recruit staff, and whether they are the most effective. Existing research refers to poor management practices in the sector, but more detailed information is needed on practices that may assist retention, including induction, on the job training, appraisal and staff consultation.

Existing research has referred to low levels of qualifications among childcare workers. Training structures for childcare are seen to lack coherence and the proliferation of qualifications and routes is believed to lead to possible confusion among providers, workers and potential entrants. There is disagreement amongst writers on childcare and early years training on the most appropriate type of training for childcare, including over NVQs. Some researchers have advocated the development of a highly trained ‘core’ worker able to work across a range of childcare and early years settings.

Studies of staff retention in other sectors state the importance of recruiting the ‘right people’ in the first place. Nursery workers in particular enter at a young age straight from school or college and research on turnover in the childcare sector suggests that younger and less experienced staff are more likely to leave than those with more experience. It is possible that new entrants have inaccurate expectations of the work. Research on young people’s expectations of working in childcare might help to identify possible misconceptions and help to improve information and guidance for childcare careers. Such information would also be useful in recruiting older people.

This research study aimed to address some of the current gaps in research identified, by exploring the experiences of childcare workers across a range of settings and from different

backgrounds. The study also explored the effectiveness of recruitment practices, and at the role of management practices in retaining staff.

The recruitment of childcare, early years and play workers (Chapter 3)

Methods used by providers to advertise vacancies for childcare workers depended on the seniority of the post, the cost of advertising and its effectiveness in the past. Organisations with larger staffing requirements and with bigger budgets, such as private nurseries, tended to use formal methods to advertise posts, for example newspaper advertisements, while smaller, voluntary, organisations relied on informal and low cost methods.

Some out of school and holiday schemes and playgroups did not use newspaper advertising because they believed they could only recruit people living very locally, and that those traveling more than walking distance would not stay. This belief may be misguided and result in missed recruitment opportunities.

Settings with low budgets, such as out of school care and playgroups made extensive use of free sources of advertising. These included local shops, libraries, community centres and school noticeboards. Many found such methods to be more effective in attracting applicants than formal methods such as newspaper advertising. Some settings were quite innovative in the sources they used, for example entertainment guides. Other providers could be encouraged to follow their example.

Job Centres were used by most organisations, but in general were not found to attract suitable candidates in terms of experience or motivation. This suggests a need for better sifting of potential applicants by Job Centres.

A number of providers had found that constant advertising loses its impact on potential applicants. Therefore, when recruiting for one vacancy, some providers placed suitable but unsuccessful candidates on a list to be offered employment if a subsequent vacancy arose. Providers also believed that the wording and content of advertisements can affect the number of responses and warned against the use of unfamiliar job titles such as 'Nursery Practitioner' and the omission of information about hours.

Word of mouth was used by all types of provider, but was favoured above other methods by out of school and playgroups, which had received poor response from advertising. Although it may be effective in identifying good candidates, over-reliance on word of mouth can exclude people outside of informal local networks and may be poor practice in terms of equal opportunities.

Many providers reported difficulties recruiting staff, particularly day nurseries, out of school care and pre-school/playgroups. Providers explained their recruitment difficulties with reference to pay, hours of work, image of the sector, competition from other sectors and their location. Few had received help with their problem, although some were using services developed by their EYDCP.

A number of the EYDCPs had set up job vacancy bulletins and websites, which were tried by providers, with mixed experiences. A common complaint concerned the relative infrequency of some of these when vacancies often had to be filled quickly. Some settings were setting up a 'bank' of staff who could work as supply. EYDCPs might provide assistance to providers wishing to set up such a facility.

Most providers used structured systems for selecting staff, including use of application forms and interviews, but some carried out a telephone interview with prospective applicants. This may result in initial screening based on highly subjective factors and lead to discrimination. Some out of school and holiday schemes recruited from volunteers without advertising the post or conducting any form of interview. Whilst giving opportunities for employment to volunteers should be encouraged, it is poor practice in terms of equal opportunities to exclude other candidates from the opportunity to apply.

Most providers were reasonably clear on the criteria they used to select at interview, but rarely had fixed requirements. The importance attached to qualifications depended on the post, with managers generally requiring a qualification at level 3 for senior posts only. Although many providers looked favourably on applicants with qualifications, almost all valued experience highly. Providers looked for recruits who could relate well to children. Other qualities valued by recruiters included team-working ability, enthusiasm, energy, cheerfulness and a caring attitude.

Almost all providers asked for names of referees, and most took up references. Criminal record checks were carried out by all providers, or on their behalf, and some carried out their own police check. They were concerned to screen out people whose offences involved abuse of children, but were not concerned about petty offences such as shoplifting.

Managers expressed support for the aim of increasing diversity in workforce, largely from concerns to enrich children's learning experience. In general, providers did not consider that they had a role in increasing diversity within the labour force, and some had stereotyped views about ethnic minorities, disabled people and older workers. Very few providers had given consideration to how their advertising and recruitment practices might disadvantage some groups, for example those outside informal 'word of mouth' networks. Many providers did not even have basic practices in place, such as monitoring of applicants. Therefore, as a first step, providers need to be made aware of the important role they can play in increasing diversity within the sector

Many providers in the study made assumptions about the suitability of particular groups for working with children which were based on stereotypes, for example that people over 50 are less able to cope with the physical demands of the work, or that a disabled person cannot cope in an emergency. Of particular concern are the assumptions made about the preferences and customs of some minority ethnic groups by many childcare providers. There is a need for research on the reasons for the under-representation of minority ethnic groups in childcare. Work with providers to promote the recruitment of ethnic minorities can then be based on understanding of the real issues involved, rather than on stereotyped notions.

Retaining workers (Chapter 4)

Some providers in the study, for example nursery and reception units in schools, reported low rates of staff turnover, while others said that they had to recruit almost continuously to retain their required staffing levels. While some providers regarded high turnover as a serious problem, others believed it 'went with the patch'.

Many day nurseries said that low pay is a factor in staff turnover and some were also aware of higher turnover rates among younger and unqualified staff. Out of school and holiday schemes and pre-school playgroups reported high levels of turnover because staff typically join when their children are young and leave when they were older. Where turnover was low, managers explained this partly with reference to good team working and training opportunities.

Providers were generally aware of the role of human resource practices in retaining staff, but many had poorly developed systems for introducing staff to work routines, though induction, and for staff appraisal and development. In many settings staff were often given documents to read at home and were taken through only the most important documents. Although staff sometimes work initially under supervision, they usually take on their full duties from the first day.

Most providers were aware of the benefits of training. Most training offered by providers was on short courses away from the workplace. Where staff attended courses outside of their paid hours, they were often not given time off in lieu. Many providers regarded training to NVQs as optional and something which staff might chose to do for their own interest. Therefore, while some providers paid for NVQ training, often subsidised by their EYDCP, others did not. Providers rarely allowed staff to do course work in working hours so that training encroached on workers' own time. NVQ awards sometimes resulted in an increase in pay and responsibility, but reward structures often were ill-defined and promotion criteria unclear. Many providers and workers said that the benefits in obtaining such qualifications were in future job prospects rather than in the present job.

Some providers had structured systems for managing staff, which included appraisal and staff consultation. However, in some cases such systems were entirely absent, and appraisals were often unconnected with staff training and development. They may not therefore be effective in reducing staff turnover. Many providers had regular staff meetings, which staff were usually required to attend. These were often outside of work time and staff were not paid over-time. This may lead to excessive working hours and to resentment.

Childcare workers placed considerable value on good staff relations and team working. A number of staff said that relations between nursery managers and staff were poor and that staff were not treated fairly. Poor working relations between management and staff were found to result in some cases from incompetence among managers, including poor organisation, and in others from authoritarian styles of management.

Workers in all types of setting said that the best thing about their job was working with children. In line with other recent research, this was universally seen as a highly positive feature of the job. Many simply enjoyed the company of children and seeing to their needs, while others

enjoyed assisting with their development. Many valued the variety in their job, absence of a fixed routine and the 'fun' of working with children.

The most negative aspect of working in childcare was identified as low pay. Although this was remarked upon by workers in all settings, it was a particular problem when combined with the long hours worked in private day nurseries. On the issue of hours, workers in settings such as play groups and after-school care said that sessions are sometimes at awkward times of the day and can adversely affect family life. However, short and dispersed hours suited some people in particular circumstances, or who combined their childcare job with other work. Workers in most settings complained of the low status of the work, in particular the perceptions of people from outside the sector that the work involves 'playing' with children.

A number of workers saw the demands of paper work, such as report writing and lesson planning as a negative feature of the job. This was often because it had to be done at home. However, some childcare workers disliked such tasks even if their employer allowed them time to do it at work, mainly because they reduce time spent with children.

The research findings suggest that current problems of recruitment and retention in the sector could be eased by the following changes:

- Increased pay across the sector
- Reduced hours in private day nurseries
- Improved career structure in all parts of the sector
- Greater encouragement for training, and opportunities to train during working hours
- Greater use of 'family friendly' policies in day nurseries
 - Free or subsidised nursery places for staff children
 - Time off for assemblies, sports day etc.
- Improve status across the sector, possibly through a change in job titles, eg practitioner and greater emphasis on aspects of the work relating to education and development

Although workers felt that changes such as those listed above would help recruitment and retention, many were also concerned that the principal motivation of those who go into childcare occupations should be to work with children and that campaigns should aim to attract people who are genuinely suited to the work.

The recruitment and retention of childminders (Chapter 5)

All of the childminders in the study were parents. They had a range of work experience, from low skilled work in supermarkets to well paid jobs in sales and marketing. Some had experience of working with children, mainly as volunteers. A strong motivation for many was to be at home during the day or after school with their own children. Like other childcare workers, the aspect of the work they enjoyed most was being with children.

Although some childminders seemed to be making a reasonable income from the work, a number of childminders stated that their earnings were not high and that money was not therefore a motivating factor. Childminders were very flexible in the childcare arrangements they made with parents.

Three of the childminders were men, two of them providing day care on contract with their local authority. Many were lone parents. A possible explanation for this is that lone parents may experience more difficulty combining work outside the home with bringing up children. If lone parents have found childminding a good employment option, they may be an appropriate group for recruitment campaigns.

Few problems were reported with setting up, although a small number of childminders reported difficulties getting their first clients, probably because most childminders obtain their clients through word of mouth.

Most childminders had experienced problems filling places, and day places were reported to be harder to fill than after school and holiday provision. There was some concern that the national childcare recruitment campaign might result 'flooding' of the market and make it more difficult for childminders to fill places and make a living.

Childminders reported difficulties dealing with parents, with the most common problems reported with parents arriving late to collect children and difficulties over fees, either the amount due, or punctuality of payment. There were indications that some childminders were not comfortable negotiating financial matters with parents and might be assisted through further training in this area.

Childminders had taken up opportunities for training, in addition to introductory courses, mainly motivated by their own interest in childcare and development. Parents were seen as more interested in childminders' experience rather than their training. Nevertheless, a number of childminders had developed folders with details of their training and certificates to show to prospective clients and to OFSTED. More widespread use of this practice might encourage parents to take more interest in training and qualifications when choosing a childminder, and could help to raise the status of the job.

Childminders valued opportunities for social contact with other childminders and a number said they would welcome more opportunity to meet other childminders. The NCMA was reported to be a valuable source of information and support, providing help on such matters as record keeping and accounts and standard terms and conditions. Childminders generally reported positive experiences of the inspection process through OFSTED.

Childminders resented the low status of the job. They felt there is a widespread misconception that childminders 'park' children in front of the television and literally 'mind' children rather than actively engage with them. Childminders therefore felt that greater awareness of the training and inspection involved would help to dispel this view. It was also suggested that a change in job title would help raise its status.

The work of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (Chapter 6)

Partnerships varied in the approach they adopted towards recruitment and retention. Three of the Partnerships identified an immediate need to recruit childcare workers to expand current

provision or to fill vacancies. These Partnerships therefore concentrated on work with the general public to stimulate demand for services and interest in employment in the sector. In the other five areas there was less urgent need to fill vacancies and long-term goals such as improving quality and training were more strongly emphasised.

Although the approach of EYDCPs varied according to local conditions, the expertise and background of key staff were also found to influence the emphasis of work on recruitment and retention. Those with a background in training appeared to bring a stronger appreciation of some issues associated with recruitment and retention than those with a background in childcare.

Few Partnerships gave sufficient consideration to the decision-making process among those interested in a career in childcare and to the role of guidance. However, to prevent early leaving, it is important that individuals considering working in the sector are well informed, well motivated and have explored their own suitability for the work with a careers adviser.

Partnerships identified a number of issues for recruitment into the sector, including low pay, hours of work, and low status. Further problems were identified in competition from other sectors, particularly Supermarkets and call-centres and competition within the childcare sector from the maintained nursery sector. Rural areas were identified as having poorer provision of childcare and more recruitment difficulties than urban districts. Partnerships' assessment of recruitment problems in the sector corresponded closely with the views of providers. Partnerships also identified issues for childcare and early years workers, including the demands of paper work, such as lesson planning and progress records.

The emphasis of the campaign work conducted by the Partnerships was strongly on recruitment, with retention taking a back seat. The main reason given for this was the concern by Partnerships to meet their targets for new childcare places. There was some evidence of attempts to meet targets with only limited expansion of provision.

Some Partnerships felt there were practical difficulties of working with providers on retention. There was also evidence of more limited expertise in retention issues, than in recruitment, among Partnership representatives. A number of representatives of Partnerships expressed the view that they could do little about the issues affecting retention, other than encourage providers to train staff. The emphasis on recruitment and sidelining of retention is problematic because, unless issues of retention are addressed, efforts expended on recruitment are likely to have only short-term benefits.

Partnerships were, however, taking active steps to improve the retention of childminders, partly because of concern to meet Government targets over the retention of this group. Some Partnerships were working with providers on retention issues and planned to do more. This work included business support and professional training and seminars on retention. Providers said they found these useful, or were interested in such events.

Representatives of all but one of the Partnerships said that the main emphasis was on work with the public. This included posters, leaflets, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts and fairs. Monitoring of telephone enquiries gave Partnerships some indication of effectiveness. Their

findings suggest differences between areas and a need for local variation in campaign methods. However, the effectiveness of different methods and materials is not fully known because enquiries were not systematically followed-up. This is an issue which Partnerships need to address.

All of the Partnerships had held at least one fair, which they felt had raised the profile of the Partnership and of opportunities for working in the sector. A key factor in the success of fairs, in terms of attendance levels, was identified in their location with those in busy areas attracting the largest number of participants.

Although only one of the eight EYDCPs said that working with providers on recruitment and retention was a key part of their work, Partnerships were trying to strengthen their links with providers, through setting up structures such as sector groups. EYDCPs were developing a number of ways to give providers practical assistance with recruitment, including help with advertising vacancies. One Partnership had developed a recruitment pack, which included model contracts, job descriptions and similar documents. Partnerships had run seminars in quality assurance, including in relation to staffing practices which were reported to attract a lot of interest from providers.

Partnerships have targets to increase the proportion of childcare workers from under-represented groups. Although these include men, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those aged over 40 years, efforts to increase diversity focused on ethnic minorities. Partnerships were keen to promote the recruitment of men, and used 'role models' in their campaigns. However, some were pessimistic about the success of any campaign targeted at men.

The work of Partnerships in promoting the recruitment of disabled people and those aged over 40 was less developed than for minority ethnic groups or men. Seminars on issues surrounding the employment of disabled people had been held for employers, but recruitment work with the over 40 age group was somewhat unimaginative, consisting largely of features on local 'solid gold' music radio stations. Other possible targets, such as parents of school children, those caring for grandchildren and people taking early retirement, were not being tapped by the Partnerships.

Partnerships supported a range of types of training, including introductory and initial training, skills training and short courses for existing employees. The introductory 'Making Choices' course was central to Partnerships' recruitment campaigns, but was reported to be sometimes poorly attended. Some Partnerships were aware of the need to build on the enthusiasm among some participants in introductory courses by providing swift transition to sector-specific training. Some Partnerships had taken steps to clarify entry routes and training courses through developing a training guide.

Although Partnerships used DfES materials on recruitment, they did not always fully support the messages of national campaigns, for example portraying childcare as easy and 'fun' rather than a serious profession. Some EYDCPs have developed strong reputations for the quality of their materials, and these are sought after for the quality of their content and design. Partnerships found campaign materials for target groups particularly useful and it was suggested that the DfES collate the best materials produced locally to distribute to EYDCPs.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Background

In a buoyant economy, recruiting and retaining workers can present particular challenges for employers in some industries. Childcare is a sector which has long experienced such problems, which are heightened when other jobs are easily found. This is despite the intrinsic attractions of working in the sector and the high levels of occupational commitment (see for example Cameron et al 2001b). The childcare sector plays a crucial role in the economy by assisting women with children to work outside the home. Therefore, unlike other sectors, problems of recruitment and retention in childcare can impact on other sectors. Given that women with children will have different preferences for hours of work, as well as the sector they wish to work in and have the skills for, a strong childcare sector which can meet these needs exerts a strong influence on their participation.

In recognition of the crucial role of childcare in women's participation in the labour market and in outcomes for children, the National Childcare Strategy was introduced in 1998, with three main aims: to improve the quality of care; to enable more families are able to afford childcare; and to expand the number of childcare places and improve information about what is available (DfEE, 1998). In July 2000, the Department for Education and Skills launched a National Childcare Recruitment Campaign, aimed at raising the profile of childcare as a career through a television and press campaign. This campaign is planned to continue across England until March 2004.

The National Childcare Strategy and national campaign are being carried out at local level by Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs). These are located within Local Education Authority areas and include representatives of local childcare providers, such as nursery owners and playgroup leaders, as well as representatives from other organisations with an interest in the childcare strategy, such as voluntary organisations, the health authorities, employers, parents and local authority departments such as Education and Social Services. EYDCPs are required to run a Children's Information Service (CIS) and to provide advice, support and training for early years, play and childcare workers. This includes helping potential recruits to find work and training locally through telephone information lines and events such as recruitment fairs and short courses.

EYDCPs and providers are expected to help to meet the increased demand for early education and childcare places, and facilitate the new recruitment needed to achieve this. Each EYDCP sets its own targets for recruitment, based on a number of additional places agreed with the DfES. In addition, the Department has set targets for recruiting groups currently under-represented in the childcare workforce. These are men, people from ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities and people aged over 40. National targets for these groups are currently men (6%); ethnic minorities (6%), people with disabilities (15%) and people aged 40 and over (40%). EYDCPs are expected to have higher targets where they believe they can achieve a higher representation from these groups (EYDCP Implementation Planning Guidance, 2002).

The early years, childcare and playwork workforce

The childcare and playwork sector employs an estimated 275,000 paid staff². Childcare workers are employed by a wide range of settings, including day nurseries, nursery and reception classes in schools, pre-schools and playgroups, out of school and holiday schemes, and creches in locations including shopping centres and sports clubs. Some of these settings offer both full and part-time jobs, but many settings offer just part-time employment. Therefore, the majority of childcare employees are part-time. In addition, many childcare workers are self-employed with childminders constituting the largest group, followed by nannies and au-pairs.

Existing research has found the sector to experience problems both recruiting staff and retaining them (see for example, Cameron, 1997; SQW/NOP, 2002). The evidence for this and possible explanations are explored in Chapter 2, and include low pay, low status, poor career progression and poor terms and conditions, including lack of paid holidays and sick leave. Recruitment and retention problems are worse in some parts of the sector than others, with vacancies in the maintained nursery sector being easier to fill than those in private provision. Moreover, even among providers who have experienced problems, these are not uniform, so that in some types of setting long hours have resulted in difficulties recruiting and retaining staff, while in others, such difficulties result from the availability of short and dispersed hours.

A further issue for recruitment concerns the composition of the childcare workforce, which does not reflect the diversity of the population. It is predominantly female and people with disabilities and from ethnic minorities are under-represented, as are workers aged over 50 (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000; Cameron et al, 2001a; SQW/NOP, 2002). The aim of the Government to introduce greater diversity into the childcare workforce is reflected in the targets agreed with DfES for the recruitment of under-represented groups at local level, and in the content of its own national advertising campaigns.

Research Aims

To achieve the National Childcare Strategy's aims, it is important that the barriers to recruitment and retention across the sector are fully understood. The study was intended to inform the national recruitment campaign by identifying successful and less successful approaches to the recruitment and retention of childcare, early years and playworkers, by EYDCPs and providers, and by obtaining childcare workers' own perspectives on their work. A central aim of the study was to find examples of good practice which other Partnerships and providers might use to improve recruitment and retention rates. These findings have been published separately as guides to good practice for Partnerships and for providers (DfES 2002).

The aim of the research with EYDCPs was to look at how they organise and run the recruitment campaign in their local area. Issues explored with EYDCPs therefore included their perspective on the campaign, their expertise on the issues involved and what activities they found to have

² This figure is from the 2001 childcare workforce survey (SQW/NOP,2002) and does not cover early education settings or crèches, nannies or au pairs.

worked well in their areas. These included such activities as advertising, events and use of materials.

The aim of the research with providers was to examine how they go about recruiting staff and to investigate practices in the sector which may assist retention, and those which can lead to staff turnover. By including a range of types of providers, for example day nurseries, out of school care and playgroups, the study aimed to identify which sectors experience particular problems with recruitment and retention and which do not and to identify the reasons for such variation.

The research also included interviews with 53 staff. These were across the range of occupations found across different forms of childcare provision, including nursery nurses, nursery assistants, playgroup leaders and helpers, other play staff and those doing similar jobs with a range of titles. They also included 14 childminders. The aim of these interviews was to find out more about people's motives for working in the sector, their experiences of the recruitment process and of working practices, and their plans for the future. Interviews with childminders addressed similar issues, but included experiences of setting up, support and inspection, issues which are thought to present barriers to recruitment.

Research Methods

The research was carried out in 3 stages:

Stage 1: A review of existing literature on recruitment and retention of childcare, early years and play workers and secondary analysis of the Labour Force Survey in relation to the sector;

Stage 2: Interviews with Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in 8 areas;

Stage 3: case studies of 40 childcare providers. This stage of the research consisted of interviews with managers in a range of settings, including day nurseries, out of school and holiday schemes, pre-school play groups; and interviews with 39 workers in the same settings, and 14 childminders. The case studies involved interviews with managers and senior staff and a range of childcare staff, including those with and without qualifications. Topic guides used in interviews with EYDCPs, providers and staff are included in Appendix 1 of the report.

The empirical research was designed to include qualitative case studies with eight EYDCPs to allow adequate representation of different types of experience in terms of success in meeting targets, geographical spread and local labour markets. The study therefore included two rural areas, four areas with high demand for labour and two areas which have failed to meet targets agreed with by the DfES for the number of new childcare places. Interviews with Partnerships explored issues including methods used to promote recruitment, the role of training, use of the DfES materials covering recruitment and retention, equal opportunities and diversity, and relationships with partners and childcare providers.

40 providers took part in the study, including 14 childminders and 26 group settings. These were selected to cover a wide range of providers in the maintained and non-maintained sectors. Therefore, they included day nurseries under private ownership, and a creche run by a charitable organisation; school nursery and reception units in the state education sector, out of school and

holiday playschemes usually in the voluntary sector, and pre-school playgroups, also in the voluntary sector. Staff were interviewed in each setting, usually selected at random from a staff list, but sometimes from who was available at the time. Additional information was collected from providers on all staff: their age, gender, ethnicity, length of service and range of pay. This information is presented in Chapter 2 of the report.

Table 1. Providers visited and staff interviewed

Type of provider	Number of settings	Staff interviewed
Day Nurseries (including workplace nurseries and creche)	8	14
Pre-schools/playgroups	5	7
Out of school and holiday schemes	6	9
Nursery and reception classes in schools	7	9
Childminders	14	14
Total	40	53

Structure of the report

There are six chapters to this report. Chapter 2 looks at the childcare labour market, through a review of existing literature and an analysis of data from the Labour Force Survey. This chapter also describes the background of childcare workers included in the study. Chapter 3 looks at the methods used by providers to recruit workers, and who they recruit and the potential for increasing diversity within the workforce. The chapter presents the perspective of providers on whether they have a recruitment problem. It also looks at workers' experiences of the recruitment process and how they came to be in their current jobs. Chapter 4 explores issues relating to the retention of childcare workers; at providers human resource practices which may affect workers' decisions to stay in their jobs. The chapter presents providers' views on whether they have a retention problem. It also presents workers' own views on the positive and negative aspects of working in the sector.

The issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of childminders are somewhat different to those for other childcare workers because childminders are self-employed childcare workers operating from their own homes. Therefore, the experiences and views of this group of workers are presented separately in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 looks at the work of the EYDCPs in delivering the childcare strategy and campaign at local level, at their work with providers and with the

general public. The chapter also looks at providers' views of the work of the Partnerships in their area. Section 7 concludes the report with a discussion of the main findings of the study.

Chapter 2. The labour market

Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the findings of the case study research presented in later chapters of the report. It begins with a review of existing literature on the childcare, early years and playwork workforce, which was conducted both to place the current research in context and to inform the design of the qualitative research with providers and childcare workers. Therefore, the literature is largely recent, most of it dating from the 1990s to the present. The focus is on British literature, but some involves cross-national comparisons. The review looks at the main areas of research and policy analysis, identifying the main issues addressed, findings and issues which have been left unexplored. Key issues and implications are identified for the current research. This is followed by a presentation of data on the childcare workforce from the Labour Force Survey, which includes analysis of the personal characteristics of childcare workers, characteristics of the job, length of service and movement. The final part of the chapter describes the childcare workers employed by the participating organisations, and the characteristics, background and hours of work of those who were interviewed in the research.

Existing research on the childcare, early years and playwork workforce

Introduction

Recent literature on childcare and early years provision has considered issues of employment, including recruitment and retention, even where these are not the main focus. Discussions of policy, provision, and quality, all lead inevitably to consideration of such issues because the sector is by nature labour intensive. Therefore, the expansion of the sector and the quality of provision are dependent on the childcare workforce. Five main areas of literature can be identified, although these are by no means discrete:

- Childcare and early years policy and provision
- The childcare workforce
- Gender segregation and ethnicity in the childcare workforce
- Training and quality issues in childcare
- Turnover of childcare workers and turnover in other sectors

Childcare early years and playwork policy and provision

There is a large body of literature on childcare policy and provision, some of which addresses issues of the childcare workforce, and much of which includes international comparisons of provision. This literature is based largely on analysis of policy, rather than on empirical research and its focus is on three main policy issues:

- The role of childcare in supporting maternal employment, children's development and tackling economic disadvantage

- The relationship of childcare to education
- Which type of childcare provision is most necessary and appropriate

The childcare workforce is reported to be diverse and varied, reflecting a wide variety of services in different areas of the country, or between countries (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000). Expansion within the sector during the 1980s and 1990s has led to differences between areas of the country in terms of the extent of provision and its type. Although childcare provision is intended in part to address inequality and deprivation, in the UK day care has increased most in the least deprived areas, reflecting the association between childcare and the employment of women with children, but has declined in the most deprived areas (see Randall and Fisher, 2001). The literature also identifies changes in the type of provision, such as the increase in day nursery provision and in out of school care and holiday care, a decline in play groups and childminders and an increase in the average size of provider (SQW/NOP 2002; IFS, 2002). Such changes have implications for the supply and recruitment of childcare workers.

Literature on childcare policy has addressed issues of quality and training in childcare, identifying a tension between the need for low cost provision and the need for quality care by trained staff. A number of commentators therefore express concern that poor pay and conditions, combined with limited opportunities for training lead both to high levels of staff turnover and to poor standards of childcare (see Cameron, 1997). Training is identified as a key issue to be addressed with the expansion of the sector, to address issues of quality and low status of the work. The case is made for an improved career structure, with a single, integrated early years profession. The UK has recently integrated administrative responsibility for early welfare and education within the education system, but retains a split system of education and training for early years teachers and childcare workers (see Moss, 2001).

A number of studies note that many childcare workers are without specialist training and that, despite the variety of provision, the workforce in many parts of the sector is homogenous. Many who work in the sector are young, female and white. The literature also remarks on the poor salaries and poor working conditions offered and the low status of the work (see Penn, 1995). In this context, concerns are raised for the supply and recruitment of qualified education and early years workers during a period of rapid expansion, which has been fueled by Government policy and a buoyant labour market. However, this is counter-balanced by high levels of intrinsic job satisfaction found among childcare workers (see, for example, Cameron et al, 2001b).

The childcare, early years and playwork workforce

A number of studies have been carried out on the childcare, early years and playwork workforce, focusing on its characteristics, and the extent of training and qualifications held. These include studies for the DfEE/DfES and others which have taken an international perspective to identify variations and similarities in the childcare labour force.

Studies have looked at employee characteristics, including gender, age and ethnicity, qualifications, both educational qualifications and in childcare. Research has also looked at training opportunities for childcare workers. Much literature on the childcare workforce has been

informed by recruitment difficulties experienced by the sector. Therefore, it looks at the perspectives of childcare workers on their jobs, and what motivates them to work in the sector.

These studies reach similar findings on the nature of the childcare workforce, in particular that it is predominantly female and white and, in many parts of the sector, for example day nurseries, young. Some studies express concern for the future prospects of the sector, as the pool of potential recruits diminishes with the rise in qualifications among school leavers. A number of studies refer to differences within the childcare workforce between types of setting. Women with children are found to predominate in pre-schools and playgroups. Men are in a small minority in all types of setting and ethnic minorities are under-represented. However, higher proportions of men and ethnic minorities are found to work in out of school care and holiday schemes. Research which has included volunteers as well as paid workers has found a higher proportion of men and ethnic minorities among volunteers in out of school clubs and pre-school/play groups (SQW/NOP, 2002). Some parts of the sector offer full-time jobs, but in other parts of the sector, for example playgroups and after school care, hours of work are part-time and dispersed. Research has reported examples of workers taking two or even three jobs in the sector to obtain a full-time equivalent wage (IdeA, 1999; Scott et al, 2001).

Research which examines the motivations of childcare workers reports high levels of intrinsic commitment to and reward from childcare and playwork. However, at the same time childcare workers complain at the low value attached to their work. (see for example Cameron et al, 2001). Research on childcare workers' attitudes to their work has concentrated on nursery workers and childminders, and identifies these groups as vulnerable to competing sources of employment (see Cameron et al, 2001; IdeA, 1999; Mooney et al, 2001). Many childcare workers are parents themselves, and research reports problems experienced by some workers in combining childcare work with parenting (Cameron et al, 2001a).

Policy suggestions resulting from existing studies include the need to diversify recruitment to lessen the current reliance on young female labour force and the potential to raise career prospects and pay through creating an 'early childcare worker'. This is modeled on the 'core' early childhood worker found in integrated childcare and education systems in other European countries, described by Moss as follows:

'The worker is relatively well trained (with at least a three year training in higher education) and well paid (at or just below the level of school teachers), and works across the whole early childhood age range.....These 'core' workers usually work with less qualified workers...' (2001:5).

This idea is advocated by the national childcare charity, the DayCare Trust, and by Calder (1995) who propose a three year programme of higher education for such workers (see below).

Childminders

Childminders constitute an important section of the childcare labour force. After relatives and friends, childminders are the most commonly used form of childcare (see Mooney et al, 2001). The issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of childminders are somewhat different to

those for other childcare workers because childminders are self-employed childcare workers operating from their own homes. Therefore, the experiences and views of this group of workers have been considered separately by research on the childcare labour force (see Moss, 1987; Mooney et al, 2002). Research on childminders has found that many women take up the work because it allows them to combine paid work with caring for their own children (see Mooney et al, 2001). Childminders have been found to have low levels of education and worked previously in low skilled work. They do not generally hold qualifications in childcare, although some have experience of paid or voluntary work in childcare in addition to childminding (see IdeA, 1999).

Turnover among childminders has been estimated to be just over 18 per cent (IdeA, 1999)³ but research has also identified two main groups of childminder: those who view it as a long-term career; and those who plan to remain in childminding for a temporary period while their own children are young, with turnover lower among the first group. Pay has been identified as a factor in childminders' decisions to give up and find alternative employment (see Mooney et al, 2001).

Recent research has identified a fall in the number of childminders and vacancies among childminders, which suggests they are an under-used resource (see SQW/NOP, 2002; IFS, 2002; Mooney et al, 2002). This also has implications for policy aimed at increasing the number of childminders and reducing childminder turnover. However, childminders are likely to remain a popular choice for some parents because they are able to fit in with parents' working hours (see La Valle et al, 2000) and because of the value placed by parents on providers who can show their child affection (see Woodland et al, 2002).

Gender segregation and ethnicity in the childcare, early years and playwork workforce

Literature on diversity within the childcare workforce has focused on gender. In comparison very little consideration has been given to the issue of ethnicity, although a number of UK studies have noted that ethnic minorities are under-represented in the childcare workforce. Studies of gender in childcare work have largely consisted of comparative studies based on secondary analysis or on literature reviews (see Moss, 2000; Cameron et al, 2001a) and any empirical research has been small in scale (see Cameron et al, 1999). However, this research offers a useful insight into the key issues in the under-representation of men in childcare in addressing three main questions:

- Why are men under represented in the workforce?
- What would be the benefits of recruiting more men into childcare?
- What could be done to increase the number of men in childcare?

The first question has been answered mainly with reference to poor pay and conditions in the sector and the predominance of part-time jobs in many types of setting. However, researchers have pointed out that even where the work is more highly paid and full-time, in Nordic countries which provide greater Government subsidies to childcare, men are still a relatively small

³ Researchers arrived at a figure of 18.3 per cent, as a sum of childminders surveyed who had worked for one year or less (14.4%) and the fall in employment of 3.9 %. A follow-up survey in 2001 did not include an estimate of turnover (SQW/NOP, 2002).

minority of childcare workers. (Moss 2000; Bertram and Pascal, 2000). It has therefore been suggested that the image of childcare as 'women's work' may be an important factor. Research has also identified a problem in suspicion of the motives of male childcare workers, in particular that they may be perceived as having perverse sexual motives (Cameron, 2001).

Studies have identified a number of potential benefits of recruiting more men into childcare. These include:

- Male childcare workers as role models for boys
- To demonstrate equality in roles of men and women to children
- To provide children with a balance of experience and approach to childcare offered by men and women
- To reduce the current reliance on a young female workforce, which is inherently less stable because of periods of absence for childbirth and childrearing

A number of suggestions have been made on measures which might attract more men into childcare. These include improving pay and career structures and to recruit men into centres with an emphasis on play and education, and where work is more compatible with traditional views on men's role. There is a need for further research to explore how successful these are likely to be in increasing the proportion of men in childcare, and to more clearly identify what the barriers to entry are for men of different ages and backgrounds.

Training and quality issues in childcare, early years and playwork

Research on the areas of training and quality stem from concerns with the quality of care and provision for young children and from a drive for professional status for childcare and early years workers. On the first of these, a number of studies suggest a link between staff training and the quality of care (Palmerus, 1996; Munton et al, 2002) which identifies a need for improvements in training and qualifications. Much of the recent literature on training has focused on the current split in the UK between education of young children and their care. The literature therefore remarks on different training routes for early years teachers, and childcare workers, with teachers undertaking 4 years of Higher Education course, and childcare workers taking a 2 year course in Further Education for a qualification at level 3. Comparisons are made with some countries with combined systems of training of early years education and childcare workers (see Calder, 1995; Moss, 2001; DayCare Trust, 2001). Moreover, many childcare workers in the UK have qualifications lower than level 3 or none at all, and there is a heavy reliance on experienced, but unqualified staff (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000). Research has also found a lack of consistency in the requirement for training to work with young children across the UK, which presents a problem for mobility of childcare workers and for career progression (Cordeaux, 1999 Bertram and Pascal, 2000). However, recent research suggests that there are improvements in the skill levels of the workforce, with indications of a recent increase in qualifications and training in the sector (SQW/NOP, 2002).

Childcare providers are believed to place insufficient importance on training (see Vernon and Smith, 1994). The 1998 Childcare Workforce Survey reports lack of time and funding as two restraints on staff training (IdeA, 1999) and the 2001 survey refers to issues of access to training

courses (SQW/NOP, 2002). Childcare workers are believed to be restricted by family commitments, the cost of training and by lack of flexibility in their hours (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000; Mooney et al, 2001). Research on childminders found that over one in four were interested in pursuing a qualification in childcare⁴ (see IdeA, 1999). Research by Mooney and colleagues of former childminders gives a number of reasons why childminders may not attend courses, including lack of time and their own childcare responsibilities (see Mooney et al, 2001). Cameron and colleagues found differences in views of nursery workers about training between those with qualifications and those without: those with qualifications were more convinced of the benefits to childcare provision than unqualified workers. The same study also found that half of those who thought they would still be in childcare in the next five years thought they would study for a qualification (see Mooney et al, 2001).

Research on childcare training policy has also identified a problem in the proliferation of qualifications and awarding bodies which results in confusion among providers, employees and potential childcare workers (see Cordeaux, 1999). This is identified as an important issue in the Green Paper *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* (1998) which states:

‘Deciding which training and qualifications are suitable for different jobs and career paths in the sector can be confusing. There are many different types of work (early years, playwork, and other related areas such as social care and youthwork) and many training courses and qualifications. There seems to be little consistency among childcare employers on the qualifications they require or recognise for childcare workers doing similar types of work. This can be particularly problematic for childcare workers moving to a new area’ (HMSO, 1998)

National Vocational Qualifications have been developed within the UK partly to deal with such problems, and to increase certificated training in sectors where it is low. However, as the Green Paper also points out, there are only a few higher level qualifications in the profession. Moreover, NVQs have not been given a universal welcome by writers on childcare policy, and have been criticised for down-grading the importance of knowledge (see Calder, 1995). As stated above, it has been argued that care and education should be combined in early years provision. It has also been argued that training for such work should be placed in Higher Education (see Calder, 1996) and supported by post-graduate modules (see DayCare Trust, 2001). The ‘core’ childcare worker developed by such a system is described by Moss (2001).

A number of issues have been raised in relation to proposals to improve the training and qualifications of childcare workers. The first of these is that childcare workers might have increased expectations for earnings, which may be difficult to meet in a largely unsubsidised childcare sector, and which might lead to turnover. Secondly, concerns have been raised for the prospects for women, and some men, who are keen to work in the sector but have little interest in training, particularly in theoretical aspects of childcare and education. It is therefore feared that efforts to raise qualifications might exacerbate current recruitment difficulties. In response to these concerns, it has been argued that competency based qualifications allow individuals to progress at their own pace, and they need not be discouraged by requirements to gain

⁴ However, the survey achieved a response rate of only 30 per cent and the sample may therefore be biased.

qualifications. Moreover, it has also been argued that training should not be kept at a low level for such reasons (Moss, 2000).

Turnover of childcare, early years and playworkers and turnover in other sectors

A number of studies have drawn attention to high levels of staff turnover experienced by employers in the childcare sector (see Penn, 1995; Cameron, 1997; Bertram and Pascal, 2000). Recent studies report increasing problems of recruitment and retention in the sector (see Cameron et al, 2001b; IDS, 2001). A survey of nurseries found a third of providers had difficulties with staff retention, and two-thirds had recruitment problems (IDS, 2001). Cameron (1997) states, ‘...the rate at which staff leave childcare work is alarming’. However, reliable figures on turnover in the sector are difficult to find, because of variations in methods of measuring turnover, varying economic climate and variations between types of provider. The 2001 Childcare Workforce Survey found turnover rates of 16 per cent among nursery workers; 13 per cent in playgroups and 19 per cent among workers in out of school clubs, but these rates are lower than other studies, particularly of nursery workers: Penn (1995) and Cameron (2001a) both report turnover rates between 25 and 30 per cent.

The emphasis of a number of studies has been in identifying reasons for staff turnover, focusing on reasons why people leave the sector. Some research is motivated principally by concerns about the implications of turnover for the quality of care (see, for example, Bertram and Pascal, 2000). Problems of recruitment into the sector are given less consideration, since the focus of research is on workers rather than employers, although recruitment difficulties are widely reported (see for example SQW/NOP, 2002). Some research on turnover has been conducted from an international perspective, including within Europe and elsewhere (Cameron, 1997; Bertram and Pascal, 2000). Issues of staff turnover have also been addressed in American literature on childcare (see Manlove and Guzell, 1997; Wilder Research Center, 2001).

Studies suggest that reasons for staff turnover in childcare occupations may differ from those elsewhere. The main reasons for this are that the intrinsic rewards of the job are high, but status and extrinsic rewards are low (see Cameron, 1997). Therefore, childcare workers report high levels of satisfaction with the content of their jobs, and particularly their contact with children, but report low levels of satisfaction with pay and benefits such as holidays. Studies have focused on nursery workers and have identified low pay, poor terms and conditions such as pension rights and sick pay, poor career structures, lack of consistent training and poor quality standards as features of the childcare sector which result in high staff turnover (see, for example, Bertram and Pascal, 2000; DayCare Trust, 2001). Recent research by the national childcare charity Daycare Trust reports average pay in the sector at less than £11,000, with more than 80 per cent of childcare workers earning less than £13,000 a year (Daycare Trust, 2001). As shown later, many day nurseries pay at the level of the minimum wage, including the ‘development rate’ of £3.50 an hour for young workers. Although pay is widely referred to as an issue for retention, American research has suggested that pay is less important in retention of staff than in recruitment (see Manlove and Guzell, 1997). However, it is possible that pay combines with other factors to result in staff turnover, for example with long hours or few opportunities for advancement.

Studies identify higher rates of turnover among junior staff and those with shorter periods of service. This suggests a need for better induction, in-house training and management of new staff. Turnover has been found to vary according to type of setting, and is typically lower in the maintained sector, particularly school based care, than in private or voluntary settings. This may be due to a number of factors, including pay and training opportunities, which are known to vary across the sector.

Recent research refers to poor management as a factor in staff turnover, with the day nursery sector identified as particularly problematic. Staff in this sector have reported 'lack of respect' from management as contributing to staff turnover and high levels of stress, resulting in 'burnout' (see Cameron et al, 2001b). Research which looks at employer practices through managers' own accounts adds an additional and useful perspective on staff turnover. This has found poor training opportunities, low priority given to staff development, poor planning and staff supervision and limited non-contact time for administrative work and staff discussions (see Vernon and Smith 1994).

Although existing research suggests that poor terms and conditions of employment and poor management practice in the childcare sector make a significant contribution to turnover, attention has also been drawn to the predominance of women in the workforce and the role of factors such as family and personal reasons, for example pregnancy and house moves, in decisions to leave (Cameron et al, 2001a). These findings suggest a need for 'family friendly' policies (see Cameron 1997), but also to the benefits of creating a more diverse workforce, particularly through an increase in male childcare workers.

Studies of staff turnover in childcare suggest that the following might help to improve retention:

- improved pay and benefits,
- paid time for preparation, meetings and training,
- flexible working to accommodate family responsibilities
- team working, good communication and a supportive work environment
- opportunities for training, including in-house

Literature on turnover in other sectors, for example health and education, which have experienced similar difficulties, has identified similar problems in respect of access to training and career routes. These have been identified as issues for the retention of nurses (see Firth and Britton, 1989), and for teachers (see Smithers and Robinson, DfES 2001). Other studies have focused on issues leading to turnover among women workers (see Huws et al 1999; IDS, 1991) and, in addition to training opportunities, have noted the importance of flexible work options and family friendly policies as well as attractive employee benefits packages. This stems in part from the findings of some research that women are more likely to leave their jobs for personal or family reasons than are men. Studies have also noted the importance of intrinsic motivators associated with the nature of work in reducing turnover. On this issue childcare is likely to differ from other sectors because satisfaction with the work itself has been found to be generally high. Therefore issues affecting turnover in the childcare sector may be different to those in other sectors, and may need to be addressed in different ways.

Gaps in evidence

The main gaps in evidence concern the experiences of childcare workers across a range of settings and from different backgrounds; the effectiveness of recruitment practices; and the role of careers information and guidance.

On the first of these, research has looked in some detail at the experiences of nursery workers and childminders, but other sections of the childcare workforce have been given less attention. Therefore, relatively little is known about the motivations and experiences of workers in after school and holiday schemes, playgroups and schools. More information about these groups might help to identify differences in employment conditions and other features of the work that affect recruitment and retention.

Existing research has looked at barriers to the employment of men in childcare, giving full consideration to some of the possible issues for providers, prospective employees and for parents. However, research from the perspective of men, both current and prospective employees, is limited. It may be particularly useful to know the views of boys of secondary school age on working in childcare. This might help to identify possible gaps in knowledge and misconceptions about childcare careers. Reasons for the under-representation in the sector, including ethnic minorities and older workers, have not been addressed in existing research. Information about this issue could be of considerable assistance to the current National Childcare Strategy and recruitment campaign.

One of the main gaps in evidence concerns the recruitment process and its role in creating a stable workforce. Existing research shows the importance of ‘word of mouth’ to some types of providers, particularly playschemes, after school and holiday schemes (see SQW/NOP, 2002). However, reasons for the widespread use of this method are not explained. Moreover, research has not looked in any detail at the methods used by providers to recruit staff, and whether they are the most effective. This includes the criteria used to select applicants. Existing research refers to poor management practices in the sector (see Vernon and Smith, 1994; Cameron et al, 2001b). However, more detailed information is needed on practices which may assist retention, including induction, on the job training, appraisal and staff consultation.

Studies on retention across a range of sectors refer to the importance of recruiting the ‘right people’ in the first place (see IDS, 2000). Research on turnover in the childcare sector suggests that younger and less experienced staff are more likely to leave than those with more experience (see IdeA, 1999; Bertram and Pascal 2000; SQW/NOP, 2002). It also notes that many childcare workers, particularly nursery staff, enter at a young age straight from school or college. While a certain level of turnover may therefore be expected among this group, it also points to the importance of careers information and guidance for young people entering employment in the sector. Childcare is a popular career choice for young women, but it is possible that new entrants do not fully appreciate the nature of the work. Research on young people’s expectations of working in childcare might help to identify possible misconceptions and help to improve

information and guidance for childcare careers. Such information would also be useful in recruiting older people.

Childcare, early years and playwork workforce: evidence from the Labour Force Survey

Introduction

As part of the study, a number of analyses were conducted using the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The purpose was to contribute to our assessment of good practice through a better understanding of childcare employment and the childcare workforce. The analyses examined the personal characteristics of the childcare workforce and identifies groups who are under-represented. It considers how job characteristics may affect recruitment and retention, including who works in the sector. The prevalence of jobs with few hours is an issue for recruitment and retention and, as an indicator of demand for longer hours and of a possible source of supply, multiple job holding was examined. Job movement was examined, in order to identify the extent of the retention problem and the extent to which this leads to loss of childcare workers. Finally, the LFS has information on recruitment methods and this was analysed to explore whether advertising methods might be improved.

Childcare occupations identified in the Labour Force Survey

Analysis of the childcare workforce, using the Labour Force Survey encounters a major problem: the occupational breakdowns are not fine enough to identify the childcare workforce fully. Childcare workers can be found under the following classifications:

- 650 Nursery nurses
- 651 Playgroup leaders
- 652 Educational assistants
- 659 Other childcare & related occupations not elsewhere specified (nes)
- 234 Primary (& middle school deemed primary) & nursery education teaching professionals
- 235 Special education teaching professionals
- 239 Other teaching professionals not elsewhere specified (nes) managers

However, all but the first two classifications will also include workers outside our definition of childcare workers. The following pragmatic approach was taken: those working in the first four categories were included in the analysis, with the exception of educational assistants working in secondary, higher or adult education, and other childcare & related occupations nes who worked in secondary education. This means that the following excludes those classified as managers.

The analysis uses the Spring 2000 Labour Force Survey, the latest available at the time of writing.

Who works in childcare?

The LFS data show that the childcare workforce is overwhelmingly female (97%) and white (97%), Table 2. The majority employed in childcare are aged between 30 and 50 (60%) and have

children of their own aged under 19 (65%). Sixty-four percent do not have qualifications higher than level 2 and 13% no qualifications. On each of these five characteristics, the childcare workforce is over-represented^{5, 6}. However, there are some important differences across childcare occupations. The following discusses these differences, together with some other characteristics of the childcare workforce.

⁵ Apart from where otherwise specified, the childcare workforce is compared with all women employed. This is a more useful comparator than the workforce as a whole (men and women): comparing the almost female childcare workforce with all employed would largely identify differences between male and female employment generally, rather than any peculiarities of the childcare workforce.

⁶ Forty-four percent of all people employed are female; of females employed 95% are white, 53% are aged between 30 and 50 and 46% have children aged under 19. Fifty-five percent do not have qualifications higher than level 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of the childcare workforce

	percent of the childcare workforce (column %)						percent of all (column %)			
	nursery nurses	playgroup leaders	education assistants (primary)	other childcare occupations, excluding social work	other childcare occupations, those in social work	all childcare occupations	in employment	ILO unemployed	inactive	population
Female	99	98	98	96	97	97	45	39	63	50
							percent of females			
Women married/cohabiting	63	80	82	64	80	73	73	43	61	69
Women non-married	36	18	15	32	17	25	27	57	39	31
age										
Under 18	3	0	1	7	1	3	3	11	7	4
18 to under 20	7	4	1	4	1	3	4	9	5	4
20 to under 25	20	3	5	8	9	10	9	14	11	10
25 to under 30	12	2	3	11	8	8	12	13	10	12
30 to under 35	14	11	10	9	21	12	14	12	12	13
35 to under 40	12	16	24	13	22	18	14	12	12	14
40 to under 45	14	24	20	15	15	17	13	11	9	12
45 to under 50	9	18	18	12	14	13	12	6	8	11
50 to under 55	5	16	11	9	6	9	12	7	12	12
55 to under 60	4	4	4	9	2	5	8	5	14	9
60 and over	1	3	3	5	1	3	-			
Children										
none under 19	46	35	28	41	23	35	54	42	41	50
Some under 2	5	4	3	4	8	5	6	8	14	8
Some 2-4	10	0	5	8	20	9	10	14	19	12
Some 5-9	18	32	34	28	44	31	17	24	24	19
Some 10-15	28	48	50	44	39	39	22	28	25	23
Some under 16 (tot)	46	60	65	51	72	58	41	53	52	44
British nationals	99	95	97	90	97	95	95	92	91	94
<i>of which non-nationals arrived since 1999 (earliest childcare 1950)</i>	0	0	6	45	24	26	7	7	10	8
non-white	4	5	3	2	3	3	5	12	11	7

Qualifications										
Higher	22	13	20	7	14	15	27	12	11	22
A level or equiv.	25	34	21	13	23	20	18	16	15	17
GCSE grades A-C	42	30	37	28	34	35	29	32	23	27
Other	9	21	12	23	21	16	14	19	16	15
None	2	3	10	29	9	13	12	21	34	19
Enrolled on f/t course	1	2	1	10	4	4	5	11	16	8
Health probs >1year	20	17	18	20	21	20	19	29	40	25
Affect kind of work	7	3	6	9	8	7	7	19	32	15
Disabled	12	9	9	13	16	12	12	23	35	19

All holding childcare jobs (first and second jobs)
LFS, Spring 2000

Men working in childcare and studying

A large minority of the small number of men who work in childcare may be doing so to fund studying: 38% are in full-time education, with 17% at school and 21% at college or university. This varies substantially by childcare occupation, with the highest percentage in other childcare workers (excluding social work): 60% of men in full-time education. Nursery nurses and other childcare workers in social work also have a high percentage of their male workers in full-time education, 37% and 29% respectively. Only 10% of male education assistants and no male play group leaders were in full-time education. It is not possible from the LFS to identify whether employees are students who are employed to fund their study or whether they are childcare workers who are increasing their skills.

Four percent of the female childcare workforce were studying full-time. This compares with 5% of all female employees (aged under 60). Full-time study was most common for other childcare workers (in social work), where 10% of the workforce were studying full-time, split equally between those at school and those at college or university. This suggests that, for women, employment as other childcare workers (in social work) may be an attractive option for full-time students.

Family responsibilities

The relatively high percentage of women with children (aged under 19) working in childcare suggests this is either seen as an appropriate job for mothers or is relatively easy to combine with mothers' own childcare. However, the pattern varies across occupations and by age of workers' own children.

The high percentage of childcare workers with children was due to childcare workers being much more likely to have a child over the age of four. 31% of childcare workers had at least one child aged 5 to 9, much higher than the average for employed women, 17%. Similarly, childcare workers were more likely to have a child aged 10-15 (39% and 22%, respectively). Childcare workers were actually slightly less likely than all employed women to have any children under the age of 4 (9% and 12%, respectively).

This pattern varied by occupation. Nursery nurses were the least likely to have children under 19, although, at 54%, this was still higher than the average for all employed women. For nursery nurses, the spread across children's ages was similar to the national average. Other childcare workers in social work, education assistants and play group leaders were most likely to have children aged under 19, around three-quarters for the first two occupations and two-thirds of play group leaders. For all childcare occupations, except nursery nurses, a high percentage of workers had children in the 5-9 age range and the 10-15 age range. This was particularly high for play group leaders and education assistants for 10-15 year olds (with about half having children in this age range) and for other childcare workers in social work for children aged 5-9 (44%). Other childcare workers in social work were the only occupation to have a high percentage of workers with children aged under five (with 20% aged 2-4). These patterns suggest a strong link between own childcare responsibilities and working in the childcare sector for most childcare occupations, but that this is much less strong for nursery nurses.

A minority of the childcare workforce are single women, 27%. This is similar to the female workforce as a whole. However, single women are over-represented amongst nursery nurses and other childcare workers (excluding social work) (around one third) and substantially under-represented amongst the other childcare occupations (around one sixth).

Age

The age profile of childcare workers is likely to be driven by the link between own childcare responsibilities and working in the childcare sector. The concentration of childcare in the 30 to under 50 age range applies to play group leaders, education assistants and other childcare workers in social work. Nursery nurses and other childcare workers (excluding social work) have a younger age profile, with 42% and 30%, respectively, aged under 30, many of whom are in their teens and early 20s. A small percentage, 3%, of the childcare workforce are aged over 60, with the oldest in this survey aged 70.

Qualifications

Thirteen percent of the childcare workforce have no qualifications, 64% are qualified to level 2 or lower and a further 20% are qualified to level 3⁷. The relatively low qualification level of the childcare workforce is mainly due to few childcare workers holding a higher education qualification (15% v 27% of employed women)⁸.

Nursery nurses and education assistants are the most highly qualified, with 22% and 20%, respectively holding a higher education qualification (including a degree). Other childcare workers (excluding social work) are the least qualified, with only 7% holding any form of higher education qualification, whilst 29% have no qualifications (and 23% hold 'other qualifications'). This suggests that, in terms of qualifications, at least, no great barriers should exist to recruitment.

Twenty percent of the childcare workforce were studying for a qualification (similar to the average for employed women under 60, 19%). Four per cent were studying for a higher level qualification (slightly fewer than average, 6%). The majority of those studying for a qualification were enrolled part-time at a university or college (65% of those studying, 12% of the childcare workforce).

Other characteristics

Two other characteristics of the childcare workforce stood out: disability and nationality.

Twelve percent of the childcare workforce were disabled (either under DDA definition or due to a work-limiting disability), similar to the average for employed

⁷ These data cover all qualifications, whether childcare specific or not.

⁸ 4% of the childcare workforce have a degree compared with 16% of employed women.

women. Play group leaders and education assistants had the lowest percentage of disabled people, 9%, whilst other childcare workers in social work the highest, 16%.

In respect of nationality, 5% of the childcare workforce were non-British nationals, similar to the percentage for employed women. However, non-British nationals were under-represented amongst nursery nurses (1%) and over-represented amongst other childcare workers (excluding social work) (10%). Nationals of Eastern European states were over-represented (1.6% of the childcare workforce v 0.2% of all female employed).

Many childcare workers who were not born in Britain had arrived since January 1999, 24% compared with 7% of non-British born employed women. This suggests either that recent immigrants are particularly likely to work in childcare or that this figure includes many temporary entrants (e.g. young people working temporarily in this country as home helps and au pairs).

Characteristics of the job⁹

The ability to attract people to the childcare workforce and to retain workers will be affected by the nature of the job. Childcare jobs are similar to other jobs in terms of self-employment, with the exception of other childcare workers in social work, which has a much higher incidence of self-employment. Part-time work predominates and a relatively high percentage of jobs have very few hours. Homeworking is more common than average. Amongst employees, temporary, including casual, work is more common and pay rates are relatively low.

Contractual

The majority of jobs in childcare are for employees, 88%, with only 11% self-employed, Table 3. The self-employment rate is the same as for the workforce as a whole but is higher than the average for women, 7%. However, this is almost wholly due to the concentration of self-employment in other childcare workers in social work (where 55% are self-employed, compared with 5% or fewer in other childcare occupations). The LFS data is not specific about these workers' roles, but we would expect this group to include childminders.

Overall 71% of jobs are for employees and permanent, with large differences across occupations: 40% in other childcare workers in social work and 66% in education assistants, but over 80% for nursery nurses, play group leaders and other childcare workers (excluding social work). This compares with 82% of jobs in the workforce as a whole being for employees and permanent.

⁹ The data refers to main jobs only (i.e. not childcare jobs which are a second job). This is because the LFS provides little information on second jobs.

For employees, 8 out of 10 jobs were permanent (81%). This fell to 67% for education assistants. Temporary employment is more prevalent than in the workforce as a whole, where 93% of employees are in permanent jobs, with similar figures for women and men.

The main form of temporary work was fixed-term contract, 69%, although this varied by occupation, with only around one third of temporary work of this form for play group leaders, other childcare workers (excluding social work) and other childcare workers in social work. Casual work was common in other childcare workers in social work (56% of temporary employment) and accounted for around one-third of temporary work in other childcare workers (excluding social work), whilst agency temping accounted for almost one-third of temporary work for play group leaders.

Table 3: Job characteristics

	childcare						all occupations		
	nursery nurses	playgroup leaders	education assistants (primary)	other childcare occupations, excluding social work	other childcare occupations, those in social work	all childcare occupations	male	female	all
	percent of all jobs (employee plus self-employed)								
Employee	96	91	99	94	44	88	85	92	88
self-employed	2	8	0	6	55	11	15	7	11
Government scheme	2	0	1	<0.5	1	1	*	*	*
Permanent employees	84	84	66	81	40	71	80	85	82
<i>Percent of employees</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>93</i>
full-time	67	20	37	15	35	37	91	54	74
part-time	33	80	63	85	65	63	9	46	26
part-time, comprising:									
students	2	4	1	11	2	4	3	5	4
Part-time from preference	24	68	55	67	57	52	4	37	19
Could not get full-time job	6	9	6	6	6	6	2	3	3
part-time, could not get full-time job:									
Have 2 nd job	1	5	2	1	1	2			
Have 2 nd job in childcare	0	4	1	0	<0.5	1			
Available as extra childcare workers	5	6	5	5	6	5			
Hours of work, per week									
4 hours or fewer	1	7	2	5	3	3	1	2	1
>4 – 8 hours	3	5	6	54	9	18	1	5	3
>8 – 16 hours	11	23	20	12	26	17	3	13	8
>16 – 20 hours	6	21	9	7	13	9	2	9	5
>20 – 30 hours	21	33	42	10	16	24	4	17	10
>30 hours	59	10	21	12	33	29	90	55	73
	percent of employees								
Length of service (employees)									
Joined 1999 onwards	33	24	27	36	42	32	25	26	25
Joined more than 5 years ago	36	46	35	31	19	33	46	42	44

Place of work

Fourteen percent of childcare workers worked from home (whether as their sole workplace or as a base). This is only slightly higher than average, although relatively high for women, as 11% of the workforce and 8% of employed women work from home. (13% of employed men work from home.) Most of those working from home were other childcare workers in social work (57% of whom worked from home). Otherwise, 15% of other childcare workers (excluding social work) and 6% of play group leaders worked from home. Only 2% and 1% of nursery nurses and education assistants, respectively, worked from home.

The majority of those working from home, were self-employed or working for a family business, 73%. However, all education assistants who worked from home were employees, as were 78% of nursery nurses and 67% of play group leaders, whilst 42% of other childcare workers (excluding social work) were and only 7% of other childcare workers in social work.

Part-time working

Part-time working predominates, with nearly two-thirds working part-time (63%). This compares with 26% in the workforce as a whole (46% for women and 9% for men). Many jobs involved very low hours of work: 21% were for eight hours or fewer and 38% for 16 hours or fewer. Few hours were particularly common for other childcare workers (excluding social work), with 59% working eight hours or fewer per week (and 71% working 16 hours or fewer). Only for nursery nurses were hours worked similar to that in the female workforce as a whole.

Given the high degree of part-time working in childcare, it is possible that there is a substantial untapped supply of childcare working amongst those working part-time, i.e. part-time childcare workers who would prefer to work full-time. However, 90 percent of childcare workers who worked part-time in their main job either did not want a full-time job (83%) or were students (7%) with only 10% of part-timers working part-time because they could not find a full-time job (equivalent to 6% of the childcare workforce). Some of these already had a second job in childcare (approximately 9% of those who did not work part-time by choice). Assuming all those childcare workers who work part-time in their main job because they cannot find a full-time job and do not have a second job or whose 2nd job is outside childcare were willing to take a full-time job (or a 2nd job) in childcare, this would be the equivalent of raising the number of childcare jobs by about 6%¹⁰ overall.

¹⁰ 63% of the childcare workforce work part-time; 10% of these wish to work full-time; i.e. 6% of the whole childcare workforce work part-time and would prefer to work full-time. After subtracting those who already have a 2nd job in childcare (and rounding), the figure of those available to take additional or full-time job in the childcare sector remains at 6% as the numbers who wish to work full-time and already have a 2nd job in childcare are small. (Of those who work part-time and wish to work full-time, 73% do not have a second job, 9% have a second job in childcare and 18% have a second job not in childcare. Thus 91% of those working part-time and wishing to work full-time do not already have a 2nd job in childcare and may therefore be available to work full-time in childcare, without reducing the supply of childcare workers working in childcare by more than one. After rounding, this equates to 6% of the childcare workforce.)

Pay

Pay is relatively low. Median¹¹ pay for employees in childcare was £4-70 per hour, Table 4. This is not only substantially below median pay for all employees (£7-00 per hour) but also below median pay for women employees, £6-00 per hour. However, this comparison ignores the lower qualification level of the childcare workforce. Taking just those qualified to level 3 or lower, median pay for women is £5-30 per hour, still substantially above median pay in childcare. Indeed, the median pay of women whose highest qualifications are level 1, at £4-80per hour, is still slightly above median pay in the childcare sector (irrespective of qualifications), whilst that of men is £6-20.

Table 4: Pay, childcare employees and all employees

	£ per hour			
	median	lower quartile	mean	upper quartile
all childcare	4.7	3.8	5.1	6.3
nursery nurses	5.2	3.9	5.5	7.1
play group leaders	5.0	3.6	4.8	5.6
education assistants	5.0	4.3	5.4	6.5
other childcare workers (excluding social work)	4.2	3.6	4.8	5.1
other childcare workers in social work	3.6	3.3	3.9	4.1
all employees				
all	7.0	4.9	8.6	10.5
Male	8.0	5.6	9.8	11.9
Female	6.0	4.3	7.3	8.9

Table 5: Pay by qualification level, all employees

		£ per hour			
Highest qualification	employees	median	lower quartile	mean	upper quartile
up to level 3	all	6.1	4.4	7.2	8.5
	male	7.0	5.1	8.1	9.8
	female	5.3	4.0	6.1	7.1
up to level 2	all	5.6	4.2	6.6	7.7
	male	6.4	4.7	7.5	8.8
	female	5.1	4.0	5.9	6.9
up to level 1	all	5.3	4.1	6.3	7.2
	male	6.2	4.7	7.1	8.2
	female	4.8	3.9	5.4	6.3

Multiple job holding

Multiple job holding may indicate that available jobs do not provide suitable hours. In the case of childcare, this may occur both in relation to the number of hours (given the percentage which offer very few hours) and the timing of work. Childcare workers

¹¹ Median pay is a better indicator than mean pay of the pay facing most childcare workers as it is not influenced by the very high levels of pay of a small number of high earners.

who hold second jobs outside childcare may be a particularly easy group to attract to increase their employment within childcare by changing the hours of work offered.

Of all those working in childcare, 17% have more than one job, with 14% having a job outside childcare. Half of these (7% of the childcare workers) see their childcare job as a secondary job.

Multiple job holding is most common amongst ‘other childcare workers’ (excluding social work), where 26% of workers have more than one job. Eighteen percent of those working in this sector see the job as a secondary job and for 13% their main job is outside childcare. Multiple job holding is also very common for play group leaders and for education assistants, with 20 per cent having two jobs. However, for nearly all such workers the job is their main job (94% and 95%, respectively). Although multiple job holding is slightly less common for other childcare workers in social work (16%), 11% do not see this as their main job and for 9% their main job is outside childcare. Multiple job holding is rare amongst nursery nurses, with only 7% holding more than one job and nearly all see being a nursery nurse as their main job, 98%.

Table 6: Multiple job holding

	percent of childcare workers					
	nursery nurses	play group leaders	education assistants	other childcare workers, excluding social work	other childcare workers in social work	all childcare
One job only	93	80	80	74	84	83
Multiple job holders	7	20	20	26	16	17
one job not in a childcare occupation	7	10	12	20	13	14
both jobs in childcare occupations, other job in:	1	10	8	6	3	3
<i>nursery nurses</i>	*	0	0	*	0	
<i>play group leaders</i>	0	3	1	*	*	
<i>education assistants</i>	0	3	1	5	1	
<i>other childcare workers (excluding social work)</i>	*	2	6	0	*	
<i>other childcare workers in social work</i>	0	1	1	*	1	
Main job (single and multiple job holders)	98	94	95	82	89	93
Main job outside the occupation	2	6	5	18	11	7
Main job outside childcare	2	4	4	13	9	7
Total people	135421	27150	183526	185776	103481	621099

* <0.5

Most people were employees in their second job (84%) and worked regularly (80%). As with main jobs, few worked from home (16%). For those who had worked in a second job in the week previous to the survey, the hours worked in the second job were low: 22% had worked four hours or fewer, 41% had worked more than four but no more than eight hours, 25% had worked more than eight but no more than 16 hours and 12% had worked more than 16 hours in their second job. There was no relationship between hours worked in the main and second job, except that those who worked 30 hours or more in their main job were much less likely to have a second job (only 7% had a second job).

Although some people may prefer to have two jobs and to do two different type of jobs, the above suggests that up to 7%¹² of those already working in childcare might be amenable to working longer hours in the childcare sector, with the figures particularly high amongst other childcare workers (excluding social work).

Job tenure and movement

Previous studies indicate a turnover rate for between 13% and 29% for various types of childcare workers (see above). Leavers may move to other childcare jobs or out of the sector (or out of the labour force altogether). The Childcare Workforce Survey 2001 estimated that 5% of out of school club workers, 4% of nursery workers and 3% of playgroup workers had moved out of the childcare sector in the previous year (SQW/NOP, 2002). Analysis of the LFS data on length of service and on job movement over the year prior to survey provides further information on this. (The latter compares employment at the time of survey and one year previously.) Neither are the same as turnover (in particular, the annual change does not capture multiple changes within the year) but both provide an indication of tenure and job movement.

Length of service¹³

Length of service amongst childcare workers was relatively short: 33% had been with their employer for more than five years, whilst 32% had joined within the previous year, Table 7. This compares with 44% and 25%, respectively, for employees in all occupations¹⁴.

Fewer play group leaders and education assistants had very short periods of service (24% and 27% respectively). Other childcare workers in social work had the shortest periods of service (42% less than one year and only 19% with over five years service).

Job movement

For those with their main job in the childcare workforce at the time of survey, 74% had been with their current employer in exactly the same occupation one year ago and a further 2% had been with the same employer but changed occupations, Table 7. This is similar to the female workforce as a whole. Stability was highest for play group leaders and lowest for nursery nurses and other childcare workers (excluding social

¹² Note that the discussion of multiple job holding refers to those with more than one job (and is based on all those who work in childcare whether as a main or 2nd job and who have more than one job), whereas the previous discussion of part-timers who wish to have a full-time job refers to only those whose main job is in childcare. Given that less than 1% of childcare workers who worked part-time but wished to work full-time and had a second job in childcare was less than 1% of all childcare workers, the overlap is small.

¹³ Note that these data do not indicate turnover, as they only give information for those who were with the employer at the time of survey, not those who had left.

¹⁴ The figures for all employees are similar for women and men.

work), but even for these groups stability was only slightly lower than average for all women.

Those that had not been with their employer over the whole period, if they had been employed, tended to have been in the same occupation or in childcare more generally. Only 6% had been employed in a non-childcare job. However, 16% had not been employed a year previously, a higher percentage than the norm for female employment: 11%. The main difference from average was the high percentage who had been looking after their family or home, 8%, compared with women in all jobs, 3%. The percentage who had been unemployed (2%) or a full-time student (5%) was similar to the average for employed women.

Conversely, one can look at the probability of job change. Those employed in childcare were similarly likely to be employed a year later as the rest of the female workforce, around 94% and 93% respectively, Table 7. (Three percent had left and were looking after their family or home, 1% were unemployed and 1% were full-time students.) Of those who were employed in childcare in 1999, 85% were with the same employer (including 2% who had changed occupations). This is slightly higher than average for females, 82%. The probability of staying was highest for education assistants, with 91% staying with their employer. Only 6% had moved out of childcare into other employment.

Table 7: Employment one year previously

Situation one year previously	percent of those employed in 2000							
	current employment							
	Nursery nurses	play group leaders	education assistants	other childcare, excluding social work	other childcare in social work	all childcare	non-childcare, female	non-childcare, all
Employed	84	89	89	80	83	84	89	91
<i>Employee</i>	(81)	(83)	(88)	(76)	(37)	(75)	(84)	(81)
<i>self-employed</i>	(3)	(6)	(1)	(4)	(46)	(10)	(6)	(10)
Unemployed	2	4	2	1	1	2	2	2
Special government scheme	1	0	1	0	0	*	*	*
Full-time student	9	2	1	8	3	5	4	4
Looking after family or home	4	3	8	10	11	8	3	1
Other	*	2	*	2	1	1	2	2
Same employer, exactly same occupation	73	80	76	73	77	74	75	77
Same employer, not exactly same occupation	1	2	5	*	0	2	3	3
Exactly same occupation, different employer	3	0	1	2	1	2	3	3
Occupation one year previously								
nursery nurses	78	0	*	0	*	18	*	*
play group leaders	0	80	*	0	*	4	*	*
education assistants	0	0	79	0	0	24	*	*
other childcare workers (excluding social work)	1	0	1	75	*	20	*	*
other childcare workers in social work	*	2	1	0	77	13	*	*
not childcare	5	7	7	5	4	6	89	91

* <0.5

Table 8: Employment change

	percent of those employed in 1999							
	employment one year previously							
Current situation	Nursery nurses	play group leaders	education assistants	other childcare, excluding social work	other childcare in social work	all childcare	non-childcare, female	non-childcare, all
Employed	95	93	96	94	89	94	93	95
<i>Employee</i>	93	85	96	89	41	83	87	83
<i>self-employed</i>	3	5	0	4	49	10	6	11
Unemployed	1	3	1	*	3	1	2	2
Special government scheme	*	2	0	*	0	*	*	*
Full-time student	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
looking after family or home	2	2	2	4	5	3	2	1
Other	1	3	2	1	3	2	2	2
Same employer, exactly same occupation	83	83	88	81	80	83	79	81
Same employer, not exactly same occupation	2	2	3	2	1	2	3	3
Exactly same occupation, different employer	3	0	1	2	1	2	3	4
Occupation								
nursery nurses	88	0	0	1	*	20		
play group leaders	0	82	0	0	1	4		
education assistants	1	3	91	2	1	28		
other childcare workers (excluding social work)	0	0	0	84	0	22		
other childcare workers in social work	*	2	0	*	82	14		
not childcare	6	6	5	7	5	6		

* <0.5

Advertising method

The LFS identifies the advertising method used for those who had been recruited within three months of being surveyed. Note this does not identify all methods used, but only the method used for appointees. (As some recruitment methods may tend to be more successful, these will differ).

The most common approach was word of mouth, 42%, with advertisement second most common, Table 9. The approaches varied across occupations, although, word of mouth was the most common mode in all childcare occupations except nursery nurses. It was particularly dominant for play group leaders and education assistants (65% and 54% of jobs), although the Jobcentre was also an important means of recruitment for play group leaders (36%). The Jobcentre was also important for other childcare workers in social work (used for 25% of jobs). For nursery nurses, more jobs were filled by advertisement than by any other single method (37%), with word of mouth second (31%).

Childcare recruitment is more reliant on word of mouth and less reliant on advertising, in particular, than for jobs in the workforce as a whole. Childcare recruitment is also less reliant on direct applications and private employment agencies. Word of mouth recruitment tends to perpetuate recruitment of the type of people already employed. It may therefore restrict supply. Open advertising methods (e.g. press and the Jobcentre) can avoid this and open recruitment to a wider group. However, further research would be required to know whether the childcare sector is

restricting advertising to word of mouth or whether this is the most successful method. Without such research, it might be useful to ensure that childcare providers are aware of the benefits of open advertising, despite, in some cases, their greater cost.

Table 9: Recruitment: advertising method (jobs obtained in previous three months)

	nursery nurses	playgroup leaders	education assistants	other childcare occupations, excluding social work	other childcare occupations in social work	all childcare occupations	<i>all occupations</i>		
							<i>men</i>	<i>women</i>	<i>all</i>
word of mouth	31	65	54	40	38	42	29	27	28
Advertisement	37	0	15	16	14	20	24	31	27
Jobcentre	0	36	8	4	25	8	11	9	10
Private employment agency	9	0	0	8	8	6	12	11	12
Direct application	0	0	12	4	0	5	12	12	12
Careers office	8	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1
Some other way	14	0	11	28	16	17	12	10	11
N									

Extending the childcare workforce

The above analysis identifies both positive and negative aspects of the childcare sector which are likely to affect the ability to recruit and retain workers. The childcare workforce is overwhelmingly female. Some sectors are primarily composed of women with young children and of certain age groups. This degree of segregation means that the pool of labour available to childcare is substantially restricted and suggests that one approach to increasing the childcare labour force would be to encourage employment amongst under-represented groups. However, whether this is likely to be effective and how this might be achieved will depend on why certain groups are not employed in childcare. The LFS cannot fully address this. However, it can provide some strong indicators.

On the positive side, low qualifications are not a barrier to employment in the sector and childcare employment appears to offer the opportunity to combine childcare and employment. On the negative side, pay is low, security is low, relatively few women with pre-school children work in the sector and the high percentage of childcare workers with school-aged children may indicate that, as children age, workers leave the sector.

Whilst the hours of work may suit some of the labour force (notably women with school-aged children) and this may compensate for the low level of pay, it is likely that both hours and pay result in low levels of employment amongst other groups and certainly amongst men. To compete with other jobs, raising pay to a more competitive level would be helpful and as would providing more full-time employment (particularly if men are to be attracted). This does not necessarily mean reducing the availability of jobs with very low hours, but enabling jobs to be combined. Increasing the security of employment may also help attract more workers.

There also may be scope for increasing the supply through targeting certain groups of workers who may be willing to accept the current terms and conditions of employment. In general, this means people who can command relatively low rates of pay or who wish to work very short hours. (It will also include people for whom pay rates are relatively unimportant, but these cannot be identified in the LFS.) These include non-employed women, non-employed men and, due to their under-representation in the childcare workforce (and, in the labour market as a whole, high levels of unemployment and racial discrimination), ethnic minorities.

Non-employed women

We would suggest that the main pool from which workers with similar characteristics could be drawn are non-employed women (unemployed and inactive), although, of course, women might be attracted from other jobs.

Unemployment is relatively high amongst the under 25s (34% of female unemployed are under 25) suggesting a potential source of labour. Inactivity is also high amongst the under 25s (although this will include those in full-time education). The relative unemployment and inactivity patterns amongst female 35 to under 50 year olds do not suggest a particularly large untapped source, as these age groups amongst women have a relatively low unemployment rate

and high participation rate. Single women comprise 57% of unemployed women and 39% of inactive (excluding those aged over 60).

Qualifications (as opposed to skills) would not prove a barrier. Although the unemployed workforce and non-participants are, on average, less qualified than the childcare workforce, both groups contain a large number of women qualified to the average standard of the childcare workforce. Indeed, unemployed women are, on average, more qualified than other childcare workers (excluding social work). Non UK nationals are also over-represented amongst the unemployed and the economically inactive and so may provide a source of workers.

Older women might provide a useful pool of labour: 74% of those aged 60 to under 65 and 92% aged 65 to 70 are inactive. These are equivalent to 9% and 12% of employed women for the younger and older age groups respectively. However, as employment in childcare tends to be lower in the higher age groups, this suggests that tapping this pool may require some effort. As the extent to which the low percentage of older women is due to their choice not to work in childcare, or to discrimination against this age group working in childcare, it is unclear what approach might successfully increase childcare working amongst this group. The same might be applied to those from 50 upwards (with inactivity rates of 27% and 42% for 50 to under 55s and 55s to under 60s).

Non-employed men

Obviously, men are the most under-represented group within childcare and a potential source might be unemployed younger men. As with women, unemployment is relatively high amongst under 25s (32% of male unemployed are under 25) suggesting a potential source of labour.

Ethnic minorities

The other important group is ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities were under-represented in the childcare workforce compared with female employed, 3% v 5%. This varied little by childcare occupation. Because of small sample sizes, a finer breakdown is less reliable, but the data did suggest that black people were not under-represented, with the under-representation lying with other ethnic minority groups.

Ethnic minorities form a relatively high percentage of the unemployed (12% of both the total, and of the female, labour force) and the inactive (8% and 11% of all and of female inactive, respectively) compared with 7% of the population (and of the female population). Problems of racism, resulting in higher unemployment, and differences in female participation rates by ethnicity are well known.

These figures suggest that there may be scope for action to increase childcare employment amongst ethnic minorities both through tackling any racism in childcare employment and through targeting ethnic minorities to encourage application, especially amongst non-black ethnic groups. (Given the small numbers involved, it is of course possible that certain black groups are also under-represented and might be targeted.)

Childcare, early years and play workers in the study

Forty providers took part in the study, including 14 childminders and 26 group settings. These included day nurseries and creches, school nursery and reception classes, out of school and holiday playschemes and pre-school play groups (see Chapter 1). Background information was collected from managers of all 26 settings employing a total of 257 staff. This included the following:

- number of full-time and part-time staff,
- numbers of men and ethnic minorities,
- age range of staff,
- staff pay, by occupation/grade,
- numbers of workers recruited in the last year,
- numbers who left in the last year.

In addition, interviews with 53 childcare, early years and play workers collected further information on the characteristics of these individuals, including their own childcare responsibilities, background and work history. Data from these two sources is summarised here.

Full-time and part-time working

In the settings visited, full-time working was the norm at private day nurseries, while part-time working predominated in playgroups and out of school and holiday schemes. As Table 10 shows, more than 80 per cent of staff in day nurseries were employed as full-time workers, while in out of school and holiday schemes and playgroups, around 90 per cent of workers were employed part-time. In these settings, only play leaders worked full-time. About half of childcare jobs in schools were described as part-time, usually to work mornings or afternoons, rather than a reduced number of days.

Table 10. Full-time and part-time working by setting

Type of setting (number)	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	All
Day nursery (8)	79 (83)	16 (17)	95
School nursery/reception (7)	42 (52)	38 (48)	80
Out of school/holiday (6)	4 (8)	48 (92)	52
Playgroup (5)	4 (13)	26 (87)	30
All (26)	129 (50)	128 (50)	257

Source: Providers in the study

Employee characteristics

The characteristics of employees in the settings visited are presented in Table 11. Across all settings visited, 12 per cent of employees were from ethnic minority groups, which is considerably higher than in the Labour Force Survey, which found 3 per cent from ethnic minorities. However, staff from ethnic minorities were unevenly distributed by type of setting and also by geographical area. Therefore, although higher proportions of ethnic minority childcare staff were found in schools and out of school settings, this is partly explained by the location of the individual settings visited which were different in each area. Data on other characteristics, age and gender, may more accurately reflect the workforce as a whole: data from providers accords with findings of previous studies which have found men to be a small minority of childcare workers in all settings except out of school and holiday schemes. Of the 257 staff in the 26 providers visited, only 9 were men and 7 were these were in out of school and holiday schemes.

With regard to age, more than a third of childcare workers across settings as a whole were aged 25-39, and just over a quarter were aged over 50. This accords closely with data from the Labour Force Survey which shows a concentration in the 30-49 age range: the exception is the nursery nurse workforce, where 42 per cent are in their teens and early twenties. As Table 11 shows, age profiles of staff in the providers visited varied considerably according to type of setting, with almost half of staff in day nurseries aged 16-24, in line with Labour Force Survey data. In contrast, few childcare and early years staff in schools were aged under 25 and 70 per cent were aged 25-49. Staff of playgroups were concentrated in the 25-39 age group, accounting for 53 per cent of staff in these settings, and reflecting their status as mothers of young children.

Table 11. Diversity in the workforce: men, ethnic minorities and age of staff by setting

Type of setting (number)	Men (%)	Ethnic minorities (%)	16-24 yrs (%)	25-39 yrs (%)	40-49 yrs (%)	50+yrs (%)
Day nursery (8)	1 (1)	6 (6)	45 (47)	32 (34)	13 (14)	5 (5)
School nursery/reception (7)	1 (1)	10 (12)	7 (9)	31 (39)	25 (31)	7 (9)
Out of school/holiday (6)	7 (13)	13 (25)	16 (31)	17 (33)	12 (23)	7 (13)
Playgroup (5)	0 (0)	2 (7)	4 (13)	16 (53)	8 (27)	2 (7)
All (26)	9 (3)	31 (12)	72 (28)	96 (37)	58 (23)	21 (8)

Source: Providers in the study

Turnover of staff

As Table 12 shows, almost all settings visited reported recruiting more staff in the previous year than had left. In many settings the majority of staff were recruited in the last year: 59 per cent in day nurseries and 43 per cent across all settings. This is considerably higher than in the Labour Force Survey and is explained by an expansion in provision and increased staffing requirement as well as turnover. Across settings as a whole, more than a quarter of staff had left in the

previous year, but in playgroups this was as high as 57 per cent. Schools lost relatively few of their childcare staff, only 11 per cent in the previous year.

Table 12. Turnover of staff by setting

Type of setting (number)	Total staff	Recruited in past yr (%)	Left in past yr (%)
Day nursery (8)	95	56 (59)	29 (30)
School nursery/reception (7)	80	13 (16)	9 (11)
Out of school/holiday (6)	52	24 (46)	18 (35)
Playgroup (5)	30	17 (57)	17 (57)
All (26)	257	110 (43)	73 (28)

Pay

Data from the Labour Force Survey (see above) shows median pay in the sector of £4.70 an hour, a level substantially below the median for all employees (£7.00 an hour) and below the median for female employees (£6 an hour). Pay of childcare workers in the study varied across settings and according to qualification levels. Schools were the higher paying providers, employing nursery nurses at rates in the region of £12,000 to £13,000¹⁵ and Teaching Assistants roughly £5.00 - £6.00 an hour. Playgroups, out of school and holiday schemes paid qualified playworkers or supervisors in the region of £5.00 - £6.00 an hour and sessional workers (the majority of staff), £4.00 - £5.00). Hourly pay rates in private nurseries were difficult to calculate because of lack of clarity surrounding hours worked. However, annual salaries were usually given as in the region of £8,000 to £10,000 for unqualified staff, £9,000 to £10,000 for qualified staff and £11,000 to £12,000 for managers. A number of private nurseries paid nursery nurses at the lower threshold for the minimum wage, including the ‘development rate’ of £3.50 an hour for workers aged 18-21 receiving accredited training. The lowest rates of pay were generally found in the private nurseries visited.

Background and personal circumstances of childcare, early years and play workers

Information about the background and personal circumstances of childcare workers was collected only from those who were interviewed - a total of 53 staff. Before they took their current position, nursery workers had been employed by another nursery or childcare setting, or had been at school or college. The few with different backgrounds had either taken a career change or had worked in other care settings, for example residential care for the elderly. Most were working full-time and those working part-time worked only slightly shorter hours, allowing for an earlier finishing time. Most of those interviewed had worked in the sector after leaving school or after taking nursery nursing courses at college. Their primary motivation for working in the sector was to work with children. Only those aged over 30 had children of their own and these were the minority of staff, with most being in their teens and early 20s (see above).

¹⁵ This annual salary is not easily converted into an hourly rate, because staff are paid for 52 weeks of the year, including 13 weeks of school holidays.

Childcare workers in nursery and reception classes of schools, working as nursery nurses or teaching assistants, were generally older than nursery workers and had a wide range of previous experience. Some had considerable experience of childcare in a range of settings, while others had joined after a career break, having worked in areas as diverse as chartered surveying and hotel management. About half of the childcare workers interviewed in schools had a background in childcare, while most of the others had taken a job as a teaching assistant to fit in with their own childcare responsibilities.

Workers in out of school and holiday playschemes were similar in age to those working in schools. All of the 9 interviewed had their own children. Almost all of this group of workers had a background in childcare which began after taking a career break from jobs in other sectors, including finance, retail and catering. Hours of work varied according to provision, but were roughly 3.30pm – 6.00pm during term time and a full working day during the school holidays. A number had considerable experience in childcare, but as volunteers rather than paid employment. Some had taken the job to supplement income from another part-time job, also in childcare. Although this group had children, the work did not fit in very well with their childcare responsibilities and a number relied on relatives and friends for their childcare. Some of those in after-school care talked about the conflict between the needs of their own families and the demands of the job.

The 7 playgroup workers interviewed were all women and all but one were in their 20s and 30s with young children, including of pre-school age. All but 2 had been in post for a very short time, usually a matter of months. This group came from similar backgrounds to those in out of school and holiday playschemes, although they were generally younger and had less childcare experience. Most of those interviewed worked for around 12 hours a week, covering about 5 morning or afternoon sessions. Playgroup workers had generally started to work with the group on a voluntary basis, helping with the playgroup sessions and often also on the committee.

Fourteen of the childcare workers interviewed were childminders. These were generally older than childcare workers interviewed in other settings, particularly private nurseries. All were parents themselves and a number had been childminders for more than ten years, starting when their own children were very young. Others had started more recently, after giving up work to look after their first baby, but very few had joined within the current recruitment campaign. Three of the childminders were men, two of them providing day care on contract with their local authority. This involves looking after children of pre-school age whose parents require additional support with their childcare and can include evening and weekend care. Because of their different status, as self-employed childcare workers operating from their own homes, the experiences and views of this group are presented separately in Chapter 5.

Key points and conclusions

Existing research on the childcare sector notes that it is an expanding sector, which is reliant on both a good supply of labour and its retention for the quality of its provision. Concerns have been expressed for the ability of the sector to recruit sufficient staff to cope with increased demands for childcare as more women return to work while their children are young (see Wilkinson, 2002).

Concern has been expressed at poor levels of pay, hours of work, poor working conditions and the low status of childcare work, which are seen to result in turnover (see Cameron, 1997; Wilkinson, 2002). Almost a third of childcare workers in the Labour Force Survey had started their current job within the previous year, compared with 25 per cent of workers in all occupations. Previous research reports annual turnover rates approaching 30 per cent (see Penn, 1995; Cameron et al, 1997) and turnover rates were even higher in the providers visited. High turnover is not only problematic for employers, but is also believed to adversely affect the quality of care. This may in turn impact on parents' willingness to use childcare provision.

A number of studies refer to high levels of satisfaction with intrinsic features of the job, particularly contact with children, but it is argued that the low value attached to the work makes it vulnerable to high levels of turnover. Pay is relatively low in the sector, with median pay for childcare workers in the Labour Force Survey lower than for employees elsewhere and substantially lower than those with similar qualification levels working elsewhere. Some day nurseries visited paid some of their staff at the level of the minimum wage, including the 'development' rate for young workers of £3.50 an hour. Hours of work may be a factor in turnover, since part-time work predominates and a relatively high percentage of jobs have few hours. Ten percent of childcare workers in the Labour Force Survey who were working part-time said they did so because they could not find a full-time job. Multiple job holding is found within the sector, with 14 per cent of childcare workers in the Labour Force Survey having more than one job.

Existing research also notes the diversity of provision within the sector, offering different hours and balance between education and care. However, it also notes a strong degree of homogeneity among the workforce, particularly in the day nursery sector, where the majority of staff are young, female and white. 42 per cent of nursery nurses in the Labour Force Survey were women aged under 30. Other parts of the sector vary largely only in the age of staff, with stronger representation of the 30-50 age group, although the after school care sector also employs more men and ethnic minorities. A relatively high proportion of childcare workers in the Labour Force Survey were women with children, suggesting that it is easy to combine with mothers' own childcare. This is reflected among childcare workers in the providers visited. However, this may not be true of all types of settings: nursery nurses who work principally in day nurseries are predominantly women without young children, and research indicates problems in combining such work with childcare responsibilities. Although there are indications of change, concern has been expressed for the future, as the pool of young women with low educational qualifications diminishes.

Data from the Labour Force Survey suggests that a number of groups which are currently under-represented in the sector might be targeted for childcare work, because they show higher levels of unemployment. These are men under 25; older women, particularly those aged over 60 and ethnic minorities. Literature on diversity within the childcare workforce has not addressed the issue of the under-representation of ethnic minorities in childcare occupations. Existing research has looked at barriers to the employment of men in childcare, giving full consideration to some of the possible issues for providers, prospective employees and for parents. The Labour Force Survey indicates that some men working in the sector may be doing so to fund studying, and therefore are unlikely to stay in the long term. However, research from the perspective of men, both current and prospective employees, is limited. It may be particularly useful to know the views of boys of secondary school age on working in the sector, in order to identify any gaps in knowledge or misconceptions about the work.

Research has looked in some detail at the experiences of nursery workers and childminders, but other sections of the childcare workforce have been given less attention. Therefore, relatively little is known about the motivations and experiences of workers in after school and holiday schemes, playgroups and schools. More information about these groups might help to identify differences in employment conditions and other features of the work that affect recruitment and retention.

One of the main gaps in evidence concerns the recruitment process and its role in creating a stable workforce. Existing research shows the importance of 'word of mouth' to some types of providers, particularly playschemes, after school and holiday schemes (see SQW/NOP, 2002). However, reasons for the widespread use of this method are not explained. Moreover, research has not looked in any detail at the methods used by providers to recruit staff, and whether they are the most effective. This includes the criteria used to select applicants. Existing research refers to poor management practices in the sector (see Vernon and Smith, 1994; Cameron et al, 2001b). However, more detailed information is needed on practices which may assist retention, including induction, on the job training, appraisal and staff consultation.

Research has referred to low levels of qualifications among childcare workers. Labour Force Survey data shows more than two-thirds do not have qualifications higher than level 2 and 13 per cent have no qualifications. Training structures for childcare are seen to lack coherence and the proliferation of qualifications and routes is believed to lead to possible confusion among providers, workers and potential entrants (see Cordeaux, 1999) and was identified as an important issue in the Green Paper *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* (1998). There is disagreement amongst writers on childcare and early years training on the most appropriate type of training for childcare workers, particularly the validity of competency based training leading to NVQ qualifications.

Studies of staff retention across a range of sectors refer to the importance of recruiting the 'right people' in the first place (see IDS 2000). Research on turnover in the childcare sector suggests that younger and less experienced staff are more likely to leave than those with more experience (see IdeA, 1999; Bertram and Pascal 2000; SQW/NOP, 2002). It also notes that many childcare workers, particularly nursery staff, enter at a young age straight from school or college. While a certain level of turnover may therefore be expected among this group, it also points to the

importance of careers information and guidance for young people entering the sector. Childcare is a popular career choice for young women, but it is possible that new entrants do not fully appreciate the nature of the work. Research on young people's expectations of working in childcare might help to identify possible misconceptions and help to improve information and guidance for childcare careers. Such information would also be useful in recruiting older people.

Chapter 3. The recruitment of childcare, early years and play workers

Introduction

This chapter of the report presents findings from interviews with providers and childcare workers about the recruitment process. It looks first at the advertising and selection methods used by providers and their criteria for selecting staff. It then looks at childcare workers' experiences of the recruitment process and how they came to be in their current jobs. A central aim of the current childcare campaign is to attract and recruit more people from groups under-represented in childcare. The chapter presents providers' views on the benefits, drawbacks and potential for recruiting more men, ethnic minorities, older workers and disabled people. It also presents the perspective of providers on whether they have a recruitment problem, and what they have done to address this.

Advertising for childcare, early years and playworkers

Providers used a wide range of methods to advertise vacancies for childcare workers. Those used depended on the seniority of the post, the cost of advertising and its effectiveness in the past. In general, larger and more financially secure organisations, such as private nurseries, used more formal methods to advertise posts, while smaller, voluntary, organisations relied on informal methods.

National publications such as Nursery World were regularly used by day nurseries, but for management posts rather than to recruit junior nursery nurses. Local papers were used extensively by day nurseries, and by school nursery and reception units for posts at all levels. However, this method was considered too expensive by out of school, holiday schemes and playgroups. In addition to cost, some of these settings believed the area covered by even a local paper to be too wide, reflecting a strong preference to recruit only people living very locally. This may be misguided because many people do not consider a journey of half an hour to work to be excessive and it unlikely in itself to adversely affect retention. As local authority organisations, school nursery and reception units were required to advertise childcare posts in local authority vacancy bulletins, but reported a low response from this method. A number of the EYDCPs had set up job vacancy bulletins and websites, which were tried by providers with mixed experiences. A common complaint concerned the relative infrequency of some of these. Out of school and holiday schemes and playgroups often had to fill vacancies as quickly as within two weeks.

Job Centres were used by most organisations, but in general were not found to attract suitable candidates in terms of experience or motivation. Some providers had the impression that some applicants from job centres were under pressure to prove their willingness to work and had no real interest in the job. This suggests a need for better sifting of potential applicants by job centres.

Day nurseries sometimes recruited staff through contact with schools and colleges. Many also recruited students following completion of a placement from college. These organisations were therefore able to recruit people whose skills and suitability had already been tested, and also developed, by the nursery. It may also reduce turnover which can result when recruits discover that the setting does not suit them.

Many providers received speculative applications, usually CVs of people interested in working for them. These were mainly private nurseries and school nursery and reception units and were frequently from parents of children currently in attendance. These were found useful, particularly when posts had to be filled quickly. Some settings were also considering using such applications, and those from strong but unsuccessful candidates, to form a 'bank' of individuals available to provide emergency cover.

Settings with low budgets, such as out of school care and playgroups made extensive use of free sources of advertising. These included local shops, libraries, community centres and school noticeboards. Many found such methods to be more effective in attracting applicants than formal methods such as newspaper advertising. Previous research has found word of mouth to be the main method of recruitment used in parts of the sector, particularly playschemes, out of school and holiday schemes (SQW/NOP, 2002). The current research found word of mouth was used by all types of provider, but was favoured above other methods by out of school and playgroups which had received poor response through formal advertising methods. In addition, these providers identified advantages to word of mouth in getting applicants who knew what the work would involve and who would therefore be more likely to stay.

Some organisations by-passed the advertising and recruitment process by appointing existing staff, such as lunch-time supervisors, to childcare posts. This was used most often by nursery and reception units, but was also used by private nurseries where they felt that a support worker, such as a cleaner, would be suited to a childcare post.

Effective advertising

Providers based their current advertising practices partly on what they found to be effective in the past. A number of providers had found that constant advertising loses its impact on potential applicants and could create a bad impression to potential clients concerned at continuity of care. Therefore, when recruiting for one vacancy, some providers placed suitable but unsuccessful candidates on a reserve or supply list, and these could be re-contacted and recruited if a subsequent vacancy arose soon after. Providers recruiting from schools or colleges found responses to advertising and word of mouth enquiries vary greatly according to the time of year. Therefore summer is a good time to recruit and recruiting in winter can be difficult. Providers also believed that the information provided in advertisements and the wording of key features, such as job title can affect the number of applications. Therefore terms like 'Nursery Practitioner' should be avoided and hours of work should be specified. Some providers with small budgets for advertising and recruitment and which experienced difficulty in recruiting staff had investigated local sources of free advertising. These included leaflets and magazines about entertainment events and websites targeted at the local area.

Selecting childcare, early years and play workers

Some providers took steps to ensure that applicants were reasonably well informed about the job before making an application. A number of the day nurseries sent information about the job with an application form, but this was usually no more than a job description and person specification. Information about hours of work was sometimes included, but rarely about pay. A small number of nurseries sent out full packs of information including background on the organisation, but most felt this was not necessary and might even be off-putting. Pre-schools and playgroups also provided prospective applicants with a job description, and sometimes information about hours and pay. Some settings complained at poor information about the job provided by Job Centres, which resulted in some candidates unaware that vacancies were part-time or that they should have experience of working with children.

Few nurseries gave prospective applicants the opportunity to visit before making an application or coming to an interview. However, this seemed to be usual practice by school nursery and reception units which regarded it as an opportunity to observe an applicants' interaction with children and demeanor outside of a formal interview session. It might also help to ensure that applicants without experience can envisage what the job would be like. Some private day nurseries required successful applicants at interview to work for a specified period as a volunteer, to test their suitability. In one nursery this was as long as a week, and candidates would only be paid for their time if they were then accepted. Whilst it is understandable that providers wish to ensure that recruits are suitable, they might ask candidates to carry out an activity with a group of children, as part of the application process, and then work a period of probation, rather than require applicants to work unpaid. This was the practice used by an out of school scheme which had found many applicant to interview badly, because of low self-confidence, yet to work well with children when asked to take a short practical session.

Some informal approaches were found in pre-schools and playgroups and out of school and holiday schemes. For example, some playleaders carried out a provisional interview with prospective applicants over the telephone, asking particularly about qualifications and experience and only sending out an application form or requesting a CV if they were considered suitable. This may result in initial screening based on highly subjective factors. For example, it is likely to disadvantage people who lack confidence in presenting themselves over the telephone and favours those who can more easily establish rapport, for example because they are from a similar cultural or social class background to the playleader. Even more informally, some out of school and holiday schemes recruited from volunteers without advertising the post or conducting any form of interview, but merely transferring them to the pay roll. Whilst giving opportunities for employment to volunteers should be encouraged, it is poor practice in terms of equal opportunities to exclude other candidates from the opportunity to apply.

Criteria for selecting childcare, early years and play workers

While all providers wanted to recruit people who like children, who understand their needs and can respond to them, differences were found between types of provider in what they looked for when selecting applicants. Before looking at these, it is important to note that these criteria were

judged almost entirely at interview and not from written applications. Whilst information about qualifications and experience was initially gained through an application form or CV, these were rarely used to select for interview because providers usually received fewer than 10 applicants for a vacancy. Therefore, it is quite usual for childcare providers to invite all applicants for interview.

Some providers had developed selection criteria and used scoring systems for interviews. These were largely pre-school playgroups, many of which were developing systematic methods of selection for the first time. Most other providers were reasonably clear on their selection criteria, but rarely had fixed requirements. This is partly because for jobs other than in management, qualifications are not a requirement of the job. It is also because, in some parts of the sector, applicants are from diverse backgrounds and have different experience and qualities to offer. Although judgements on applicants' personalities and demeanor were frequently part of the selection process, most providers attempted to make this transparent and only a few said they used 'gut instinct' to select the best candidates, a method which is likely to lead to poor practice, including discrimination. It is also commendable that few providers referred to candidates' appearance as of any importance. Concerns about body piercings, jewelry and clothes were in most cases easily resolved by staff rules on such matters.

The importance attached to qualifications depended on the post rather than the setting, with managers generally requiring a childcare qualification at Level 3, and nursery nurse posts in settings such as schools requiring a qualification at this level. In many cases, qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 were preferred rather than required, partly because few applicants to some settings, such as out of school, holiday care and playgroups, had qualifications. A few providers attached importance to a good general education, with schools preferring candidates with GCSEs in English and Maths for teaching assistant posts. This was explained with reference to their delivery of the Foundation National Curriculum, but also to the need for record keeping. Aside from qualifications, some providers looked for knowledge or awareness of particular issues, for example child protection, equal opportunities in relation to childcare, or the National Curriculum. Providers did not require such knowledge to be gained from formal learning but looked for an interest in such issues. Some providers, across all types of provision also looked for a willingness to train among applicants without qualifications or experience.

Although many providers looked favourably on applicants with qualifications, almost all emphasised the importance of experience. Some providers, for example day nurseries, looked for experience in a similar setting, while others looked for experience of working with children, either in employment, as a volunteer, or as a parent or grandparent. Experience of any kind was seen to result in much faster integration into the workforce and less need for direction and supervision. The ability to work independently was also looked for among inexperienced applicants, and this was judged by responses to questions about dealing with particular scenarios, for example how they would run a craft session. How much experience providers could ask for in their recruits varied according to the number of applicants and strength of the field. Therefore, nurseries could generally ask for either qualifications or experience in a childcare setting, while out of school and holiday schemes, which often had few applicants, would often settle for some experience as a volunteer or the experience of being a parent.

Providers also looked for staff willing to take direction or work under supervision where necessary, but the strongest emphasis was given to team-working, particularly by day nurseries and schools. For this, communications skills were seen as important, but providers also referred to the need for 'balance' in a team of childcare workers. Therefore shy and quiet staff can be 'balanced' by more confident and out-going ones. Despite this, some providers expressed a preference for candidates with particular personality traits. These were generally more extrovert in nature, with 'enthusiasm' and 'energy'. Some providers were concerned not to have too many introverted and shy people on their staff, yet found that many such people are attracted to childcare work. At the same time, considerable value was placed on qualities of friendliness, cheerfulness and a caring attitude. Providers looked for recruits who could relate well to children, and ruled out anyone who did not speak to children on visiting the setting for interview. Some providers also emphasised the need for childcare workers to relate to adults, which was believed to be often forgotten. Out of school and holiday schemes emphasised the need for staff to actively participate in children's activities rather than take the role of instructor. To do this, it was believed that a genuine interest in children and young people was necessary.

Any other preferences were largely more specific to certain settings. Therefore, schools often looked for skills of presentation in application forms, as an indicator of skills in making displays and record keeping. Flexibility was valued by schools and playgroups where rotas might need to be changed or meetings held out of sessions.

References and criminal record checks

Almost all providers asked for names of referees, and most took up written references. Some contacted referees by telephone for a less formal opportunity to obtain information on their previous job performance. This should not be seen as a reliable or fair method of selecting between candidates, since it may depend on the rapport established, or existing relationship between, the provider and referee. However, it may be justified when there are concerns about child protection and a candidate's suitability. Although most providers used written references, many remarked that they are not reliable and often uninformative. For this reason, many took them up as a formality, to check for undisclosed problems such as poor attendance record, dishonesty and reliability, after making a provisional job offer. Providers generally felt that references provided 'peace of mind' that there were no 'skeletons in the cupboard'.

It might be considered unnecessary that providers who knew the applicant already, for example as a volunteer, still asked for references, but to do otherwise would be to introduce different practices for the recruitment of these and external applicants, which would be unfair. Moreover, some providers recruiting from volunteers remarked that references gave an insight into such an applicant's conduct as an employee, for example their trustworthiness and punctuality, which may not be apparent during their time as a volunteer.

Criminal record checks were carried out by all providers. In some cases, such as schools, playgroups and out of school and holiday schemes, the Local Education Authority or OFSTED carries this out on their behalf. Some groups also carried out their own police check as an additional safeguard. A recruit can usually begin work before the results of any check are known,

but are not permitted to be alone with children during this time. Providers had little concern about offences such as shop-lifting, and said they would usually recruit and retain individuals with such offences. Their real concern was to screen out people whose offences involved abuse of children. No provider said they had recruited anyone who was later dismissed on the grounds of a criminal record or information from the police, although some spoke of sudden departures of staff and cases of false identity.

Workers' experiences of the selection process

The experiences of applying for a childcare job varied greatly between workers in different parts of the childcare sector, particularly in terms of the relative formality of the process. Most of the nursery and creche workers interviewed had seen the job advertised in their local paper, but in many cases they had applied because they knew of the reputation of the nursery, usually for its standards of care rather than employment practices. Others had worked in the nursery on placement from college and in one case on work experience from school.

It was fairly common to receive some information about the job following a request for an application form. As providers had said, this information usually consisted of a job description and person specification and, less usually, information about hours and pay. Except for those who had been on placement, it was rare to look around the nursery before having a job interview, but quite common to be given a brief tour on the day of the interview.

Most nursery and creche workers had been through a formal interview process, but described the interview itself as relaxed or friendly. This was important because nursery workers attached considerable importance to the 'atmosphere' of the nursery, which included the personality and friendliness of staff. Some nursery staff had been recruited initially as support staff, carrying out duties such as cleaning. Some staff recruited in this way did not have a formal interview, as one nursery assistant, recruited initially as a cleaner, explained, 'We had a chat, a cuppa and a fag, and she said you can start Monday'.

Some childcare workers in schools had applied having seen a newspaper advertisement, but most had found out about the vacancy through less formal means. These included school noticeboards, but above all else word of mouth. Some had been working as parent volunteers and had been told about the vacancy by a member of staff. This appeared to be the most common route into these jobs. These childcare workers had different experiences and views of the interview process, which in all cases had some degree of formality because of Local Education Authority requirements. For some of those who already knew their interviewers the experience was somewhat awkward because of its 'forced' formality. One teaching assistant said she had been interviewed by a panel of 5, and felt this was unnecessary. At the same time, this group of childcare workers felt it important that the interview was thorough, and one remarked on its brevity,

'I was surprised it was so short, particularly compared to the type of interview you might have for a professional type of job, but I suppose it reflects the type of job and different skills looked for'.

As with nursery staff, this group also felt it important that the interview was friendly and relaxed, since this seemed to reflect on the ethos and atmosphere of the setting itself.

Childcare workers in out of school and holiday provision had either heard about the job locally or had been recruited while working as a volunteer for the group or scheme. At most this group had an informal interview, but many were not interviewed at all. Those working in playgroups had similar experiences of the application process, but in most cases were interviewed by the management committee. As with other childcare workers who had worked as volunteers, these interviews were described as somewhat awkward because of the existing relationship between the interviewers and applicant.

Background of applicants and recruits

As explained in Chapter 2, the background of applicants and recruits, in terms of personal characteristics such as age, and family circumstances, varied by type of provider. This accords with findings of the Childcare Workforce Surveys (see IdeA, 1999; SQW/NOP, 2002). Therefore, the day nurseries recruited many of their staff from college or school, and targeted younger applicants. Most applicants wished to work full-time, even though some nurseries were willing to offer part-time posts. Nurseries also recruited students who had taken a placement with them. Most applicants and recruits to day nurseries were young women without children, although some nurseries did have one or two young male nursery staff.

The profile of both applicants and recruits to school nursery and reception classes was reported to differ from those in day nurseries. Although some college leavers were attracted to nursery nurse posts, teaching assistant positions, of which there was a greater number, were staffed mainly by women with school age children. Some of these providers remarked that the work is attractive to middle class women who are able to afford to take a low paid job.

Applicants and recruits to out of school and holiday playschemes were reported to be from diverse backgrounds. These included students and retired people, as well as women with children. These settings attracted and recruited more men than elsewhere, possibly because the jobs were temporary and therefore attracted people without a strong interest in working in childcare. However, childcare workers with part-time jobs in schools and playgroups were also found to apply for jobs in out of school and holiday care, to increase their working hours and supplement their part-time income. This accords with previous research which reports examples of workers taking two or even three jobs in the sector to obtain a full-time equivalent wage (IdeA, 1999; Scott et al, 2001). Some providers believed that the recruitment pool for jobs in out of school and holiday care is very local, and that even those beyond walking distance were unlikely to apply.

Pre-schools and playgroups recruited from a similar pool to school nursery and reception units: women with children of pre-school or school age. Again, some providers commented that applicants and recruits tend to be middle class women who can afford to take a low paid job. A high proportion of applicants and recruits had worked for the playgroup as a volunteer. As with out of school and holiday care, recruits were found to be local, but this may also have been a consequence of reliance on word of mouth and local advertising. Few men were employed in these settings.

Increasing diversity in the workforce

Managers in all types of setting expressed their approval with the aim of increasing diversity in the childcare workforce. However, the main reason for this was not to ease current recruitment difficulties and expand the childcare workforce, but to enrich the quality of the experience for children.

It was also apparent that providers did not consider that they had a role in increasing diversity within the childcare labour force. Rather, they saw it as a question of Government efforts to increase the supply of childcare workers from particular sections of the population through advertising, or through careers education and guidance. Some saw the barriers to participation from some groups, such as ethnic minorities, as stemming from their own cultural attitudes rather than the practices of providers (see below). Very few providers had given consideration to how their practices might influence who applies. Many did not even have basic practices in place, such as monitoring of applicants. Even when data on gender, ethnicity and other characteristics of applicants was collected, it was not analysed. Therefore, as a first step, providers need to be made aware of the important role they can play in increasing diversity within the sector.

Recruiting men

Previous research has remarked on the homogeneous nature of the childcare workforce, particularly the small proportion of men employed in the sector (see for example Cameron et al, 2001a). Studies have also commented on possible benefits in increasing the presence of men in childcare settings (see for example Cameron et al, 1999; Cameron, 2001). Providers generally expressed strong approval with the aim of encouraging men to apply for jobs in childcare. The main reason for this was the potential benefit to children. Certain groups of children were thought to have most to gain from more contact with men. These included the children of lone mothers, who were assumed, possibly incorrectly, to have little contact with men. Men were also seen as a potential 'role model' for boys, a view which may also be based on an incorrect assumption that a childcare worker must be the same gender as the child to be an effective role model. Other benefits of employing men, which may have more validity were:

- It helps even children living with their father or mother's partner to relate to men
- It sends a positive message to children that men and women do not carry out fixed roles in society and that men can have caring attributes as well as women

- More men in childcare roles might increase the status of the work, and could in turn have an effect on pay
- A mixed workforce has better 'dynamics'

The main barrier to recruiting men was thought to be pay, which was universally agreed by participants in the study to be inadequate to support a family. This was thought to discourage both men with children and young men who took account of their future circumstances. However, the view of childcare as 'women's work' was also thought to discourage men, particularly boys at school considering their career options.

Other concerns about employing men centred on the views of parents and, in particular, of fear of accusations of child abuse. This is an issue discussed in reviews of men in childcare (see, for example, Cameron 2001). While some providers said that parents liked to see men employed in the nursery, for reasons given above, many others believed that parents were 'suspicious' of men working in childcare. Providers were confident that their own procedures would screen out child abusers, but that parents' suspicions remained. Some providers interviewed, sought to reassure parents, as well as protect staff, by making toileting and nappy changing the responsibility of female staff only. Some providers said that this 'rule' had staffing implications and therefore might be a consideration in recruitment.

The concerns of providers in two of the case study areas had been heightened by allegations of child abuse in local childcare settings which had attracted local media coverage. Although these allegations were found to be false, providers felt vulnerable to similar cases and adverse local publicity. A number of providers believed that the number of false allegations of child abuse in childcare settings was increasing, as older children used these maliciously against male workers. This was an issue of some concern and regret among childcare providers who regarded the presence of men in childcare settings as highly positive. Providers also believed that the fear of allegations of child abuse discouraged men from applying to work in childcare. Some evidence was found to support this view. A young male nursery assistant in a private day nursery explained how his school friends, his parents and their friends had almost discouraged him from becoming a childcare worker, by suggesting that childcare was not a job for a 'normal' man. He also described people's reactions on hearing he works with children:

'Older people (adults) look at you a bit funny, like you are a bit dodgy, a paedophile or something. It's more looks than what they say although they sometimes say to me "isn't that a bit weird?" I just walk away and swear under my breath.'

When asked how more men might be encouraged to apply for jobs in childcare, many providers expressed the view that only an increase in pay would prove effective. Some providers also referred to the need to improve the career structure but had not considered how they might assist in this process, for example by linking jobs in out of school care with pre-school playgroup work. Some providers expressed considerable doubt that current Government efforts to target men for recruitment campaigns would be effective, believing the funding would be better spent elsewhere, as one nursery manager remarked,

‘I don’t know how realistic it is to try to recruit more men. It can mean a lot of effort for limited results’

Recruiting from minority ethnic groups

Many providers remarked on the benefits of employing people from minority ethnic groups. However, the main benefit was identified for ethnic minority children, particularly in nursery and reception units. Other benefits were identified in interpreting for Asian parents with poor spoken or written English. Few providers had considered the benefits to white children of the opportunity to form relationships with people from different ethnic groups and cultures. A number of providers referred to the opportunities for cultural activities to be more 'authentic', but seemed unaware of other benefits such as challenging stereotypes. Many providers in areas with small ethnic minority populations felt that the aim of increasing diversity in childcare did not apply to them.

We referred above to the poor monitoring practices among childcare providers. The assumptions made about the preferences and customs of some minority ethnic groups by many childcare providers are also of concern. The following beliefs about women from Asian communities appear to be widely held by employers in the daycare sector:

- Asian women are less confident than other women in a work setting
- Asian men are strongly resistant to their wives working outside the home
- Asian culture disapproves of children being cared for by non-relatives and of nurseries in particular
- Childcare is seen as an undesirable career option for young British Asians and parents are likely to discourage it

These may be factors in the shortage of Asian applicants, but they may have no basis in fact, or form only a partial explanation for the under-representation of ethnic minorities in childcare. Therefore, further research or consultation is needed before any action is taken which is based on such assumptions. In addition, providers automatically assume that any increase in ethnic minorities will be from women, and Asian women in particular. No provider had considered that men from ethnic minorities might be attracted to the work.

Recruiting disabled people

Many providers stated that, in principle, they were in favour of employing people with disabilities, but followed this quickly with the caveat that they must be able to see to the needs of children in their care. There was widespread concern that a disabled person would not be able to deal with an emergency, such as a child falling off equipment. This appeared to result from an association of disability with wheelchair use. A number of providers were also concerned about the possible 'burden' on staff without a disability.

Some providers did take a wider view of disability, and a small number were employing people with learning disabilities. In some cases, these were undertaking full childcare duties and receiving training, although working under supervision. In other cases they were in support roles, for example catering or cleaning. Many employers said they would give full consideration to employing a disabled person, but that their view would depend on the nature of the disability. These discussions suggest the need for further work with providers on the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and of the benefits of employing disabled people for children's knowledge and understanding.

Recruiting older workers

Many providers were very positive about the qualities which older people can bring to childcare. These were principally the ability to relate well to children, as a result of experience with their own children and grandchildren. At the same time, providers felt it was of benefit of children to learn to relate to people of different ages, rather than just their peers and parents. Older people were also seen to be more calm, even-tempered and less prone to emotional stress than younger people. Some providers in out of school and holiday care, which employed higher proportions of older staff, said this was of particular benefit to children whose parents are young and immature. One provider also remarked that older women have skills which younger staff sometimes lack, for example sewing, knitting and cooking.

Despite these assessments of the benefits of employing older people, many providers expressed concern at older people's ability to cope with the physical demands of childcare. In this context, some providers referred to the need to lift small children or to move equipment around, but a larger number talked of the energy, or stamina, required to interact with children continually, resolve their disputes and to keep them occupied. Providers were, in most cases, referring to people in their 50s and 60s, many of whom are likely to be active and even fit. Stereotyped views of this age group as weak, tired and unable to cope have to be challenged in order to promote their recruitment into childcare.

Many providers did not see the need for recruitment campaigns targeted at this group because they already employed some older people and received applications from this group. However, others had not considered the possibility of recruiting people in their 50s and 60s who have retired from other jobs. Work based in their local community with part-time and dispersed hours might have a strong appeal to people in this group. However, one provider was working with the local volunteer bureau in an attempt to encourage older volunteers to work in the nursery, either as volunteers or paid workers.

Recruitment problems

Many providers reported difficulties recruiting staff, both in terms of responses to job advertisements and in the suitability of applicants. This accords with the findings of other recent research which has identified widespread recruitment problems in the sector (see IDS 2001). Particular problems were experienced by day nurseries, out of school care and pre-

school/playgroups. In contrast nursery and reception units experienced few difficulties. Providers explained their recruitment difficulties with reference to a number of factors. The first of these was pay, which was widely acknowledged to be low and acceptable only to people in particular circumstances. These were principally young people living at home and women whose family is not dependent on two incomes. Nurseries believed that pay was the principal reason why few men apply for childcare jobs. Some providers had investigated ways in which pay rates might be increased, for example through the working families tax credit, but believed that the only way in which pay levels could rise was through increasing their fees to clients. Day nurseries felt this would not be acceptable and that they would lose clients as a result.

Some providers believed that the hours of work they offered were only acceptable to certain sections of the population. In particular, part-time and dispersed hours offered by out of school care and pre-schools and playgroups were thought to appeal principally to women with children at school who do not wish to work full-time. This therefore restricted the number of potential applicants. However, providers had not fully considered other sections of the labour force which might be interested in part-time work, including older people. They tended to base expectations about potential applicants on those who currently applied, and did not seem to appreciate that this was partly a consequence of their advertising methods. Similarly, providers believed that the low status of childcare work meant that the work was only attractive to particular people, principally younger women who love children. However, they had not considered the appeal of such work to other sections of the labour force for whom status might not be an important factor, for example older workers.

Some providers felt that the sector suffers unfairly from a poor reputation in certain respects, in particular awareness of the opportunities for training was thought to be low. Some providers felt that some potential applicants might be encouraged if they were more aware of opportunities to combine training with employment, through study for childcare and early years qualifications. It is likely that such opportunities have increased very recently, since the creation of EYDCPs, and that the general public should be made more aware of this. However, it was also apparent that childcare workers who undertook such training made a substantial commitment of their own time, and sometimes money, which may not be practicable for some potential applicants (see Chapter 4). This accords with the findings of other recent research that childcare workers may be deterred from training by its cost and by lack of flexibility in their hours (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000; Mooney et al, 2001).

Providers also referred to competition from other sectors, and from within the childcare sector itself. Competition from outside of the sector came from industries offering part-time unskilled work, such as supermarkets and call centres. These were particularly strong competitors for the recruitment of women with young children. Competition from within the sector was seen as particularly strong from schools, which offered relatively good pay and short hours to teaching assistants and nursery nurses. Day nurseries also believed that the supply of trained nursery nurseries was falling as a result of a decline in popularity of childcare college courses. One nursery manager speculated that young women who had in the past opted for such courses were now choosing teacher training.

Providers in rural areas and on isolated housing estates were more likely to report problems recruiting staff than those in towns or cities. This was explained with reference to poor public transport and to lower rates of female participation in the labour force in rural areas. High levels of street crime were also believed to discourage potential applicants from some settings.

Response to recruitment difficulties

Providers experiencing recruitment problems had responded in a number of ways. Some had lowered their standards of recruitment, by taking on people with very little previous experience. The availability of training through the EYDCP was found to be helpful in providing these staff with basic childcare skills and knowledge. Some providers, such as day nurseries had recruited internally, from support staff such as cleaners, with good results. This practice was also reported by providers with few recruitment problems, such as schools, where a suitable internal candidate had been identified. Some providers which favoured recruiting people living very locally had recruited from further afield and, although they were not happy about doing so, had no firm evidence that such staff were more likely to leave than those with very short journeys to work.

Few providers had sought help or advice with their recruitment problems from organisations such as the national childcare charities, the Daycare Trust or the Pre-school Learning Alliance. However, a number were actively involved in their EYDCP and both these and others had taken advantages of services offered to assist recruitment and retention (see Chapter 6). These included group advertising, a vacancies bulletin and web-site, and a range of training opportunities.

Key points and conclusions

Methods used by providers to advertise vacancies for childcare workers depended on the seniority of the post, the cost of advertising and its effectiveness in the past. Organisations with larger staffing requirements and with bigger budgets, such as private nurseries, tended to use formal methods to advertise posts, for example newspaper advertisements, while smaller, voluntary, organisations relied on informal and low cost methods.

Some out of school and holiday schemes and playgroups did not use newspaper advertising because they believed that even local papers covered too wide an area. Some believed they could only recruit people living very locally, and that those traveling more than walking distance would not stay. This belief may be misguided and result in missed recruitment opportunities.

Job Centres were used by most organisations, but in general were not found to attract suitable candidates in terms of experience or motivation. This suggests a need for better sifting of potential applicants by job centres.

A number of the EYDCPs had set up job vacancy bulletins and web-sites, which were tried by providers with mixed experiences. A common complaint concerned the relative infrequency of some of these. Out of school and holiday schemes and playgroups often had to fill vacancies as quickly as within two weeks. Some settings which found they often had to find staff quickly

were setting up a 'bank' of staff who could work as supply for a short period. EYDCPs might provide assistance to providers wishing to set up such a facility.

Settings with low budgets, such as out of school care and playgroups made extensive use of free sources of advertising. These included local shops, libraries, community centres and school noticeboards. Many found such methods to be more effective in attracting applicants than formal methods such as newspaper advertising. Some settings were quite innovative in the sources they used, for example entertainment guides. Other providers could be encouraged to follow their example.

Word of mouth was used by all types of provider, but was favoured above other methods by out of school and playgroups which had received poor response through formal advertising methods. Although it may be effective in identifying good candidates, over-reliance on word of mouth can exclude people outside of informal local networks and may be poor practice in terms of equal opportunities.

A number of providers had found that constant advertising loses its impact on potential applicants and could create a bad impression to potential clients concerned at continuity of care. Therefore, when recruiting for one vacancy, some providers placed suitable but unsuccessful candidates on a reserve or supply list, and these could be re-contacted and recruited if a subsequent vacancy arose soon after. Providers also believed that the content of advertisements can affect the number of responses. Particular problems were identified in the use of unfamiliar job titles such as Nursery Practitioner' and the omission of information about hours.

Providers who recruited young people leaving schools or colleges found greater difficulty recruiting at times of year when courses are still running or when leavers have recently started their first job. This suggests a need for forward planning by providers, or use of alternative sources of recruitment.

Many providers took steps to ensure that individuals had sufficient information about the job before making an application, by sending a job description and person specification. Few invited prospective applicants to visit, but some asked applicants to work for a number of sessions unpaid. Whilst this may be helpful in assessing suitability, requiring job applicants to undertake unpaid work amounts to exploitation.

Most providers used structured systems for selecting staff, including use of application forms and interviews, but some carried out a provisional interview with prospective applicants over the telephone. This may result in initial screening based on highly subjective factors and lead to discrimination. Some out of school and holiday schemes recruited from volunteers without advertising the post or conducting any form of interview, but merely transferring them to the pay roll. Whilst giving opportunities for employment to volunteers should be encouraged, it is poor practice in terms of equal opportunities to exclude other candidates from the opportunity to apply.

Providers rarely used application forms to select for interview, because numbers of applicants were small. Most providers were reasonably clear on the criteria they used to select at interview,

but rarely had fixed requirements. The importance attached to qualifications depended on the post rather than the setting, with managers generally requiring a childcare qualification at level 3 for senior posts only. Some providers looked for a willingness to train among applicants without qualifications or experience.

Although many providers looked favourably on applicants with qualifications, almost all emphasised the importance of experience. Providers looked for recruits who could relate well to children. Some providers also emphasised the need for childcare workers to relate to adults and who would work well in a team. Value was also placed on 'enthusiasm' and 'energy' and qualities of friendliness, cheerfulness and a caring attitude.

Almost all providers asked for names of referees, and most took up written references. Providers generally felt that references provided 'peace of mind'. Some contacted referees by telephone. Although this is generally considered to be poor practice, it may be justified when there are concerns about child protection and a candidate's suitability. Criminal record checks were carried out by all providers, or on their behalf. Some groups also carried out their own police check as an additional safeguard. Providers were concerned to screen out people whose offences involved abuse of children, but were not concerned about petty offences such as shoplifting.

The background of applicants and recruits, in terms of personal characteristics such as age, and family circumstances, varied by type of provider. Therefore, the day nurseries recruited many of their staff from college or school. Applicants to school nursery and reception units and to playgroups were predominantly women with school age children, while those to out of school and holiday playschemes were reported to be from diverse backgrounds, and included students and older people.

Managers in all types of setting expressed their approval with the aim of increasing diversity in the childcare workforce. However, the main reason for this was to enrich the quality of the experience for children. In general, providers did not consider that they had a role in increasing diversity within the childcare labour force, and some had stereotyped views about ethnic minorities, disabled people and older workers.

Many providers reported difficulties recruiting staff, particularly day nurseries, out of school care and pre-school/playgroups. Providers explained their recruitment difficulties with reference to pay, hours of work, the image of the sector, competition from other sectors and their location. Few had received help with their problem, although some were using services developed by their EYDCP.

Chapter 4. Retaining workers

Introduction

Turnover in the childcare sector has been found to be high compared with both turnover in the economy as a whole and in personal service occupations generally (see IDS, 2000). Although many who leave take up other jobs in the sector, others do not. This is of concern when the sector is experiencing labour shortages and needs to expand to meet rising demand. It is also a concern for the quality of care and for the costs incurred by childcare providers in recruiting and training new staff. Indeed, some providers believed that staff turnover was a particular problem in their sector, because of the importance of the relationship built up between staff and children to the quality of the experience for children and their parents. As one nursery manager stated,

'I would make a heart-felt plea that retention and continuity in childcare is more important than in any other service'.

This chapter looks at a number of human resource practices which have a role in increasing commitment of childcare workers to their job and to working in the sector. These include induction, training, appraisal and other aspects of staff management. The chapter presents providers' views on whether they have a retention problem and at any steps they may have taken to address it. The chapter also presents childcare workers' own views on the positive and negative aspects of working in the sector and on what might be done to present a positive image of the work to prospective applicants.

Induction of childcare, early years and play workers

Providers were aware of the need for staff induction and familiarisation with the policies and procedures of their organisation. However, considerable variation was found in the degree of formality of induction. A few providers had structured induction programmes, while the leader of a playscheme said it had an 'induction pack' but that this was 'verbal'.

The most structured systems for induction were found in private nurseries. Some of these had a structured programme of induction involving instruction with a member of staff or use of checklists. A number had handbooks or induction packs containing many documents which new recruits were asked to read or were taken through. These included information on such matters as health and safety, fire procedures, the daily routine, behaviour policy and procedures with parents. Other childcare settings had induction packs, and in these settings staff were often given documents to read and were taken through only the most important documents, for example the fire drill and accident procedures.

New members of staff in nurseries usually worked alongside an existing member of staff for an initial period of around two months, although carried out full duties straight away. A number of nurseries said they reviewed the progress of new staff after a period of around 6 to 8 weeks.

Elsewhere, staff did not generally work alongside experienced staff, but took up full duties from the first day, although this was often under the direction of other staff.

Some nurseries were clearly concerned at the time taken for new staff to be given introductory information. Therefore, to save time, some nurseries arranged for staff to attend an induction before their first day. This also saved nurseries money, since staff were not paid for this induction session, and for that reason alone it is poor practice.

Workers' experiences of induction

Most recruits to nurseries said they were given an induction pack, which varied in content but typically included policies and practices in the areas referred to above. Where nurseries had a structured programme of induction this was appreciated by staff, but what was most welcomed was being shown around the building and introduced to all staff on the first day. It is common practice for new staff to work alongside an experienced member of staff, and respondents saw this as standard practice. However, they said they were expected to work as a full member of staff as soon as they began work. Childcare workers in other settings, schools, out of school and holiday schemes and playschemes, confirmed reports of managers that they did not have a formal induction and at most were 'talked through' policies and procedures. Most took up the duties of the post straight away, with no lead in period. Although some said they had initially worked alongside an experienced member of staff, such as a classroom teacher or an experienced playleader, they did not work under supervision but were treated as part of the team from their first day.

Training

Most providers were aware that it is good employment practice to offer training to staff, and of the benefits both to the organisation and the employee. However, they varied considerably in the opportunities and support given to staff training. A small number of settings, mainly private nurseries, had training budgets, training plans or full individualised records of staff training. The emphasis in all settings was in off the job training away from the workplace and on short courses in such areas as health and safety and child protection. However, a small number of settings, again private nurseries, organised internal sessions where staff who had attended training passed on some of the knowledge obtained, referred to as 'cascading'. In addition, teaching assistants and nursery nurses in schools were usually included in training during INSET days.

Most providers said they encouraged staff to attend short courses, and welcomed the free or subsidised provision of such training through the EYDCPs. There were indications that some providers had made more use of such training in recent years, as a result of its availability and low cost. Some providers, for example out of school and holiday schemes, sent new staff on a short initial training course funded by the EYDCP. Most providers reported a willingness among staff to attend short courses. For example, one private nursery described the benefits of training as follows,

'You've been given a day off, your employer is paying, you're mixing with other people in similar jobs, you have a free lunch and you're doing something special, something for yourself. You feel you are worth investing in. Self-esteem is very important. '

However, providers in other settings, particularly playschemes, reported little interest from staff in training. Staff willingness to attend training courses may depend in part on whether they are paid to do so. Where staff attended courses outside of their paid hours, many providers did not allow them time off in lieu, or even costs of childcare if these were incurred. Many providers appeared to consider it was enough that they had made the arrangements or paid the fee, even though this was often minimal.

Providers' approaches to training differed most noticeably in relation to longer term training, to NVQ level qualifications. Some nurseries recruited staff with the aim of training them to Levels 2 and 3, to meet their requirement for a proportion of qualified staff. Schools were generally supportive of staff wishing to train for childcare and early years qualifications, although were more keen that they should train to be teachers. However, in most nurseries and other settings, training to NVQs was regarded as optional and something which staff might chose to do for their own interest. Some providers paid for NVQ training, again often subsidised by their EYDCP, but others did not. Moreover, providers rarely allowed staff to do course work in work time.

A number of day nurseries had clear staffing structures, with grades of staff linked to qualifications obtained, and some said that a member of staff would have an increase in pay and responsibility on obtaining a vocational qualification. However, in most types of setting structures were ill-defined, or funding too tight to allow staff to be rewarded in this way. Therefore, providers felt that the benefits to staff in obtaining such qualifications were in their future job prospects.

Workers' experiences of off the job training

Many nursery staff had gained NVQ qualifications, usually at levels 2 and 3, and a small number had reached level 4. In most cases, the nursery had paid for any fees, but staff had carried out almost all of the work in their own time, during evenings and weekends. Therefore, in some cases these qualifications had taken a considerable time to obtain, as long as 5 years for Level 3. Most nursery staff said they had attended short courses in such areas as first aid, fire safety and child protection and, as providers stated, these were sometimes taken in staff's own time without time off in lieu.

Nursery nurses and teaching assistants in schools had taken part in a range of types of training, including short courses and training to Level 3. Fees for training for childcare and early years qualifications were paid by the school but, as with nursery staff, much of this training was out of school time, at evenings and weekends. Those who opted for such training said they had done so on their own initiative, rather than on their employer's advice. However, a number of teaching assistants were embarking on teacher training as a result of encouragement by their school.

Training in out of school, holiday schemes and playgroups was also described as optional by those working in these settings, and those who did participate often took the initiative.

Many childcare workers spoke of the benefits of training. Many described the training they had received as useful, particularly in showing new ways of carrying out childcare tasks. Some had found that training had made their work more enjoyable, referring to both short courses and more lengthy training, leading to NVQ level qualifications. Training covering child development issues was seen as particularly beneficial in raising awareness of the child's perspective and capabilities. Most of those undertaking training to NVQ level did not expect to benefit through promotion within their current setting, but believed that they might be able to apply for more senior positions elsewhere in future.

Management of staff, including appraisal and consultation

Some providers had structured systems for managing staff, which included appraisal and staff consultation. However, in some cases such systems were entirely absent. Most day nurseries and schools had such systems in place, while some out of school, holiday and playschemes were far more casual in their approach. Some day nurseries had systems of more regular appraisals for new staff, although interviews with staff suggest these are not always carried out. A number of day nurseries and schools had recently applied for Investor in People status, and their systems dated from this time. The relative importance of performance appraisal and training and development needs in staff appraisals was not clear, and many providers appeared to regard them as an opportunity for staff, and management, to raise any concerns about the job and job performance. This may help to identify problems which are likely to lead to staff turnover, but may not have a positive effect on longer term retention.

Many providers had regular staff meetings, but these varied widely in their purpose and their frequency. They were sometimes intended to be opportunities for staff to raise concerns about management and job performance issues. Some providers included a training element, usually involving a report on a training course attended by a member of staff, with 'cascading' of its main points. However, more usually staff meetings included planning of future activities with children, rota planning and other administrative tasks. The frequency of meetings reflected their purpose to some extent, with meetings involving planning taking place at sometimes weekly intervals, while those addressing management issues were usually held every 2 months.

Staff were usually required to attend meetings, and these were often outside of work time. However, they were not usually paid to do so, which some providers justified on the grounds that they were held for the benefit of staff. The manager of one day nursery believed that by attending in their own time, staff were able to contribute to the nursery's 'culture of participation'. It is more likely that such practices help to cultivate a climate of resentment and dissatisfaction.

Problems experienced with staff

Providers reported a number of problems with staff, which had resulted in dismissal. These included a range of problems relating to attitude, ability and behaviour:

- Poor reliability, including time-keeping and absenteeism
- Bad relations with or treatment of other staff, including bullying, rudeness and poor team working
- Poor communication as a result of shyness or limited social skills
- Unacceptable treatment of children, including shouting, rudeness and rough treatment

These problems were reported most often by day nurseries, some of whom said they had sacked a number of staff on such grounds. This may be a consequence of the young age profile of day nursery staff, a proportion of whom will be in their first job since leaving school. They are therefore more likely to experience difficulty in adopting work discipline, such as time keeping, and find team work difficult. This suggests a need for structured induction systems and initial on the job training.

Workers' experiences of management

Nurseries are small workplaces where the working atmosphere is greatly affected by personal dynamics. Therefore childcare workers placed considerable value on good staff relations and team working. Consequently, although many had to attend staff meetings in their own time (see above), they saw these meetings as invaluable. The small number who had regular appraisals also saw these as important. However, a number also said that relations between nursery managers and staff were poor and that staff were not treated fairly. Some day nursery staff said they had difficulty in getting time off when they wanted it and some felt their efforts went unacknowledged. Some reported very poor practices among previous employers, including very high child to staff ratios which arose from staff absence and lack of cover. Such problems were found to be less prevalent elsewhere in the sector. Few problems were reported in schools, although some confusion was reported over lines of management and accountability. Where problems were reported in out of school, holiday schemes and playgroups, these concerned poor organisation, particularly in relation to staffing arrangements. This led to confusion among staff over their hours of work and arrangements for leave. Failure to deal with staff dissatisfaction, disputes among staff and poor time-keeping were also seen to result from poor management in some of these providers.

Staff turnover: the perspective of providers

Some providers said they had low rates of staff turnover, while others found that staff stayed for relatively short periods and had to recruit almost continuously to retain their required staffing levels. Schools reported few problems with staff retention. However, many teaching assistants had been recruited recently as a result of new staffing practices in early years education and their long term stability has not been tested. All other types of setting - day nurseries, out of school, holiday schemes and playgroups - reported high levels of staff turnover. However, their attitudes towards this varied, with some regarding it as a problem to be given serious consideration, while others believing it 'went with the patch'.

Many day nurseries identified low pay as contributing to staff turnover, but felt that they could not increase it without raising fees, which would lose them custom. Some day nurseries complained at the high staffing ratios they are required to have, compared with nursery schools and argued that they could cut their costs and raise pay if these were reduced. Some nurseries were aware of higher rates of turnover among particular sections of the workforce: among those working with babies because the work can be more demanding and stressful and among younger and unqualified staff. One nursery marked the files of this second group in red 'for danger', to remind managers that these may be in need of particular attention and support. Others blamed young people themselves, for their poor attitude to work.

Some of the difficulty in retaining staff in day nurseries may be explained by their role as providers of first jobs for school and college leavers. Therefore, many young employees may view their job as a 'stepping stone' into other jobs. This was recognised by some day nurseries, which also reported poaching of young staff by parents looking for nannies. One nursery was trying to address this problem by including no-poaching agreements in the contracts of staff and parents.

Out of school and holiday schemes and pre-school playgroups reported high levels of turnover, but accepted this as in the nature of the work. Therefore, staff typically joined when their children were young, typically of nursery or infant school age, and left when they were of secondary school age. Staff were therefore reported to leave for jobs with more hours, and more pay. Many providers therefore felt it was not realistic to try to keep staff for long periods, and one even felt it would be unfair to try,

‘Working here can hold people back, because it means that they can’t get a job with more hours. Staff are bound to leave, there is nothing to keep them here and it would be selfish to hang on to them. I’d like to keep staff forever, but it isn’t realistic’.

Some providers explained their turnover problems partly with reference to their location. Therefore settings in rural areas and on isolated housing estates had difficulty both recruiting and retaining staff because of the time and costs associated with travel. Efforts to resolve this problem by recruiting staff locally were not always successful. Some play schemes were located in areas of high street crime where staff muggings had led to turnover and recruitment difficulties.

Where turnover was low, managers explained this with reference to good team working and training opportunities. Some schools believed that the well-defined role of the teaching assistant contributed to satisfaction and retention. However, few providers who had retention problems had given consideration to how they might reduce turnover. One nursery regularly gave 'treats' to staff for exceptional performance, and gifts to all staff, for example chocolate eggs at Easter. This practice has also been used by employers in the childcare sector in the US (see Wilder Research Center, 2001). Although such practices might improve morale, many staff may see them as patronising. Exceptional performance would be better rewarded with promotion and a pay increase.

Workers' future intentions

Most of the nursery and creche workers interviewed had no plans to leave and some thought they would stay in their present job for a number of years. In some cases this was because of genuine commitment to the job, but in most it was for lack of a definite plan. Those in the second group were young and in their first job. Some of these were thinking vaguely of other opportunities, such as travel. Those who were less committed to staying in their current post usually had particular plans: to get a job with more responsibility, for example in childcare training, or in a specialist area, for example care of children with special needs. Most were not thinking of leaving the childcare sector, including those who voiced complaints about their current job.

Most of the teaching assistants in schools were considering training as a teacher, or had embarked on the training. These were generally graduates who can complete the postgraduate training course in a year and carry out much of in the school where they currently work. Those working as nursery nurses did not wish to undertake such training and there was some discontent that the main promotion route for childcare workers in the classroom is in practice restricted to graduates wishing to train as teachers. The lack of opportunities for progression, aside from teacher training, was more of an issue for teaching assistants than of low pay.

Childcare workers in out of school, holiday care and playgroups were less committed than those elsewhere in the sector to staying in their current job for a long period of time. Those who intended to stay indefinitely were generally older and planned to stay until they retired or had insufficient energy for the work. Younger staff intended to leave for a job with more hours when their own children were older. A number of workers in out of school care and playgroups had jobs or their own businesses outside of the sector or were training for other work. Some of these said they would give up their childcare job if their other work became more demanding or successful.

Workers' views about the job

In line with other recent research, childcare workers in all types of setting said that the best thing about their job was working with children (see Cameron et al 2001b). This was universally seen as a highly positive feature of the job. Many childcare workers simply enjoyed the company of children, seeing to their needs and interacting with them, but many also gained satisfaction from seeing children develop their skills, particularly in social interaction, and confidence. Childcare workers delivering early education to 3 and 4 year olds, in schools and some day nurseries, also said they enjoyed helping children to learn. As a teaching assistant remarked,

'They are like sponges. Every day they learn something from me and I also learn something from them'.

Many childcare workers spoke of the variety in the job and absence of a fixed routine. A number made the comment that 'no two days are the same'. Different activities were carried out with the children each day, for example craft, art, dressing up, using construction toys, playing puzzles

and games. Because many children attend nurseries and playgroups part-time, even the children who attend can vary considerably from day to day, and result in different combinations of personalities, interactions and experiences. Many childcare workers referred to the 'fun' of working with children, and this aspect, of never knowing exactly what would happen was viewed as very positive. Working with older children in out of school and holiday schemes was also found to be 'fun' because activities were designed to keep children and young people engaged and entertained.

A number of childcare workers referred to the good atmosphere at the setting in which they worked. This was a result of a combination of factors, but included the quality of team working and relations between staff. Some remarked on the good relations between management and staff, particularly the 'open' style of some managers. Some teaching assistants in schools had developed very good working relationships with the teacher with whom they worked. One teaching assistant described this as follows:

'She starts a sentence, and I can finish it. We both know what works and what doesn't work with the children.'

However, not all staff were this fortunate and some spoke of poor working relations, particularly between management and staff (see below). Some childcare workers, particularly those in private nurseries and in schools remarked on the physical environment in which they worked as a positive aspect of the job. Those in purpose built modern units or conversions with outdoor as well as indoor play areas were particularly satisfied in this respect. In contrast, many of those in playgroups, after-school and holiday schemes were in hired rooms which required staff to set out and put away all equipment at the beginning and end of each day (see below).

Apart from good relations with other staff, some childcare workers said they had good relations with parents, and gained much satisfaction from this. Some childcare workers particularly liked being asked for advice on a child's development or welfare, feeling that this demonstrated confidence in their knowledge and skills.

Some childcare workers also mentioned opportunities for training as positive features of the job. These were mostly those working in day nurseries, some of whom had recently started NVQ training, and teaching assistants in schools. Opportunities for promotion were less apparent, with most of those who were training for NVQs seeing benefits in job performance and opportunities to find work with another employer. Childcare workers in schools felt they had very little opportunity for advancement, unless they were graduates and could undertake teacher training (see above).

Some factors that have been identified in previous research as negative features of the job were identified as positive, reflecting different expectations and requirements among those who work in the sector. A number of childcare workers were satisfied with their pay, even though it was objectively low. For some, the intrinsic satisfaction of the job was paramount, and some appeared to regard their earnings as supplementary to the main household income. Similarly, while hours of work in settings such as playgroups and after-school care have been identified as a problem in recruitment, short and dispersed hours were found to suit many of those in the

sector, and therefore may not be a problem in retention. Some were combining jobs in two settings with complementary hours, for example a playgroup and out of school care. This practice has been identified in previous research (see (IdeA, 1999; Scott et al, 2001).

What are the disadvantages of working in the sector?

The most frequently mentioned negative aspect of working in childcare was identified as low pay. This was remarked upon by childcare workers in all settings. However, it was a particular problem when combined with the long hours worked in private day nurseries. Those working part-time in other settings had the opportunity to increase their income by taking other jobs or running their own small business, and in some cases this seemed to work very well. This was not an option for those in full-time work.

Hours of work were identified as a negative feature of the job by workers in different settings, and for different reasons. Those in private day nurseries complained at the length of the working day and in many cases this was well in excess of 45 hours a week. In addition to the hours spent in the nursery or childcare setting, many staff had to take work, such as planning and report writing home, extending the working day even further. Many were also required to attend staff meetings out of work time and, although they felt the meetings were useful, particularly in reflecting on practice, resented their timing. Teaching assistants in schools felt it particularly necessary to reflect on practice and plan future activities with their class teachers, but were not paid for non-contact time, and therefore did most of this work unpaid.

In some parts of the sector, such as play groups and after-school care, hours are often short and at awkward times of the day so that they had a negative impact on family life. Although one would expect the hours of work on offer to be a major factor in the decision to take a job in the first place, a number of workers said the hours they worked were inconvenient to them. In some cases this was a result of a change in home circumstances, but others had not fully appreciated how awkward the hours of work would be. Those who combined jobs in such settings with other work were less likely to complain, possibly because they worked in childcare more from interest, or to supplement their other income than to earn a living wage.

We have already referred to the demands of paper work, such as report writing and lesson planning, where this work had to be done in childcare workers' own time. However, some childcare workers found this a negative feature of the job even if their employer allowed them time to do it at work. Such tasks were seen as reducing time which could be spent with children and therefore seen to have a negative impact on the quality of care. Even if sufficient cover was provided, childcare workers would still prefer to be with children rather than writing about them, which many pointed out was their chief motive for working in the sector. Record keeping on individual children was found to be particularly tedious, particularly for children who are progressing normally and whose development is no cause for concern.

A number of childcare workers felt that opportunities for progression were poor, partly because they worked in small organisations, but also because there was no structure for progression

within their setting. Therefore, while a number were taking training courses, often on their own initiative, they did not expect to receive promotion with their current employer.

Childcare workers in most settings complained of the low status of the work, although this was less likely to be mentioned by those working in schools. Therefore the type of setting seemed to affect either the status or perception of the status of the job. Some of those working in playgroups and day nurseries felt particularly strongly that their work was seen as 'playing' with children. As one nursery worker explained,

'I've had comments like "so you're going to be finger painting today and, although it is meant as a joke, it is also half serious and shows they don't understand what I do. I've also had comments like "when are you going to work in a proper school".'

We referred to good team working, staff relations and management as a positive feature of the job for some childcare workers. However, there were also reports of poor team working and management/staff relations. This was found in various settings and included incompetence, resulting in poor organisation, and authoritarian styles of management. The first problem, of incompetence, was reported most often by staff in playgroups and other voluntary settings, where managers may have little training to carry out their role and have few of the facilities a manager might usually expect, such as a computer and clerical assistance. The consequences included poor communication about staff rotas, holidays and training opportunities. An authoritarian style of management was reported by workers in some private day nurseries and was perceived by staff to result from pressures to save costs, but also from the stress of managing a business. Therefore disputes were reported to arise from requests to take holiday at particular times, because nurseries were unwilling to pay for cover. Some unreasonable demands were reported, for example that staff should take home babies' sheets and blankets to wash because there were no washing facilities on site. Such incidents often resulted in argument and, subsequently, to poor relations and bad feeling from staff towards management. Some managers were apparently oblivious to the effect that such occurrences had on their staff and of possible effects on turnover.

We referred to working in an attractive and purpose-built or converted environment as a positive feature of the job for workers in some settings. Conversely, some found the environment a negative feature of the job. This was particularly found among those working in playgroups, after-school and holiday schemes where premises were hired from schools, churches and community organisations. This meant that staff had to set out and put away all equipment at the beginning and end of each day, which increased the physical demands of the job. Some staff, who found the work otherwise enjoyable, said they would have to leave the job in the foreseeable future because of these physical demands.

Key points and conclusions

Some providers, for example nursery and reception units in schools, reported low rates of staff turnover, while others said that staff stayed for relatively short periods and they had to recruit almost continuously to retain their required staffing levels. Attitudes of providers towards high turnover varied, with some regarding it as a problem to be given serious consideration, while others believing it 'went with the patch'.

Many day nurseries said that low pay is a factor in staff turnover and some were also aware of higher turnover rates among younger and unqualified staff. Out of school and holiday schemes and pre-school playgroups reported high levels of turnover, because staff typically joined when their children were young and left when they were older. This was confirmed by some of the childcare workers interviewed in these settings. Where turnover was low, managers explained this partly with reference to good team working and training opportunities.

Providers were generally aware of the role of human resource practices in retaining staff, but many had poorly developed systems for introducing staff to work routines, though induction, and for staff appraisal and development. In many settings staff were often given documents to read at home and were taken through only the most important documents. Although staff sometimes work initially under supervision, they usually take on their full duties from the first day.

Most providers were aware of the benefits of training but varied considerably in how much they offered. The emphasis was on training away from the workplace and on short courses in such areas as health and safety and child protection. Where staff attended courses outside of their paid hours, many providers did not allow them time off in lieu. Many providers regarded training to NVQs as optional and something which staff might choose to do for their own interest. Some providers paid for NVQ training, often subsidised by their EYDCP, but others did not. Providers rarely allowed staff to do course work in working hours so that workers training to NVQ levels did most of their course work in their own time. NVQ awards sometimes resulted in an increase in pay and responsibility, but reward structures often were ill-defined and promotion criteria unclear. Many providers and workers said that the benefits in obtaining such qualifications were in future job prospects rather than in the present job.

Some providers had structured systems for managing staff, which included appraisal and staff consultation. However, in some cases such systems were entirely absent, and appraisals were often unconnected with staff training and development. They may not therefore be effective in reducing staff turnover. Many providers had regular staff meetings, which staff were usually required to attend. These were often outside of work time and staff were not paid over-time. This may lead to excessive working hours and to resentment.

Nurseries are small workplaces where the working atmosphere is greatly affected by personal dynamics. Therefore childcare workers placed considerable value on good staff relations and team working. A number of staff said that relations between nursery managers and staff were poor and that staff were not treated fairly. Complaints concerned issues such as permission for time off, acknowledgment of hard work and high child to staff ratios. Poor working relations

between management and staff were found to result in some cases from incompetence among managers, resulting in poor organisation, and in others from authoritarian styles of management.

Childcare workers in all types of setting said that the best thing about their job was working with children. In line with other recent research, this was universally seen as a highly positive feature of the job. Many childcare workers simply enjoyed the company of children and seeing to their needs, while others enjoyed assisting with their development. Many childcare workers valued the variety in their job and absence of a fixed routine. Many referred to the 'fun' of working with children and young people.

The most negative aspect of working in childcare was identified as low pay. This was remarked upon by childcare workers in all settings. However, it was a particular problem when combined with the long hours worked in private day nurseries. In other settings, such as play groups and after-school care, hours are often short and at awkward times of the day so that they had a negative impact on family life. A number of workers said the hours they worked were inconvenient to them, sometimes because of a change in home circumstances. However, short and dispersed hours suited some people in particular circumstances, or who combined their childcare job with other work. Childcare workers in most settings complained of the low status of the work, in particular the perceptions of people from outside the sector that the work involves 'playing' with children.

A number of childcare workers saw the demands of paper work, such as report writing and lesson planning as a negative feature of the job. This was often because it had to be done at home. However, some childcare workers found this a negative feature of the job even if their employer allowed them time to do it at work. This was principally because such tasks reduce time which could be spent with children.

The research findings suggest that current problems of recruitment and retention in the sector could be eased by the following changes:

- Increased pay across the sector
- Reduced hours in private day nurseries
- Improved career structure in all parts of the sector
- Greater encouragement for training, and opportunities to train during working hours
- Greater use of 'family friendly' policies in day nurseries
 - Free or subsidised nursery places for staff children
 - Time off for assemblies, sports day etc.
- Improve status across the sector, possibly through a change in job titles, eg practitioner and greater emphasis on aspects of the work relating to education and development

Some of these have been advocated outside the childcare and early years sector, including in sectors where the workforce is predominantly female, for example the health service, and where work needs to be compatible with domestic responsibilities (see IDS, 2000; NHS Executive, 2001).

Although childcare workers felt that changes such as those listed above would help recruitment and retention, many were also concerned that the principal motivation of those who go into childcare should be to work with children, and felt that an individual's commitment to the well-being of children should be the prime consideration. They were therefore wary of the validity of any campaign which might put this in second place, since this might lead to the recruitment of people unsuited to the job, with implications for the quality of care and reputation of childcare workers.

Chapter 5. The recruitment and retention of childminders

Introduction

Childminders constitute an important section of the childcare labour force. After relatives and friends, they are the most commonly used form of childcare (see Mooney et al, 2001). The issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of childminders are somewhat different to those for other childcare workers because childminders are self-employed childcare workers operating from their own homes. Therefore, the experiences and views of this group of workers are presented separately in this chapter, which looks at their background and working arrangements, experiences of setting up and training, getting clients, being inspected and their views about the job.

Childminders and their working arrangements

Childminders were generally older than childcare workers interviewed in other settings, particularly private nurseries. All of the fourteen childminders in the study were parents themselves and a number had been childminders for more than ten years, starting when their own children were very young. Others had started more recently, after giving up work to look after their first baby, but very few had joined within the current recruitment campaign. Three of the childminders were men, two of them providing day care on contract with their local authority. This involves looking after children of pre-school age whose parents require additional support with their childcare and can include evening and weekend care. For the childminder, this provides a more guaranteed income than general childminding, although it can be more demanding where children and parents are experiencing difficulties in their lives.

The working arrangements of childminders were complicated because many parents arranged to have part-time care and some childminders looked after older children before and after school and in the school holidays. Most of the childminders looked after five children, although some looked after as many as 10 or 11. A number were very flexible in the hours they would work and looked after children at weekends or overnight on occasions. These were mainly childminders working as 'day carers' for their local authority, for children in difficult circumstances (see above).

Previous work experience

Childminders had a range of work experience, from low skilled work in supermarkets to well paid jobs in sales and marketing. A few had experience of working with children, usually as volunteers in play groups attended by their own children. While the background of childminders varied considerably, the decision to become a childminder was often the same, and centred on the desire to be at home to look after their own children. This applied to some extent to the men: one chose to be at home because his wife was a high earner; another because he wished to see more of his son after working in a job with long hours; and the third wanted to assist his wife while retaining his main job as a milkman. It may not be a coincidence that many of the

childminders were lone parents. A possible explanation for this is that lone parents may experience more difficulty combining work outside the home with bringing up children. If lone parents have found childminding a good employment option, they may be an appropriate group for recruitment campaigns.

Reasons for working as a childminder

Childminders reasons for working in the sector were somewhat different from those of other childcare workers, employed in a variety of settings. As previous research has found (see Mooney et al, 2001), a strong motivation for many was to be at home with their own very young children, or to be at home for older children after school and during the school holidays. A few childminders wanted to work with children but preferred childminding to options such as working in a nursery. Although some childminders seemed to be making a reasonable income from the work, mostly through skillful planning of part-time places, a number of childminders stated that their earnings were not high and that money was not therefore a motivating factor.

Most of the childminders appreciated having a job which allowed them to manage their home and typically commented that 'work can be organised around my life rather than my life organised around work'. Therefore, they could carry out cooking, housework and shopping while looking after children in their care. A number also referred to opportunities which childminding gave them for more pleasurable activities such as sitting in the garden and going on outings. At the same time, they were concerned to dispel the notion that childminders provide little active care for children and 'park' children in front of the television.

Registering and setting up as a childminder

The process of setting up as a childminder involves registering with OFSTED after undergoing an introduction to childminding provided by the local authority. Most childminders described this process as slow, usually taking 6 months. They believed that it was the police check which caused the process to take this long. Some childminders believed that the process had become slower with the change to registration with OFSTED. Childminders did not find the period of 6 months excessively long, since many were entering childminding after a period out of the labour market and were not desperate to start. However, some childminders said they knew of prospective childminders who were discouraged by the length of time required to register. Costs of setting up were not reported to be high, since most childminders had children in the age group they aimed to look after. Additional equipment therefore usually included such items as fire blankets. Childminders felt they had good access to information and advice from the EYDCP, Children's Information Service or local authority and those who joined the National Childminding Association found it a valuable source of advice and support. Few problems were reported with setting up, although a small number of childminders reported difficulties getting their first clients. This is probably because most childminders obtain their clients on the basis of their reputation which is spread by word of mouth between parents.

Clients and contract terms

Information about vacancies with registered childminders is held by the Children's Information Service on behalf of the EYDCP, but childminders said they rarely had enquiries from prospective clients through this route. The reasons for this are unclear, but childminders thought that parents looking for a childminder will rarely use one without recommendation. Therefore, the childminders found most of their clients through word of mouth from current or past clients. A small number of childminders said they were occasionally asked if they had a vacancy by mothers at playgroups or other places they visited with children. Some had placed advertisements in local shops, but felt that interested individuals would then seek further information on the local 'grapevine' before making an initial approach.

Most childminders had experienced few problems filling places, but day places were reported to be harder to fill than after school and holiday provision. There was some concern that the national childcare recruitment campaign might result 'flooding' of the market and make it more difficult for childminders to fill places and make a living. Some childminders expressed a preference for the ages of children they cared for, or the hours they worked, but most liked to have a mix of clients in these respects. Many said they gained most satisfaction by seeing children they cared for develop and grow older. Therefore, they liked to care for children on a long-term basis. This also gave childminders the opportunity to get to know children's families, and for childminders' families to develop their own relationships with the children who came to their homes.

The fees charged by childminders ranged from around £2 to £3.50 an hour, but costs to parents depended also on arrangements for holiday periods and whether other items were charged as extra, for example food and playgroup fees. Some childminders charged lower rates for siblings and some charged more for after school care. Most childminders did not ask for holiday pay, but did charge fees during clients' holidays and most charged for a child's sick leave but not for their own. Although most childminders had an hourly rate, a few said they varied this according to parents' means. Whilst this might be seen as responding flexibly to the childcare market, it also reflected discomfort among some childminders in setting a market rate for their services. Indeed, many childminders reported difficulty with parents over payment issues and complained that parents sometimes 'took advantage' by paying late or questioning bills. It is likely that problems of this nature are less likely to arise where childminders charge fixed rates and have clear rules over chargeable and non-chargeable periods.

Training of childminders

Childminders had experience of both specific training in childminding, and other training including short courses. Most childminders had been established for many years, so that what introductory training they had was largely forgotten, but those who registered more recently said they found the 'Introduction to Childminding Practice' useful. They found it gave them the confidence to begin work, and useful guidance on drawing up contracts with parents, keeping records and managing finances. In addition to their introductory training, childminders had taken short courses in first aid, fire safety, child protection, food hygiene and other areas of childcare.

Those who had taken these courses recently had their fees paid by the Partnership, through the childminding network.

Childminders who were actively involved in a network, through the Partnership, or who were contracted as 'Day Carers' (see above) by their local authority, had easier access to training than others. These were generally those who had made a commitment to childminding rather than just setting out. There might be benefits in extending this to newly registered childminders. However, given levels of turnover among childminders (see IdeA, 1999), this may be a wasted investment. Moreover, new childminders are still able to plan training for when they have settled into the job.

Some more experienced childminders had taken training to levels 2 and 3 NVQ. The main motivation for this was their own interest in childcare and development rather than to improve their skills, which they believed were based on experience. However, one childminder had registered as eligible for vouchers to deliver early education for 3 and 4 year olds. Those undertaking this training received financial support through the Partnership, and the main investment had been of their own time. In addition to their own interest, childminders had believed that training would increase parents' confidence in their skills and professionalism. However, a number of childminders remarked on the relative lack of interest among parents in their training or qualifications, compared to their experience. It is possible that this is because parents are not aware of the opportunities for training available to childminders. However, childminders were not discouraged by this and continued to train for their own interest and satisfaction. A number of childminders had developed folders which included details of training courses attended and their certificates, which they felt helped to present a professional image to prospective parents and to OFSTED. More widespread use of this practice might encourage parents to take more interest in training and qualifications when choosing a childminder, and could help to raise the status of the job.

Support and inspection of childminders

Childminders saw the main sources of support as initial grants, access to toy libraries and equipment loans, access to training, membership of the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and local childminding networks. Because many of the childminders had been established for some years, few had received a grant, but those who had found it very helpful in meeting the costs of setting up. They were also willing to use it to pay for training, although most training was free of charge or available at minimal cost. Most said they did not use the toy library or take out equipment on loan because they had been established for some time and had equipment and toys bought for their own children. It was seen as a valuable service nonetheless.

The most valuable form of support were the opportunities for social contact with other childminders. These were available either formally through local EYDCP networks and the NCMA or informally at playgroups attended by parents and carers. Networks provided considerable support through regular drop-in sessions. In one Partnership area this included an activity for children, for example art or craft, linked to a child development subject. It therefore

combined a social occasion with the opportunity to expand childcare knowledge and practice. A number of childminders said they would welcome more opportunity to meet other childminders in groups organised specifically for childminders and children in their care. Childminders found themselves to be in a minority at general playgroups and drop-in facilities and believed that mothers were interested only in meeting other parents.

Childminders who were members of the NCMA found it a valuable source of information and support. This included help with record keeping and accounts in the form of specially designed ledgers, and standard terms and conditions. These were considered to be especially helpful with the transition to OFSTED and a more rigorous system of inspection.

On the issue of the change to inspection by OFSTED, childminders generally reported positive experiences of the inspection process. In some cases this was a pleasant surprise, since they had either expected or been led to believe that it would be unconstructive. Some childminders had not yet been inspected by OFSTED, but those who had generally made favourable comparisons between the new and old systems. Some childminders appreciated the greater emphasis by OFSTED than previous inspections on child development. They also found the opportunity for parents to provide feedback had been helpful and encouraging. Some childminders had developed folders which included details of their contracts with clients, certificates and details of training courses attended. They found this to save time during the inspection and had also shown it to prospective clients. This helped to present a professional image and give parents, and inspectors, confidence in the quality of care provided. The only problem with the new arrangements was identified in the appointments system, which requires childminders to give a series of dates during which they are available to be called on. Whilst childminders appreciated the need for inspectors to visit under real, rather than contrived, conditions, they felt that this took away their freedom to plan activities at short notice during this time.

Childminders' views about the job

Childminders had particular views on the job, which differed from those of other childcare workers, presented in Chapter 4, because of the nature of the work. The positive feature of working as a childminder was the enjoyment of being with children, of seeing to their needs and watching them grow and develop. Almost all of the childminders said that this was the aspect of the work they enjoyed most. A number of childminders also referred to the opportunities for training as a positive feature of the work. Another positive feature of the job was the relative freedom to plan the working day, to take advantage of good weather to be outside, and also to keep on top of household tasks when children are resting. Many of the childminders had young children at home and did not wish to work outside the home. Childminding was therefore seen as an opportunity to earn money without undertaking excessive additional work. Working at home often impacts on family life, and a number of childminders referred to occasional resentment from other family members at the presence of other children, particularly after normal working hours. However, families were generally reported to be supportive and the relationships developed with children and their families were usually seen as a positive feature of the job.

On the negative side, many childminders referred to difficulties dealing with parents. Two common problems were parents arriving late to collect children and difficulties over fees, either the amount due, or punctuality of payments. Some childminders complained that parents sometimes 'took advantage' by paying late or questioning bills. However, it was also apparent that some childminders were uncomfortable about dealing with fees and perhaps did not make the financial arrangements sufficiently clear to clients. For example, one childminder complained that parents asked her for a monthly invoice rather than work out the fee themselves, an arrangement which would seem quite reasonable but which was not acceptable to the childminder. Such problems could be overcome by initial training, and more recently established childminders seemed to experience fewer difficulties than others.

The other negative feature of the work was its status, which was seen as poor both in general and in relation to other childcare jobs. There was widespread concern at the belief that childminders 'park' children in front of the television and literally 'mind' the children rather than actively engage with them and develop their physical, mental and social skills. Childminders therefore felt that greater awareness of the training and inspection involved would help to dispel this view. It was also suggested that a change in job title would help raise its status. Some childminders also remarked on the comparison made between childminders and nurseries, with childminders commonly seen as the poorer option. This was seen to result from the image of 'minding' and 'parking' attached to childminders and the sometimes idealised image of a nursery as a 'fun' and 'exciting' place to be. Childminders felt that the benefits of the care they offered should be more widely appreciated. These included a homely atmosphere, small numbers of children, the same carer each day, a flexible routine and regular trips outside the home. A number referred to the national advertising campaign and, while they felt that these emphasised the 'fun' of childminding, they gave insufficient emphasis to the work involved, so that it was seen as play rather than professional care covering all aspects of a child's development.

Key points and conclusions

All of the childminders in the study were parents themselves, typically starting when their children were very young. They had a range of work experience, from low skilled work in supermarkets to well paid jobs in sales and marketing. A few had experience of working with children, mainly as volunteers. Childminders' reasons for working in the sector were somewhat different from those of other childcare workers, employed in a variety of settings. As previous research has found (Mooney et al, 2001), a strong motivation for many was to be at home during the day or after school with their own children.

Although some childminders seemed to be making a reasonable income from the work, a number of childminders stated that their earnings were not high and that money was not therefore a motivating factor. Childminders were very flexible in the childcare arrangements they made with parents, providing part-time, after school and holiday care, and sometimes overnight or at weekends.

Three of the childminders were men, two of them providing day care on contract with their local authority. Many were lone parents. A possible explanation for this is that lone parents may

experience more difficulty combining work outside the home with bringing up children. If lone parents have found childminding a good employment option, they may be an appropriate group for recruitment campaigns.

Most childminders described the process of setting up as a childminder as slow, usually taking 6 months, but did not feel this was excessive. Costs of setting up were not reported to be high, since childminders had their own children and had most of the equipment needed. Childminders felt they had good access to information and advice from the EYDCP, Childrens' Information Service or local authority. Few problems were reported with setting up, although a small number of childminders reported difficulties getting their first clients, probably because most childminders obtain their clients through word of mouth.

Most childminders had experienced problems filling places, and day places were reported to be harder to fill than after school and holiday provision. There was some concern that the national childcare recruitment campaign might result 'flooding' of the market and make it more difficult for childminders to fill places and make a living.

Some childminders reported difficulty with parents over payment issues and complained that parents sometimes 'took advantage' by paying late or questioning bills. There were indications that some childminders were not comfortable negotiating financial matters with parents and might be assisted through further training in this area.

Childminders had taken up opportunities for training, in addition to introductory courses. Some were involved in networks offering training and some had taken training to levels 2 and 3 NVQ. The main motivation for this was their own interest in childcare and development. A number of childminders remarked on the relative lack of interest among parents in their training or qualifications, compared to their experience. A number of childminders had developed folders which included details of training courses attended and their certificates, which they felt helped to present a professional image to prospective parents and to OFSTED. More widespread use of this practice might encourage parents to take more interest in training and qualifications when choosing a childminder, and could help to raise the status of the job.

Childminders valued opportunities for social contact with other childminders which were available either formally through local EYDCP networks and the NCMA or informally at playgroups attended by parents and carers. A number of childminders said they would welcome more opportunity to meet other childminders in groups organised specifically for childminders and children in their care partly because they found themselves to be in a minority at general playgroups.

The NCMA was reported to be a valuable source of information and support, providing help on such matters as record keeping and accounts and standard terms and conditions. These were considered to be especially helpful with the transition to OFSTED. Childminders generally reported positive experiences of the inspection process. Some appreciated the stronger emphasis on child development and provision for client feedback.

Childminders' views on the job differed in some ways from those of other childcare workers, principally because they work from home and have closer contact than other childcare workers with parents. The main positive features of the job were identified as follows:

- Being with children, of seeing to their needs and watching them grow and develop, referred to by almost all of the childminders as the aspect of the work they enjoyed most.
- Many of the childminders had young children at home and did not wish to work outside the home. Childminding was therefore an opportunity to earn money without undertaking excessive additional work
- Childminders enjoyed the relative freedom to plan the working day, to take advantage of good weather to be outside, and also to keep on top of household tasks when children are resting.
- A number of childminders also referred to the opportunities for training as a positive feature of the work.

Less favoured features of the work included:

- Many childminders reported difficulties dealing with parents, with the most common problems reported with parents arriving late to collect children and difficulties over fees, either the amount due, or punctuality of payments.
- Some childminders were uncomfortable about dealing with fees and perhaps did not make the financial arrangements sufficiently clear to clients. Such problems could be overcome by initial training, and more recently established childminders seemed to experience fewer difficulties than others.
- Although childminders generally found their families to be supportive of their job, a number of childminders referred to occasional resentment from other family members at the presence of other children, particularly after normal working hours.
- Childminders resented the low status of the job. They felt there is a widespread misconception that childminders 'park' children in front of the television and literally 'mind' children rather than actively engage with them. Childminders therefore felt that greater awareness of the training and inspection involved would help to dispel this view. It was also suggested that a change in job title would help raise its status.
- Some childminders also felt that they were seen as 'second best' in terms of provision and that the benefits of the care they provided should be recognised. These include a homely atmosphere, small numbers of children, the same carer each day, a flexible routine and regular trips outside the home.

Chapter 6. The work of the EYDCPs

Introduction

This chapter looks at the work of the EYDCPs in promoting recruitment and retention in their local areas. This includes the strategy adopted in their work on recruitment and retention, work with providers and promotional activity aimed at the general public. It looks at the recruitment activities which Partnerships have found to be particularly effective and their efforts to improve the under-representation of target groups - men, ethnic minorities, disabled people and the over 40s. The chapter looks at the role played by Partnerships in the provision of training to prospective recruits and to existing employees. It also looks at the materials they use to assist the national recruitment campaign. Finally, the chapter looks at providers' views of the work of the Partnerships in their area.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships were set up following the launch of the National Childcare Strategy in 1998 to deliver its strategy in local areas and to co-ordinate the development of free early years education places for 3 and 4 year olds. EYDCPs are also required to run a Children's Information Service (CIS) and to provide advice, support and training for early years, play and childcare workers. Partnerships include representatives of local childcare providers, such as nursery owners and playgroup leaders, as well as representatives from other organisations with an interest in the childcare strategy, such as local voluntary organisations, the health authorities, employers, parents and local authority departments such as Education and Social Services. Partnerships are expected to take account of local conditions and of the needs of communities in developing provision.

Most of the eight EYDCPs were located within the local authority education department, but varied in the proximity and closeness of liaison with the Children's Information Service (CIS). One EYDCP had contracted the recruitment and retention campaign to a provider of childcare training. Close links with the CIS appeared to be beneficial, particularly for strengthening the link between the demand for childcare, gauged through CIS enquiries, with efforts to increase supply of childcare workers. Location of the campaign within a training provider had the advantage of linking recruitment directly to introductory courses, which might reduce 'drop-out' from a potential childcare worker, following their initial interest

Local context and issues for recruitment and retention

Eight EYDCPs were included in the study. These were selected to include a range of Partnerships according to local labour market (high and low demand), rural and urban areas and with different degrees of success in reaching targets for childcare places. Features of the local area, such as level of unemployment, and rural communities presented particular challenges for the Partnerships and influenced the direction of their recruitment and retention work. They are summarised in Table 13. The first column of the table summarises the main features of the eight EYDCP areas included in the study. The second column summarises their main issues of

concern, which include the low level of provision in rural areas and the relatively low level of labour market participation among certain sections of the population.

Partnerships' overall approach to the campaign was influenced by local circumstances, including current levels of childcare provision and level of vacancies for childcare workers. Three of the Partnerships identified an immediate need to recruit childcare workers to expand current provision or to fill vacancies. These were in areas with particular, although different, challenges for recruitment: one inner-city area with high unemployment but close to an area of high labour market demand; a town with very low unemployment and competition for childcare workers; and a county with sizable rural areas. As a consequence of local conditions, the emphasis of the work of these Partnerships tended to be on campaigns targeted at the general public to stimulate demand for services and interest in childcare employment. In the other five areas there was less urgent need to fill vacancies and long-term goals were more strongly emphasised. These centred on the need to create a trained workforce, stability of provision, meeting local demand, and quality care for children. Therefore, these Partnerships had generally formed stronger links with providers, and placed more emphasis on training.

The research examined how the features of the EYDCP areas and their main concerns for childcare in the area influenced the strategy they then adopted towards the campaign. Column 3 of Table 13 shows two main approaches: to focus on recruitment of childcare workers in order to meet DfES targets, including meeting targets for under-represented groups; and working with networks covering specific areas of provision, or other partners, in order to promote recruitment in particular areas. This second approach was strongest in areas where less emphasis was placed on immediate recruitment needs, five of the eight Partnership areas.

Table 13. Features of EYDCP areas and main concerns for workforce

	Features of local area	Main concerns of the EYDCP	Overall strategy
Area 1	Inner city, high levels of disadvantage 25% ethnic minority population with high unemployment & low childcare use	Need to recruit childcare workers to expand provision Need to stimulate female ethnic minority employment and childcare use	Recruit childminders Use networks to identify key problems for types of provider
Area 2	County with market towns, areas of prosperity and pockets of urban and rural deprivation Some isolated rural area	Vacancies for childcare workers and need to increase recruitment	Recruitment drive with public Target under-represented groups
Area 3	Town with very low unemployment and competition for labour High demand for day care	Recruitment problems Low demand for childminders	Recruitment drive with public
Area 4	City with areas of disadvantage Ethnic minority population	Quality of provision and need for trained staff	Focus on recruitment to meet targets
Area 5	County with small towns, villages and rural areas Small ethnic minority population	Need to increase provision Recruitment needed to expand provision Need for trained staff and to ensure quality provision	Respond to gaps in provision Recruitment drive with public
Area 6	Urban and rural areas Higher than average unemployment Some ethnic minority population	Poor Provision in rural areas Need to improve quality of recruits Need for trained workforce	Meet targets for places and under-represented groups
Area 7	County with urban and rural areas Generally affluent but pockets of deprivation Competition from other sectors	Quality of provision Stability of businesses in private sector Extend sessional care to day care	Support managers in recruitment and retention Retain childminders
Area 8	City with areas of deprivation and isolated estates with high unemployment Ethnic minority population	Training and workers with long-term commitment to sector Improve stability of sector	Networking with childcare and employment organisations Link training to recruitment

Partnership expertise in recruitment and retention

As explained above, local conditions influenced the approach adopted by EYDCPs. However, they could not fully explain the differences found in the approach they adopted towards the recruitment and retention campaign and factors such as the expertise and background of key staff were also found to influence the emphasis of work on recruitment and retention, particularly the degree of importance placed on training.

In 5 EYDCPs responsibility for the recruitment and retention campaign was held by a recruitment development officer/co-ordinator, or recruitment and training officer. In 2 it was held by a training and development officer and in one EYDCP by a communications officer. The head of service had a considerable involvement in recruitment and retention work in 3 of the EYDCPs visited. In 2 of the Partnerships the recruitment and retention work was closely linked into the work of the Childrens' Information Service (CIS). The job in which recruitment and retention was placed reflected, to some extent, the strategy adopted by the Partnership: in particular Partnerships identifying the most urgent recruitment needs placed less emphasis on training than those where provision and staffing was already strong.

A further variation was found between EYDCPs in the background of staff responsible for recruitment and retention work. The most usual background of staff with lead responsibility for the campaign was in childcare, social services and other local authority services. In two EYDCPs recruitment and retention work was led by someone with a background in training, within childcare or youth work. This appeared to bring a stronger appreciation of some issues associated with recruitment and retention, in particular the individual decision-making processes over job choice and entry to childcare. In one case, this led to greater emphasis on guidance for individuals considering working in childcare, in order to ensure their suitability and motivation, and to explore options within the sector. This was seen to have the advantage of reducing drop out which can result when employees find themselves unsuited to the work.

Support from sub-groups

Officers were guided and supported in the strategic direction of their work by EYDCP sub-groups, of which there are typically six. The focus of the group covering recruitment and retention issues varied between Partnerships, in particular whether it was recruitment, training or quality standards. Only one of the Partnership had a separate recruitment sub-group, and this was under formation, having been under the umbrella of a training and standards sub-group. In three of the Partnerships this support was provided by the sub-group with responsibility for training, including development and quality standards. Two of these Partnerships had recently merged their sub-groups for recruitment with those for training. This was in recognition of the role of training in recruiting and retaining staff of the necessary quality for the sector. However, as noted above, one Partnership had taken the other direction, splitting recruitment and training into two separate sub-groups. This was because it had found the issue of recruitment to have become 'lost' as the sub-group focused on improving training and quality standards.

Key issues for recruitment and retention

Partnerships identified a number of key issues for recruitment and retention of childcare workers in their areas, but only one of these, pay was mentioned by most Partnerships and was therefore a universal issue, regardless of local conditions. The importance of other issues varied as a result of differences between local labour markets and in levels of current provision of childcare. However, some representatives of Partnerships gave perhaps undue emphasis to pay and insufficient consideration of other issues, particularly those which affect retention of childcare, early years and play workers.

Pay, hours and status

Pay was seen as a key issue for recruitment and a major constraint on the success of the childcare workers recruitment campaign. Rates of pay were seen as low in general but a number of representatives remarked on that the lowest rates of pay are found in the voluntary sector, in such settings as pre-school play groups and in day nurseries in the private sector. It was also seen as an issue for the recruitment of managers as well as for junior staff. Hours of work were also identified as a key issue for recruitment. Hours were seen as long in some parts of the sector, and short or irregular in other parts. Concerns about pay were sometimes voiced alongside those about hours, and these were varied: short and flexible hours were seen as a barrier to recruitment in the voluntary sector, and long hours a barrier to recruitment in private day nurseries (see Chapter 3). However, hours were also seen as an issue for recruitment, and also for retention, irrespective of pay. Therefore it was thought that childcare workers in part-time jobs, especially where hours could not accommodate another job, were liable to leave to take full-time jobs in order to earn a higher salary. It was believed that this resulted in a loss of childcare workers to other sectors. Competition from other sectors was more often identified as a barrier to recruitment than to retention, particularly in areas of low unemployment and high demand for labour. Supermarkets and call-centres were seen as key competitor sectors. Work for these employers was seen as attractive to women with children, a key recruitment pool for childcare, for the availability of flexible working compatible with employees' own childcare responsibilities.

Some respondents also referred to competition within the childcare sector, with over-supply in some sectors and severe shortages in others. The maintained nursery sector was identified as a sector with few recruitment problems, for reasons including relatively high rates of pay and good provision of training (see Chapter 3). Schools were seen as a strong competitor for childcare workers working as Teaching Assistants for children of statutory as well as pre-school age. Playgroups in the voluntary sector, in contrast, experience considerable difficulty recruiting staff because of low pay and short, dispersed hours. EYDCP's views on where recruitment difficulties are experienced most acutely correspond closely with provider's own reports. In addition to the issues of pay and hours, the low status of childcare workers was remarked upon by a number of respondents. This was, indeed, an issue which childcare, early years and play workers themselves felt strongly about.

The nature of the work

Issues relating to the nature of the work itself were raised by only a small number of respondents, and these were seen as secondary to the issues of pay and hours. These included the demands of paper work, particularly in relation to education work with three and four year olds. Lesson planning and progress records were believed to be particularly demanding of staff time. Interviews with childcare workers confirm that this is an aspect of the job they dislike, and one which may lead to staff turnover (see Chapter 4). Some Partnership representatives also referred to poor treatment of childcare staff by management as a factor in turnover, and regarded the private day nursery sector as particularly problematic in this respect.

Issues for rural areas, and informal provision

We have referred to the effect of location; EYDCPs covering rural areas identified particular issues in relation to the characteristics of these locations. Rural areas were identified as having poorer provision of childcare, per capita, than urban districts. This was explained partly with reference to lower female participation in rural areas and therefore lower demand for childcare. A further issue was identified in transport difficulties and unwillingness to travel long distances either for work or for childcare by residents of rural areas. Use of informal arrangements for childcare were thought to be higher in such areas, although they were also seen to be common in some urban locations. Such arrangements were also believed to be more common among minority ethnic communities than among the white population. One Partnership in an inner city area with a relatively high proportion of ethnic minorities saw the conversion of informal childcare places, by childminders, into formal places as a key task.

Key features of EYDCP strategies

With the exception of one EYDCP, the emphasis of Partnerships' work in relation to recruitment and retention was strongly on recruitment. The Partnership giving the two a more equal emphasis was in an area where provision of childcare was good, partly as a result of strong representation from the private sector. This Partnership was therefore less concerned with issues of recruitment than with high staff turnover and quality of provision.

EYDCPs were set up to develop the Government's National Childcare Strategy in their local area and, as part of this are expected to meet targets agreed with the DfES for the number of additional childcare places in their area. This was seen as the priority by most Partnerships as the most tangible evidence of the success of its work. While most Partnerships appeared to be acting in the spirit of the strategy, by achieving a genuine expansion in the number of places, there was some evidence of attempts to meet targets with only limited expansion of provision. For example, one Partnership had increased after-school provision from 4 to 5 sessions a week, opened a large number of breakfast clubs and extended school holiday provision. Although these are all additional provision, which are undoubtedly valuable to working parents, they were

reported to have created very little additional childcare employment. This Partnership stated that it had met its targets through the use of 'smoke and mirrors'.

Most Partnerships also referred to specific targets for under-represented groups, and those for ethnic minority recruits were more frequently referred to than for the other target groups: men, the over 40 age group and disabled people. Some Partnerships were targeting Sure Start areas for provision, partly because of the availability of additional funding for provision in such areas, including training of childcare, early years and play workers.

Other Partnerships said they respond to gaps in provision identified through CIS Helpline and for this reason, close contact with CIS and recruitment staff was found helpful. Some Partnerships aimed to establish a more detailed picture of the recruitment and development needs in their area by working closely with providers, and their umbrella organisations. Although all had such connections through representation on the Partnership board, working relations appeared to be stronger in some Partnerships than others. Some Partnerships had set up sector, or area groups which allowed for consultation with providers through a liaison officer. Of these groups, childminding networks were particularly strong. Partnerships also had strong links with organisations such as the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA) and the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA). Partnerships also had links with other organisations, including the Employment Service, Connexions, community groups and youth clubs, representatives of which were on the Partnership and sub-groups. However, in only one Partnership were these links very strong in relation to recruitment and retention activity. This is possibly because the recruitment campaign in this area was contracted to a training organisation to whom such links are important in other areas of its work.

Most of the Partnerships saw the recruitment drive with the general public as a key activity, and referred to the need to target this work accurately, to achieve maximum effectiveness. A few Partnerships referred to the needs of particular parts of the sector, for example childminding. As we discussed earlier, the emphasis placed on training varied between Partnerships, but some had identified the need to link the recruitment drive with initial training or familiarisation courses, such as 'Making Choices' in order to build directly on initial interest.

Retention of childcare, early years and play workers

The emphasis of the campaign work conducted by the Partnerships was strongly on recruitment, with retention taking a back seat. The main reason given for this was the concern by Partnerships to meet their targets for new childcare places. A representative of one Partnership commented, 'We don't have targets for retention', and that meeting recruitment targets must be the priority. In addition, some Partnerships felt there were practical difficulties of working with providers on retention. The emphasis on recruitment and sidelining of retention is problematic because, unless issues of retention are addressed, efforts expended on recruitment are likely to have only short-term benefits.

There was also evidence of more limited expertise in retention issues, than in recruitment, among Partnership representatives. As noted earlier, Partnerships saw low pay and long hours as leading

to high levels of turnover, but other factors contributing to turnover, such as management practices, were rarely mentioned. Moreover, a number of representatives of Partnerships expressed the view that they could do little about the issues affecting retention, whereas they *were* able to influence recruitment. The exception to this was training, which most Partnerships saw as important for retention. This was put into practice through increased links made between the recruitment campaign and training of childcare workers within the Partnership areas. However, at the same time, there was some concern that training might not help in staff retention, particularly with the same employer, because trained staff may use their training and qualifications to find work elsewhere.

Although there was much more expertise within Partnerships on recruitment rather than retention, some were involved with providers on retention issues and planned to increase this. For example, Partnerships had developed the following:

- A support system for employers, which included business support and professional training.
- A seminar held at a weekend on small business management in childcare
- A recruitment guide for providers with model job descriptions, application forms, letters of appointment and advice on interview procedures.
- A ten-point set of local recruitment standards.
- A seminar on retention.

Most Partnerships expressed concern about retention of childminders. This is possibly because of Government targets over the retention of this particular group of childcare workers, among whom turnover is known to be high (see IdeA, 1999). Partnerships had paid considerable attention to the issues affecting turnover of childminders, which they believed included the change to Ofsted inspection, difficulty of finding clients, and change in personal circumstances as childminders' children grow up and other forms of employment become more attractive. However, the measures taken to improve retention focused on reducing the isolation experienced by some childminders, by building networks of childminders with access to drop in facilities and services such as toy libraries. Programmes of training were also in place, particularly the Certificate in Childminding Practice, a level 3 qualification. These were aimed at increasing quality, job satisfaction and commitment, which in turn might improve retention.

Recruitment activities with the public

Partnerships were engaged in a wide programme of activities aimed at recruiting childcare workers. The main activities involved disseminating information about careers in childcare and making contact with potential recruits through recruitment events, such as fairs.

Information about jobs in childcare

Partnerships aimed to raise awareness and interest of employment in childcare through a number of means. The most common of these were:

- Posters and leaflet distribution
- Videos and CD Roms
- Web-sites
- Newspaper features
- Radio advertisements and broadcasts

Partnerships produced leaflets and posters about employment opportunities in childcare in places used by parents and carers which they distributed at a wide range of venues, for example libraries and leisure centres. As well as leaflets targeted at recruitment, Partnerships also distributed their newsletters at a wide range of locations, and these always included features on recruitment. Local authority newsletters were also used to publicise Partnership events and activities, and the telephone hot-line. Some Partnerships took out large posters on the side of buses. These materials displayed the telephone number of the recruitment telephone hotline of the Partnership for interested individuals to contact to obtain more information about working in childcare. Other Partnerships have advertised on supermarket till rolls or local maps, alongside entries from local shops, restaurants and local services. Monitoring of calls had given Partnerships useful information on what type of advertising works, but these did not show a consistent picture across Partnerships. For example, posters on buses drew a good response in one area and a poor response in another.

Partnerships' telephone hotlines were located within the Childrens' Information Service. Enquirers were sent information packs developed by Partnerships containing information on employment opportunities in the field. Packs contained materials produced by the Partnerships themselves and by the DfES. They included information about initial training, or familiarisation courses, such as 'Making Choices'. Partnerships reported sending out large numbers of these packs, but the effectiveness of these packs and other materials is not known because enquiries were not generally followed-up. The main reason given for this was cost, but there was also some concern that 'heavy' sales techniques, including follow-up, might discourage some potential childcare workers. This is certainly an important issue to consider, particularly where an interested individual does not have the support of their partner or other family members. However, the disadvantage is that Partnerships could not gauge the effectiveness of this method or the materials used.

Some information to the general public was aimed at raising awareness and interest in working in childcare, while some advertised specific vacancies. Local newspapers were used for both these purposes. Features in newspapers often included vacancies across a number of local providers as well as stories about the jobs of people working in the sector. Newspapers were reported to be keen to feature atypical workers, such as men and to print pictures of cheerful children. Many Partnerships took out whole page advertisements for job vacancies in a number of local providers. This was developed principally as a service for providers, some of whom had

difficulty recruiting staff or affording the high costs of newspaper advertising. It was not generally seen as a way to recruit people with no previous experience of working in childcare. A few Partnerships had developed strong relationships with their local paper or radio station, and found this invaluable for general promotional work on opportunities in childcare. In one area, a local music radio station targeted at the over 40 age group, had run two features on childcare employment. These had included a mixture of paid advertising, free community announcements, interviews and information sessions. Broadcasts advertised a telephone help-line, staffed by the radio station and information pack produced by the radio station itself. Each campaign resulted in about 600 calls for information.

A few Partnerships said they had visited local schools, colleges and universities as part of the recruitment campaign in order to access young people close to leaving full-time education. Some Partnerships had run shortened versions of 'Making Choices', the introductory course to childcare, in schools. Work with schools, colleges and universities was seen as successful, in terms of levels of attendance and interest generated, but Partnerships had not assessed the success of this activity in recruitment outcomes. In addition to allowing access to relatively large groups of potential childcare employees, some EYDCPs saw this work as an opportunity to attract people from under-represented groups, particularly men. However, one Partnership had found little interest from men and believed it is necessary to carry out careers education with boys, possibly as early as Year 9 (when pupils choose their GCSE options). This raises the issue of careers education and guidance for those with an interest in childcare. It is perhaps surprising that only one Partnership raised this as a key issue for entry to the sector, emphasising the need to recruit people with the appropriate skills, abilities or interest, in order to ensure stability of employment and quality of provision.

A number of Partnerships had produced videos, web-sites, CD Roms and audio tapes. These were intended to be used and promoted at recruitment events or in careers offices. Their content emphasised the range of employment opportunities available in terms of setting, age group, relative emphasis on childcare and education, and hours of work. In addition, web-sites sometimes included information about current childcare vacancies in the EYDCP area. In developing these materials, Partnerships used materials developed by the national campaign, in order to build on information which potential childcare workers may have already seen. When compared to the production of leaflets and other printed materials, CD roms, videos and web-sites are costly. One Partnership had cut the costs by co-producing a video with neighbouring EYDCPs. As with other materials, Partnerships did not know how effective these materials were, and had not always used even simple methods such as installing web-counters.

Fairs

EYDCPs have been encouraged to hold fairs to promote childcare both as a source of employment and to enable parents to take paid work. Fairs were seen as potentially attracting large numbers of potential employees, who might be then encouraged to pursue training or direct entry to childcare jobs. Therefore, all the Partnerships had held at least one fair, typically consisting of stalls providing information about work in particular settings. While EYDCPs felt that these events had raised the profile of the Partnership and of opportunities for working in

childcare, they had been disappointed at low levels of attendance from the general public. In addition, Partnership staff had found it difficult to get contact details from visitors, either because the stall was busy or because they were reluctant to give these. Therefore, it was possible to carry out only very limited follow-up work with people who expressed an interest in working in childcare. A key factor in the success of fairs, in terms of attendance levels, was identified in their location. Central locations which required the public to make very little effort to attend were found to attract the largest number of participants. A number of Partnerships had achieved very low attendance rates at fairs in community centres in small towns or estates.

Partnerships had also taken part in job fairs held by the Employment Service, and these were found to be successful in meeting providers immediate staffing needs by attracting those with experience of working in childcare. They were not thought to be successful in attracting new entrants to the sector. However, they involved far less organisation than a Partnership's own childcare fair. Partnerships had also arranged to have a desk in a Jobcentre promoting working in childcare, which they found attracted interest from job seekers. EYDCPs also took part in a range of other fairs and events organised by other local organisations. Again, the success of these in attracting new employees was not known, but Partnerships found them useful for making contacts in local organisations, including particular sections of the local community, for example minority ethnic groups. These might be followed-up at a later date, with further recruitment activity such as a workshop. Therefore, local community fairs were found to be particularly useful.

Two measures of the success of EYDCP involvement in fairs, either as host or invited participant, have been identified: the number of people attending; and contacts made between Partnership staff and those in local organisations. A third measure of success was identified by one Partnership as 'knock-on' effects, such as newspaper reports of the event which give further publicity to the Partnership and to the recruitment campaign, and invitations to attend similar functions in the future.

Partnerships had also run workshops, typically a session lasting between 30 minutes and an hour led by a representative of the Partnership or a practitioner. These were usually arranged as part of an event, such as a fair, since stand-alone sessions were found to be poorly attended.

EYDCPs' work with providers

Only one of the eight EYDCPs said that working with providers on recruitment and retention was a key part of their work. Representatives of other Partnerships said that the main emphasis was on work with the public. However, Partnerships had formed links with providers and were offering assistance with recruitment and retention in a number of ways. A number had plans to strengthen this side of their work, through such activities as meetings and the distribution of guidance materials.

Links with providers were strongest where sector groups and liaison officers could mediate between the Partnership and providers, so that the needs of providers could be identified without the need for time-consuming contact with individual providers. Partly because of the prior

existence of childminder support groups, this was the most established sector for this type of liaison. EYDCPs were therefore involved in establishing and strengthening a range of support activities for childminders, including:

- Childminder networks
- Drop-in centres
- Free training
- Equipment loans

Partnerships were developing a number of ways to give providers practical assistance with recruitment. The most common of these was help with advertising vacancies, to reduce costs and increase the number of applications. A number of Partnerships paid for a large space of advertising in a local paper to 'pool' job vacancies in local providers. The effectiveness of this assistance is not known, but it provides considerable cost savings to providers and is likely to increase the number of applicants. Some Partnerships published their own regular vacancy database or bulletin in which providers could advertise vacancies and which was distributed to a range of venues, such as libraries, leisure and community centres. These bulletins did not only advertise job vacancies, but information about courses, which might be of interest to individuals without previous experience in childcare. Some Partnerships circulated their vacancy lists by post to people who have registered with them as interested in working in childcare. Feedback from providers in one area suggested that these bulletins must be published frequently in order to be of real benefit, since vacancies often need to be filled quickly. It was also found that vacancies advertised were largely in the private sector, possibly because of the prevalence of word of mouth for recruitment in other parts of the sector.

A number of Partnerships had set up a 'bank' of individuals available to work for short periods to cover staff absence. The main purpose of this service to providers was to release staff for training, since providers reported difficulty in obtaining cover and affording agency fees. Bank members have at least some basic training and experience and their suitability for working with children has been checked. Partnerships emphasised that this service should not be seen as a means of recruiting staff, since this could make the service costly, as the bank would need regular renewal, or could diminish its size. Problems of this nature were not reported, and unexpected benefits were identified in keeping childcare workers in the sector, who might otherwise leave altogether. As an incentive to join the bank, Partnerships were offering free training, a measure which should also benefit providers who use it.

The second way in which Partnerships were assisting providers with recruitment and retention was through guidance and support in staff recruitment and management. This included training, written materials and events such as seminars. On the first of these, one Partnership had provided training to providers in quality assurance, which included business skills and in staffing practices. Another had produced a brief guide to recruitment and retention, through the services of a consultant. Partnerships had held seminars on management and quality issues, which included issues of staffing. These were found to attract a lot of interest from providers, possibly because of the relatively small time commitment and the opportunity they give to meet other providers. However, they were not found to be willing to share good practice, probably for

competitive reasons. Therefore, such examples may have to be obtained and disseminated to providers by other means. One Partnership had held a seminar specifically on employing disabled people in childcare (see below).

Work to promote recruitment of under-represented groups

Partnerships have targets to increase the proportion of childcare workers from under-represented groups. These include men, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those aged over 40 years. Although one might expect Partnerships to be targeting each of these groups, the emphasis of their work was on recruitment of ethnic minorities, even where local populations were quite small. This work included producing campaign and information materials in minority ethnic languages. EYDCPs were grateful with assistance provided by the DfES for this service. Partnerships had also run the introductory course 'Making Choices' in minority languages.

Partnerships had achieved some success in developing links with local organisations representing minority ethnic communities. The purpose of this contact was both to encourage non-working ethnic minority women to take up employment and to use childcare services, and to take up employment in childcare. Partnerships felt there were a number of issues to be addressed, including the low level of labour market participation among women from some minority groups, and low rates of use of formal childcare. Some Partnerships believed use of informal care, particularly childminding, among some minority ethnic groups to be high, and saw potential in converting these to formal places. This would have the advantage of allowing parents to claim Childcare Tax Credit and to increase the number of regular childcare places in the area.

The national recruitment campaign has highlighted opportunities for men in childcare, and one might expect this to be followed through by Partnerships in their local campaigns. However, while Partnerships were keen to promote the recruitment of men, they were acutely aware of the obstacles to overcome, in particular pay, hours, status and concern at accusations of child abuse. There were therefore concerns about how many men might realistically be attracted to childcare. Nevertheless, Partnerships were actively investigating ways in which men might be recruited. One Partnership advertised its recruitment hotline in the match programme of the local football team.

A number of Partnerships aimed to encourage prospective male entrants by including examples of male childcare workers in their recruitment literature and, where possible at events. One Partnership had arranged a guest appearance at a recruitment event from a singer who had previously worked in childcare. Another Partnership regularly arranged for a young male childcare worker, who they referred to as the 'Jamie Oliver of childcare', to attend events in schools to attract the interest of young men.

Partnerships have not closely monitored the success of their work in this area, but it is likely that such efforts will have a long-term rather than short-term effect. However, some successes were noted by Partnerships in particular parts of the sector. For example, a number of Partnerships have successfully encouraged the partners of existing registered childminders to become

registered themselves. Typically, the male partner has retained his job, but is available after school or during the holidays when childminders can find themselves over-subscribed.

The work of Partnerships in promoting the recruitment of disabled people and those aged over 40 was considerably less developed than for minority ethnic groups or men. As Partnerships gained confidence in their work with other under-represented groups they were turning their attentions more seriously to the potential among disabled people. One Partnership held a seminar for employers from all parts of the childcare sector focusing on issues concerning the employment of disabled people. The seminar was led by a disability equality trainer from a disability organisation, and attracted a lot of interest from employers. An assurance of confidentiality allowed employers to talk openly about their concerns, for example that a physically disabled person might drop a baby. It resulted in a register of employers offering taster sessions for disabled people which can be matched to a register of disabled people interested in working in childcare, held by the disability organisation.

EYDCPs had not developed a systematic approach to the recruitment of older people. The main method used was to make links with local radio stations targeted at this group to broadcast features on opportunities in childcare. Other possible targets, such as parents of children at secondary school, those caring informally for grandchildren and people taking early retirement, were not being tapped by the Partnerships.

Training

Partnerships supported a range of types of training, including introductory and initial training, skills training and short courses for existing employees. Partnerships have substantial training budgets, and these are augmented by additional funding from sources such as the European Social Fund and Sure Start. The six-session long 'Making Choices' course was regarded as central to Partnerships' recruitment campaign. It was seen as invaluable in giving those interested in working in the field a window on the various opportunities available and possible entry routes. Despite this, some Partnerships had experienced difficulty filling places, or in retaining participants for the full course. As a consequence, some Partnerships had introduced one-session introductory courses to 'weed out' the less committed with minimal cost. Partnerships had also tried to target 'Making Choices' more closely at particular groups, disabled people in particular. Some Partnerships were aware of the need to build on the enthusiasm among some participants in 'Making Choices' by providing fast and easy access to sector-specific training. For this reason, one Partnership, which had identified a particular need for play workers for after school and holiday care was timing 'Take 5 for Play' courses to follow closely on 'Making Choices'. Other courses, such as Introduction to Childminding Practice might also be similarly scheduled. These, and other, courses were run through Partnership organisations, including local colleges and training providers such as voluntary organisations in the childcare and play sector.

Partnerships also offered short courses to existing employees and childminders, including some which are requirements for some childcare workers, for example first aid, child protection and fire safety. As such, they were usually not associated with the recruitment and retention

campaign, except insofar as recruitment led to increased demand. Despite this, it is likely that some short courses, such as dealing with challenging behaviour, might significantly affect a workers' job performance and satisfaction, and therefore affect retention. However, it was longer courses which were seen as contributing to staff retention. Particular importance was attached by Partnerships to those which lead to NVQ qualifications in Childcare and Early Years. These were seen as serving the dual purpose of improving the quality of care and increasing commitment among those working in the sector. Therefore, Partnerships offered training to NVQs as high as level 4 and reported high take-up rates. EYDCPs also offered training for work in particular parts of the sector, including childminding, crechework and playwork.

The training offered through Partnerships was sometimes organised in response to requests from providers or community groups. Therefore one Partnership had developed a course for creche workers, in response to demand from local ethnic minority women. Another Partnership was developing a course for those wishing to work with children with special needs. This responsive approach has the benefit of ensuring attendance, and there may be scope for Partnerships to consult local providers and childcare workers more closely on their training needs.

The Green Paper *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* (1998) remarked on the large number of training courses and qualifications in childcare, early years and playwork, which can lead to confusion. Partnerships were aware of the large number of courses on offer both to new entrants and existing employees and were concerned to promote greater understanding of training routes into childcare and career paths. To do this, a number of Partnerships had developed a training guide, or directory, listing the courses on offer, their content, duration, qualification and possible employment outcome. These were distributed to providers, Job Centres, careers offices and other locations and are without doubt an invaluable resource for employees, those interested in entering the sector and for providers developing their workforce.

Materials aimed at promoting good practice

Partnerships used DfES materials on recruitment as well as developing their own. The materials found most useful included the good practice recruitment guide and booklets developed for the 'Do something you love for a living' campaign. Partnerships did not always fully support the messages of national campaigns, feeling that they tended to suggest that childcare is easy and 'fun' rather than a serious profession. Partnerships had looked at DfES good practice web-site, but some had limited access to the Internet and had therefore made little use of this resource. Materials such as bags and calendars were welcomed, and especially photograph catalogues because to use its own photographs, a Partnership must obtain written parental consent. Preference was expressed for photographs of childcare workers and children in 'real' settings and interacting, rather than passive or posed.

With regard to written resources, Partnerships emphasised the need for concise documents with simple messages, both to assist them in their work and to develop materials for providers and the general public. A number of Partnerships felt that written guidance from the DfES could be supported by workshop-style events to discuss implementation. A representative of one Partnership stated that such guidance was important given that many of those working on the

recruitment campaign within EYDCPs are not specialists in recruitment and retention, but have a background in childcare or local government. A number of Partnerships also emphasised the need for 'user-friendly' materials on good recruitment and retention practice for providers. It was suggested that this might include model contracts, job descriptions and similar documents. Resources of this type had been developed by one of the eight Partnerships visited.

Partnerships also used materials on recruitment and retention developed by organisations including the Early Years National Training Organisation (EYNTO) and the Daycare Trust. They also drew on or exchanged materials with other EYDCPs, particularly within the same region. This was partly to reduce the costs of producing materials. A number of EYDCPs have developed strong reputations for the quality of their materials, and these are sought after for the quality of their content and design. Partnerships found materials in 'specialist' areas particularly useful and in short supply. These included materials aimed at recruiting ethnic minorities, men or disabled people. A representative of one Partnership suggested that the DfES collate the best materials produced locally to distribute to EYDCPs.

Views of providers on the work of the EYDCPs

The providers visited during the case study research may not be representative of providers generally, in terms of their relationship with their EYDCPs, because in some areas Partnerships advised on the selection of providers. A number of providers therefore had regular contact with their EYDCP. In some cases, contact with the Partnership was close, because a senior member of staff was on the Partnership and involved in sub-committees. One infant school was a 'hub' for sharing information and good practice on training of childcare workers. In general, however, providers reported varying degrees of contact with their EYDCPs and varying forms of assistance with such matters as recruitment and retention.

The most usual form of contact with Partnerships was to access training opportunities particularly short courses, and to obtain funding for training. Many providers had also seen newsletters produced by their Partnership. A number of providers had attended fairs held by Partnerships, and remarked on the low turnout. Some felt that such activities were worthwhile nonetheless, for raising the profile of the Partnership and of the recruitment campaign. Some Partnership services set up to assist providers with recruitment were considered potentially useful. However, some providers had found some services poorly developed. For example, a 'bank' of staff for supply work was thought by one provider to consist of only 3 people.

Some providers had attended meetings held by the Partnership, on issues such as funding for training, and on recruitment and retention. These were found to be very useful and some providers said they would like to attend more such events. A number of providers had received help from their Partnership with the recruitment of staff. Most of these providers were playgroups who had experienced severe recruitment problems and been given help mainly in the form of group adverts and bulletins. Other providers who had not attended such events or sought advice said they would welcome such help from their Partnership on recruitment, for example in interviewing. Some providers already received such assistance from organisations such as the

Pre-school Learning Alliance or the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), but some said they would still welcome assistance from the Partnership.

Some Partnerships had set up sector groups, and a number of providers said they welcomed the opportunity to meet senior staff in similar organisations to their own. Private day nurseries were aware of concerns of competition and reluctance to share good practice. However, managers in a small number of nurseries expressed the view that all nurseries share a common interest to improve the quality of staff and of provision in the sector. As the manager of one day nursery stated,

‘There aren’t that many [private] nurseries in [the city] that are struggling to survive, so we have to think that at the end of the day it is quality that is important and that is where a shift in culture is needed’.

Key points and conclusions

Partnerships' overall approach to the campaign was influenced by current levels of childcare provision and staff vacancies. Three of the Partnerships identified an immediate need to recruit childcare workers to expand current provision or to fill vacancies and therefore concentrated on work with the general public to stimulate demand for services and interest in childcare employment. In the other five areas there was less urgent need to fill vacancies and long-term goals such as improving quality and training were more strongly emphasised.

The expertise and background of key staff were also found to influence the emphasis of work on recruitment and retention. Those with a background in training appeared to bring a stronger appreciation of some issues associated with recruitment and retention than those with a background in childcare. Few Partnerships gave sufficient consideration to the decision-making process among those interested in a career in childcare and to the role of guidance. However, to prevent early leaving, it is important that individuals considering working in childcare are well informed, well motivated and have explored their own suitability for the work with a careers adviser.

With the exception of one EYDCP, the emphasis of Partnerships' work in relation to recruitment and retention was strongly on recruitment. The Partnership giving the two a more equal emphasis was in an area where provision of childcare was good, partly as a result of strong representation from the private sector. This Partnership was therefore less concerned with issues of recruitment than with high staff turnover and quality of provision.

Partnerships identified a number of issues for the recruitment of childcare workers, including low pay, hours of work, and low status. Further problems were identified in competition from other sectors, particularly Supermarkets and call-centres and competition within the childcare sector from the maintained nursery sector. Rural areas were identified as having poorer provision of

childcare and more recruitment difficulties than urban districts. Partnerships' assessments of recruitment problems in the sector correspond closely with the views of providers.

Partnerships also identified issues for childcare workers, including the demands of paper work, such as lesson planning and progress records. Interviews with childcare workers confirm that this is an aspect of the job they dislike, and one which may lead to staff turnover (see Chapter 4). Some Partnership representatives also referred to poor treatment of childcare staff by management as a factor in turnover, and regarded the private day nursery sector as particularly problematic in this respect.

The emphasis of the campaign work conducted by the Partnerships was strongly on recruitment, with retention taking a back seat. The main reason given for this was the concern by Partnerships to meet their targets for new childcare places. There was some evidence of attempts to meet targets with only limited expansion of provision. In addition, some Partnerships felt there were practical difficulties of working with providers on retention. There was also evidence of more limited expertise in retention issues, than in recruitment, among Partnership representatives. A number of representatives of Partnerships expressed the view that they could do little about the issues affecting retention, other than encourage providers to train staff, whereas they *were* able to influence recruitment. The emphasis on recruitment and sidelining of retention is problematic because, unless issues of retention are addressed, efforts expended on recruitment are likely to have only short-term benefits.

Partnerships were, however, taking active steps to improve the retention of childminders, partly because of concern to meet Government targets over the retention of this particular group of childcare workers, among whom turnover is known to be high (see IdeA, 1999). Partnerships were taking steps to improve retention by building networks to provide support and training. Some Partnerships were working with providers on retention issues and planned to increase this. This work included support systems for employers, including business support and professional training and seminars on retention. Providers said they found these useful, or were interested in such events.

Representatives of all but one of the Partnerships said that the main emphasis was on work with the public. This included posters, leaflets, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts and fairs. Monitoring of telephone enquiries gave Partnerships some indication of effectiveness. Their findings suggest differences between areas and a need for local variation in campaign methods. However, the effectiveness of different methods and materials is not fully known because enquiries were not systematically followed-up. This is an issue which Partnerships need to address.

All of the Partnerships had held at least one fair, which they felt had raised the profile of the Partnership and of opportunities for working in childcare. However, they had been disappointed at low levels of attendance from the general public and frustrated by difficulties in getting contact details from visitors, which they could then follow-up. A key factor in the success of fairs, in terms of attendance levels, was identified in their location with those in busy areas, such as shopping centres, attracting the largest number of participants. Partnerships had also taken

part in fairs held by other organizations. Community fairs were useful for making contacts in local organisations, including particular sections of the local community.

Only one of the eight EYDCPs said that working with providers on recruitment and retention was a key part of their work. However, Partnerships were trying to strengthen their links with providers, through setting up structures such as sector groups. EYDCPs were developing a number of ways to give providers practical assistance with recruitment, including help with advertising vacancies. Feedback from providers suggested that these bulletins must be published frequently in order to be of real benefit, since vacancies often need to be filled quickly. A number of Partnerships had set up a 'bank' of individuals available to work for short periods to cover staff absence. Some providers believed that these services were under-developed, but potentially very useful.

Partnerships were also assisting providers with recruitment and retention through guidance and support in staff recruitment and management. One Partnership had developed a recruitment pack, which included model contracts, job descriptions and similar documents. Partnerships had run seminars in quality assurance, including in relation to staffing practices. These were found to attract a lot of interest from providers.

Partnerships have targets to increase the proportion of childcare workers from under-represented groups. Although these include men, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those aged over 40 years, efforts to increase diversity focused on ethnic minorities. Partnerships were keen to promote the recruitment of men, and used 'role models' in their campaigns. However, some were pessimistic about the success of any campaign targeted at men. The work of Partnerships in promoting the recruitment of disabled people and those aged over 40 was less developed than for minority ethnic groups or men. Seminars on issues surrounding the employment of disabled people had been held for employers, but recruitment work with the over 40 age group was somewhat unimaginative, consisting largely of features on local 'solid gold' music radio stations. Other possible targets, such as parents of children at secondary school, those caring informally for grandchildren and people taking early retirement, were not being tapped by the Partnerships.

Partnerships supported a range of types of training, including introductory and initial training, skills training and short courses for existing employees. The introductory 'Making Choices' course was regarded as central to Partnerships' recruitment campaigns, but was reported to be sometimes poorly attended. Some Partnerships were aware of the need to build on the enthusiasm among some participants in 'Making Choices' by providing fast and easy access to sector-specific training. Partnerships were aware of the large number of courses on offer both to new entrants and existing employees. Some had taken steps to clarify entry routes and training courses through developing a training guide listing the courses on offer.

Although Partnerships used DfES materials on recruitment, they did not always fully support the messages of national campaigns, for example portraying childcare as easy and 'fun' rather than a serious profession. A number of EYDCPs have developed strong reputations for the quality of their materials, and these are sought after for the quality of their content and design. Partnerships found campaign materials for target groups particularly useful and in short supply. It was suggested that the DfES collate the best materials produced locally to distribute to EYDCPs.

Partnerships currently give details of the materials they produce on the DfES good practice website (see <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/eydcpgoodpractice/>) However, the site does not currently show reproductions of these materials.

Chapter 7. Discussion of findings

What are the challenges facing the sector?

The sector is, in some ways, in an enviable position, compared with others which have faced problems of recruitment and retention, for example sales work. The work itself is highly rated by workers themselves, who value the contact with children, the variety of the work and the team work involved. The problems associated with recruiting and retaining childcare and playwork staff are to some extent obvious, and are well recognised. Although they vary considerably according to type of provider, they include low pay, poor terms and conditions, short hours and poor opportunities for training and progression. Three questions about employment in the sector are less easily answered:

- Why is the childcare workforce so homogenous, in terms of age, gender and ethnicity?
- Where does the problem lie, with recruitment, retention or with both?
- What can be done to meet the sector's needs for a complete and stable workforce?

Increasing diversity in the sector

Existing research has identified a strong degree of homogeneity in the childcare workforce, with the majority of staff young, female and white. This applies particularly to nursery nurses and to the day nursery sector. Many young women who work in the sector have low educational qualifications. A reliance on this section of the labour force is problematic because girls are achieving higher academic results and therefore have a wider range of career options than in the past.

Data from the Labour Force Survey shows under-representation of men, older people and minority ethnic groups but not black people. Disabled people are no less represented than in other sectors. The data suggests that a number of groups, which are currently under-represented in the sector, might be targeted for childcare work, because they show higher levels of unemployment. These are men under 25; older women, particularly those aged over 60 and ethnic minorities.

Literature on diversity within the childcare workforce has focused on gender, with the under-representation of minority ethnic groups largely unaddressed. Research on gender in childcare has identified issues of pay and status of childcare as 'women's work' as important factors. Studies have also referred to suspicion of the motives of male childcare workers as an issue, which might discourage men, and also employers.

Managers in all types of setting expressed their approval with the aim of increasing diversity in the childcare workforce. However, the main reason for this was not to ease current recruitment difficulties and expand the childcare workforce, but to enrich the quality of the experience for children. It was also apparent that providers did not consider that they had a role in increasing diversity within the childcare labour force. Rather, they saw it as a question of Government

efforts to increase the supply of childcare workers from particular sections of the population through advertising, or through careers education and guidance. Some saw the barriers to participation from some groups, such as ethnic minorities, as stemming from their own cultural attitudes rather than the practices of providers. Very few providers had given consideration to how their advertising and recruitment practices might disadvantage some groups, for example those outside informal 'word of mouth' networks. Many providers did not even have basic practices in place, such as monitoring of applicants. Therefore, as a first step, providers need to be made aware of the important role they can play in increasing diversity within the sector.

Many providers in the study made assumptions about the suitability of particular groups for childcare work which were based on stereotypes, for example that people over 50 are less able to cope with the physical demands of the work, or that a disabled person cannot cope in an emergency. Of particular concern are the assumptions made about the preferences and customs of some minority ethnic groups by many childcare providers. There is a need for research on the reasons for the under-representation of minority ethnic groups in childcare. Work with providers to promote the recruitment of ethnic minorities can then be based on understanding of the real issues involved, rather than on stereotyped notions.

The emphasis of Partnerships' work in promoting diversity was on the recruitment of men. However, partnerships participating in the study were generally pessimistic about the success of any campaign work targeted at men because of the barriers to overcome, principally pay and the attitudes of men, providers and parents. The work of Partnerships in promoting the recruitment of disabled people was in its early stages, and was focused on changing employers' attitudes. This would seem to be a legitimate approach, since raising disabled people's interest and expectations may come to nothing if employers are unwilling to recruit them. Recruitment work with the over 40 age group was unimaginative, consisting largely of features on local 'solid gold' music radio stations. The potential of groups such as parents of children at secondary school, those caring informally for their grandchildren and people taking early retirement had not been fully considered or investigated. There may be much scope for EYDCPs and providers to tap these potential sources of recruitment.

The need for better recruitment practices in the sector

Although existing studies have investigated reasons for turnover within the childcare and playwork sector, less attention has been given to the recruitment process: at how providers attract applicants and at the criteria used to select applicants. Poor methods of advertising and recruitment can result in staff shortages or in the recruitment of the wrong people for the job. The current research therefore looked at employers' recruitment methods in some detail.

The most common method of hearing of vacancies in the sector is through word of mouth. This method was used by all types of provider, but was favoured above other methods by out of school clubs and playgroups which had received poor response through formal advertising methods. Although it may be effective in identifying good candidates, over-reliance on word of mouth can exclude people outside of informal local networks and is poor practice in terms of equal opportunities. Moreover, some settings did not use other forms of advertising, such as

newspapers, because they believed that even local papers covered too wide an area. Some believed they could only recruit people living very locally, and that those traveling more than walking distance would not stay. This belief may be misguided and result in missed recruitment opportunities.

Most providers used structured systems for selecting staff, including use of application forms and interviews, but some carried out a provisional interview with prospective applicants over the telephone. This may result in initial screening based on highly subjective factors and lead to discrimination. Some out of school and holiday schemes recruited from volunteers without advertising the post or conducting any form of interview, but merely transferring them to the pay roll. Whilst giving opportunities for employment to volunteers should be encouraged, it is poor practice in terms of equal opportunities to exclude other candidates from the opportunity to apply.

Providers appreciated the assistance offered by Partnerships with recruitment, for example group advertisements and supply 'banks' to cover for staff absent for training. However, providers emphasised the need for vacancies to be circulated frequently, since they often had to fill vacancies as quickly as within two weeks. Some settings which found they often had to find staff quickly were setting up a 'bank' of staff who could work as supply for a short period. EYDCPs might provide assistance to providers wishing to set up such a facility. One Partnership had developed a recruitment pack which included model contracts, job descriptions and similar documents, which providers in other areas said they would also find useful.

Recognising that retention is a problem

Some providers, most notably schools employing teaching assistants in early years units, said they had low rates of staff turnover, while other types of provider, for example day nurseries, found that staff stayed for relatively short periods and had to recruit almost continuously to retain their required staffing levels. Schools reported few problems with staff retention. However, many teaching assistants had been recruited recently as a result of new staffing practices in early years education and their long term stability has not been tested. All other types of setting - day nurseries, out of school, holiday schemes and playgroups - reported high levels of staff turnover, confirming the findings of previous research (see Penn, 1995; Cameron, 1997; Bertram and Pascal, 2000; Cameron et al, 2001b; IDS, 2001). However, providers' attitudes towards this varied, with some regarding it as a problem to be given serious consideration, while others believing it 'went with the patch'. By accepting high levels of turnover, some settings may be wasting considerable financial resources which they could avoid by adopting better practices.

Providers were generally aware of the role of human resource practices in retaining staff, but many had poorly developed systems for introducing staff to work routines, though induction, and for staff appraisal and development. In many settings staff were often given documents to read at home and were taken through only the most important documents. Although staff sometimes work initially under supervision, they usually take on their full duties from the first day. Structured systems for induction and initial on the job training assist in establishing new staff as full members of a team, and may play a crucial role in preventing early turnover. Providers

should therefore be encouraged to adopt full procedures for induction and initial supervision. Some providers had structured systems for managing staff, which included appraisal and staff consultation. However, in some cases such systems were entirely absent, and appraisals were often unconnected with staff training and development. They may not therefore be effective in reducing staff turnover.

Pay and hours of work have been identified as issues leading to staff turnover (see for example Cameron, 1997; Wilkinson, 2002). Childcare workers in the study said the most negative aspect of the work was the pay. This was remarked upon by childcare workers in all settings, but was a particular problem when combined with the long hours worked in private day nurseries. In addition to the hours spent in the nursery or childcare setting, many staff were required to stay at work beyond their contracted hours to discuss work issues and to attend staff meetings. Providers should pay staff for this work, since planning and review should be seen as an essential part of the job. Many childcare workers said they had to take work, such as planning and report writing home, extending the working day even further. This was viewed as a highly negative aspect of the work and is likely to lead to turnover.

Those working part-time in other settings had the opportunity to increase their income by taking other jobs or running their own small business, and in some cases this seemed to work very well. There is scope for EYDCPs and providers to look for ways in which part-time jobs, in such settings as play groups and after school care, might be combined to form jobs with longer hours and therefore more pay.

Other aspects of the job which are unpopular with childcare workers are less widely recognised, and need to be addressed urgently. The first of these is the extent of paper work which jobs in the sector increasingly include. Staff can be helped to cope with the demands of paper work by given time within their working hours to deal with it. They might also benefit from initial and on-going training in this area. It is also possible that some aspects of routine record keeping on children can be made easier by the use of computer packages. Forms of assistance with lesson planning may also be developed, possibly including advice from the maintained early years sector. EYDCPs might explore these and other ways of assisting providers and staff with this unpopular aspect of the work.

Some staff referred to poor relations between management and staff as a negative aspect of their job, and EYDCPs were aware that poor treatment of staff could be a factor in staff turnover. Poor practice sometimes resulted from neglect of responsibility and sometimes from use of an authoritarian style of management. Problems resulting from incompetence were reported most often by staff in playgroups and other voluntary settings, where managers may have little training or facilities to carry out their role. An authoritarian style of management was reported by workers in some private day nurseries and was perceived by staff to result from pressures to save costs, but also from the stress of managing a business. Some managers were apparently oblivious to the effect that their management style had on their staff and of possible effects on turnover. EYDCPs could help to improve management practices in their area by offering training.

EYDCPs placed a far greater emphasis on the activities of recruitment of new staff than on retention of existing childcare workers. The reasons for this included a concern to achieve DfES

targets on expansion of places and workers; a belief that it is an issue which employers should address; and a belief that the Partnership could do little to influence retention. It is important to appreciate that recruitment efforts can be wasted if staff then leave within a short period of time. Therefore retention must be addressed alongside issues of recruitment. From the outset, staff need to be introduced to the work, its routines and to other staff. They need to be given in-house training and external training to develop their knowledge and skills. These are all areas where EYDCPs are able to provide support, advice and assistance. Some Partnerships were working with providers on management issues, which is likely to assist retention. This work included business support, professional training and seminars on retaining staff. Providers found such support useful.

Recruiting and retaining childminders

Childminders reasons for working in the sector were somewhat different from those of other childcare workers. While workers in other settings said they wanted to work with children, childminders were motivated principally by the desire to be at home with their own very young children, or to be at home for older children after school and during the school holidays (see Mooney et al, 2001). A few childminders said they wanted to work with children but preferred childminding to options such as working in a nursery. The main reason for this was the relative freedom childminders had to organise their own day, and the ability to keep on top of household tasks when children are resting. It may not be a coincidence that a number of childminders in the study were lone parents. A possible explanation for this is that lone parents may experience more difficulty than parents with partners in combining work outside the home with bringing up children. If lone parents have found childminding a good employment option, they may be an appropriate group for recruitment campaigns.

Childminders reported few problems setting up, although some reported difficulties getting their first clients, probably because most childminders obtain their clients through word of mouth. However, established childminders said it was becoming more difficult getting clients, and were concerned that campaigns to recruit more childminders would exacerbate these problems. Some childminders felt that they were seen as 'second best' in terms of provision and that the benefits of the care they provided, for example flexible hours, should be recognised. They also felt there is a widespread misconception that childminders 'park' children in front of the television and literally 'mind' children rather than actively engage with them. Childminders therefore felt that greater awareness of the training and inspection involved would help to dispel this view. It was also suggested that a change in job title would help raise its status.

A number of childminders had developed folders which included details of training courses attended and their certificates, which they felt helped to present a professional image to prospective parents and to OFSTED. If this practice became more widespread, it is likely that parents would take more interest in training and qualifications when choosing a childminder, and that this could help to raise the status of the job.

Issues which might affect retention of childminders include isolation and difficulties in dealing with parents. Partnerships were developing support systems for childminders, particularly

through the use of networks, and these appeared to work well. Childminders had also found the National Childminding Association (NCMA) an invaluable source of support, and Partnerships should ensure that childminders are aware of the services it provides. Many childminders reported difficulties dealing with parents, with the most common problems reported with parents arriving late to collect children and difficulties over fees, either the amount due, or punctuality of payments. Some childminders were uncomfortable about dealing with fees and perhaps did not make the financial arrangements sufficiently clear to clients. Such problems could be overcome by initial training and provision of documents such as standard contracts.

Increasing training and qualifications in the sector

Research has referred to low levels of qualifications among childcare workers (see Bertram and Pascal, 2000). Labour Force Survey data shows more than two-thirds do not have qualifications higher than Level 2. Qualification levels among childcare workers in the study varied, and in some settings were very low. Most providers were aware of the benefits of training but varied considerably in how much they offered. The emphasis was on training away from the workplace and on short courses in such areas as health and safety and child protection. Where staff attended courses outside of their paid hours, many providers did not allow them time off in lieu. Childcare workers were generally interested in training, although often saw it as 'interesting' or a 'requirement' rather than important for skill development.

Many providers regarded training to NVQ level qualifications as optional and something which staff might choose to do for their own interest. Some providers paid for NVQ training, often subsidised by their EYDCP, but others did not. Providers rarely allowed staff to do course work in working hours so that workers training to NVQ levels did most of their course work in their own time. NVQ awards sometimes resulted in an increase in pay and responsibility, but reward structures often were ill defined and promotion criteria unclear. Many providers and workers said that the benefits in obtaining such qualifications were in future job prospects rather than in the present job. Such attitudes are likely to encourage turnover, particularly among qualified and experienced staff which many providers can ill-afford to lose.

EYDCPs fully recognised the importance of training to recruitment and retention, particularly in introducing prospective childcare workers to the sector and assisting their decision about which type of setting they wished to work in. Therefore, the 6 session 'Making Choices' programme was seen as central to the recruitment campaign. Some Partnerships were aware of the need to build on the enthusiasm of participants in 'Making Choices' by providing fast and easy access to sector-specific training or employment in the sector. However, only one Partnership emphasised the need for guidance in this process, yet this is crucial to ensure that individuals make the right choice of training and job and therefore stay in the sector in the long term.

Training structures for childcare are seen to lack coherence and the proliferation of qualifications and routes is believed by representatives of some Partnerships to result in confusion among providers, workers and potential entrants. EYDCPs were aware of the large number of courses on offer both to new entrants and to existing employees. Some had produced training guides which clarified entry routes and training courses related to the range of childcare occupations.

These are likely to be a valuable resource for providers, employees and prospective entrants to the sector.

The work of the EYDCPs

We have already referred to the importance of the approach adopted by the EYDCP and the forms of support which can assist providers. Additional issues concern the expertise and background of key staff. Where these had a background in training this appeared to result in a stronger appreciation of some issues associated with recruitment and retention, in particular the individual decision-making processes over job choice and entry to childcare. This also brought a greater emphasis on guidance for individuals considering working in childcare, in order to ensure their suitability and motivation, and to explore options within the sector. This may have the advantage of reducing drop out which can result when employees find themselves unsuited to the work.

The emphasis of Partnerships' work on recruitment and retention was strongly on recruitment, but this appeared to be driven by the need to meet DfES targets than from consideration of their relative importance. There was some evidence of attempts to meet targets with only limited expansion of provision. National systems for measuring the success of EYDCPs in their recruitment work must ensure that they count only real increases in childcare places and in childcare workers.

Partnerships were engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at recruiting childcare workers. While the success of events such as fairs was easy to gauge, from such measures as turnout, Partnerships were less certain about what activities worked best, and might benefit from closer monitoring of their work on recruitment. Some activities, for example advertising on the side of buses have been found to lead to a strong response from the public in one area, and a poor response in another. Therefore, EYDCPs cannot assume that if an activity has worked well in one area it will work in theirs.

EYDCPs had used DfES materials on recruitment, but did not always fully support the messages of national campaigns. Some felt that the messages of DfES campaigns tended to suggest that childcare is easy and 'fun' rather than a serious profession. Childcare workers were also critical of this emphasis, and felt that campaigns might place stronger emphasis on the difference a childcare worker can make to children's lives. References were made in this context to recruitment campaigns for teachers and police officers. A number of EYDCPs have developed strong reputations for the quality of their publicity materials, and these are sought after for the quality of their content and design. Partnerships found campaign materials for target groups, for example men and ethnic minorities, particularly useful and in short supply. A representative of one Partnership suggested that the DfES collate the best materials produced locally to distribute to EYDCPs.

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Appendix 1. Topic Guides

Topic guide: Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs)

Section 1: Partnership expertise in recruitment and retention

How many people are employed by the partnership?

Who has responsibility for recruitment and retention work within the partnership?

- a) Organisations within the partnership
- b) Individuals within organisations represented in the partnership
- c) The interviewee's responsibilities for recruitment and retention

What expertise do these provide the partnership on recruitment and retention?

Who else does the partnership work with on recruitment and retention issues

- Providers
- Learning and Skills Councils
- Colleges
- Employment Service
- Other partnerships
- Careers Service
- Sure start

Section 2: Local context and provision of childcare

Could you describe the area covered by the partnership?
(including ethnic minority population)

How good is the current level of provision of childcare

Where do gaps exist in demand and supply of childcare places (age groups, type of provision)

What characteristics of the local area make it easy or difficult to recruit and retain childcare workers?

Probe:

Main sectors of employment?

Levels of female participation?

Mobility and access to employment in region?

Competing sectors?

Current provision of childcare?

What then are the key issues for recruitment and retention of childcare workers in the area?

What have your audits/consultations said about these issues?

How have they been taken into account in your setting of targets for childcare places?

Section 3: Recruitment and retention activities

Before talking about the partnership's activities:

a) How do you decide where to concentrate your efforts?

Probe: balance between recruitment and retention
balance across the sector

b) How do you decide where there is most need and where you can be most effective?

What work has the partnership been doing in the area of recruitment and retention?

Why this set of activities?

Ask for a summary, and then go through each area of activity asking for each:

Why this approach was taken, and its aim?

Get details of the approach (see a - d below)

For each activity (a - d) ask:

What are the main messages?

What evidence is there of any impact?

What effect has it had on recruitment?

What has been most (and least) successful, and why?

What variation has been found between providers in what works?

Has evaluation been carried out?

Could any lessons be drawn for good practice?

a) Work with the public

Materials

What materials has the partnership produced for the public?

Has the partnership used materials produced by other organisations?

Probe for relative merits of using each type of material

Are they aimed at the general public or those with an existing involvement with children (eg parents, carers, volunteers)?

Leaflets

Where are they distributed (eg libraries, leisure centres, playgroups, family centres)

Where are adverts placed (eg newspaper, buses, radio stations)?

Information packs

Where are they distributed (eg careers offices, libraries, posted to enquirers)

Website

What is the aim of a website for the public?

What is the hit-rate and how many enquiries does it produce?

b). Events

What recruitment events has the partnership organised?
(Probe: recruitment fairs, careers conventions, workshops)
Where were these held?
What did they involve?

Who were events targeted at?

- Providers or the public
- Ethnic group
- Age group (young people or mature)
- Gender
- Disabled people

Who attended?

- Numbers attending
- Which groups (providers, public, under-represented groups etc.)

c). Dealing with enquiries from the public

How does the partnership deal with enquiries from the public about employment and training in childcare?
(Ask for details of telephone help-lines, procedures for dealing with written requests)

Are their details given to providers to follow-up?
IF YES: How is this done and with what results?

Are individuals who make enquiries 'followed-up' by the partnership in any way?
IF YES: Why are they followed up and what action (if any) is taken?

d) Work with providers

Has the partnership targeted certain providers for recruitment and retention work?

What materials on recruitment and retention has the partnership produced for providers?
(Probe for: Leaflets, guides, newsletters, web-site)

How does the partnership deal with enquiries from providers about recruitment and retention?

What are providers' main concerns about recruitment and retention?

To what extent is the advice 'tailored' to the organisation (or is it generic advice about recruitment and retention of childcare workers)?

Does the partnership operate a list of approved childcare workers?
IF YES: How is this compiled, how is it used?
Does it include checks – for criminal record and for qualifications?

Does the partnership operate an employment pool – matching job seekers with vacancies?
IF YES: How does this work?

Does it provide advice on dealing with applicants with a criminal record?
Probe for views on employment of ex-offenders and their potential as untapped resource

Summary questions:

- 3.1 Have you carried out any other work with the public on recruitment and retention?
- 3.2 Have you carried out any other work with providers on recruitment and retention?
- 3.3 Have you held any other events on recruitment and retention?
- 3.4 Has any other work been done involving enquiries from the public on recruitment and retention?

Section 4: Under-represented groups

Has any of the partnership's recruitment and retention work been aimed at increasing the participation of under-represented groups
IF YES: Which groups, what type of events, and with what results?

Is there more scope for targeting under-represented groups?
What are the relative benefits to be gained from targeting certain groups or from promoting recruitment generally?

Section 5: Providing training

Does the partnership assist with training to individuals with an interest in childcare?
IF YES: What type of training is offered?
Is it related to recruitment and retention?

Does it include provision for those without experience/training:
Eg. taster sessions or longer courses

Does it include provision for those with previous experience:
Eg. return to work training

Does it include provision for existing employees:
Eg. Skills and qualifications training
Probe for relationship to retention

How is training funded? (eg NOF, SRB)

What links does the partnership have to the following:

- Learning and Skills Partnerships
- Probe for involvement with Modern Apprenticeships
- Employment Service
- Probe for involvement with New Deal etc.

Section 6: Retention activities

What work has the partnership done in relation to the retention of childcare workers?

What has it done and with what results?

Probe for materials, events, meetings

Use probes from Section 3

IF NO WORK ON RETENTION: Does it think this is an issue for the partnership to address?
How might it address issues surrounding retention?

What are the main reasons why people leave childcare and where they go to?

How do you know?

How might providers be helped to improve retention of childcare workers?

What kind of assistance or advice do they need?

Summary questions:

Have you been meeting your targets for childcare places?

Ask for (approx) baseline and current figures

IF YES: How? IF NO: Why?

Is there anything else which could be done to improve recruitment and retention of childcare workers?

Section 7: Promoting good practice

What materials has the partnership drawn on in its work on recruitment and retention?

Has the partnership used the DfEE good practice recruitment guides?

IF YES: How useful did they find them?
Any suggestions for improvements?

Has the partnership used the DfES good practice web-site?

IF YES: how?

Has the partnership used any other materials from Government departments?

(Probe for reasons why/not)

Has the partnership used any other materials from other organisations, for example CIPD, LSCs?
(Probe for reasons why/not)

Has the partnership used materials from other partnerships?

Why were these considered useful?

What kind of materials does the partnership find most useful for its work in promoting recruitment and retention?

What kind of materials would it like, that are not currently available?

(Probe for details of formats, content, style etc.)

What kind of information might a good practice guide for partnerships usefully include?

And what should a good practice guide for providers include?

Finally, could you tell me about your previous experience:

Eg. Childcare worker, other childcare specialist, Local Authority, any personnel, HR, training experience (details)

We would like to visit providers with good practice in recruitment and retention – any suggestions?

Probes for Section 3

What are the main messages?

What evidence is there of any impact?

What effect has it had on recruitment?

What has been most (and least) successful, and why?

What variation has been found between providers in what works?

Has evaluation been carried out?

Could any lessons be drawn for good practice?

Topic guide: interviews with Providers

Section 1. Background information about the organisation

When did you first open?

What are your opening hours?

What age group do you cover?

Do you provide for special needs?

How many staff work here?

(Use sheet)

- Job titles (number of staff with each)
- Hours of work for each (and times)
- Qualifications required for each
- Pay rates (range)

IF PART OF LOCAL AUTHORITY OR NURSERY CHAIN:

Roughly how many nurseries are in the chain?

Does the parent organisation provide assistance/advice on personnel and management issues?

Does this cover recruitment and disciplinary procedures and management of staff

Does the parent organisation lay down procedures or allow local variation?

Does the parent organisation provide training on these issues?

Section 2. Methods of recruitment

How many people have you recruited in the last year (roughly)?

For which jobs and whether full or part-time

What are your main ways of recruiting staff?

(not selection, but advertising, word of mouth etc)

What type of advertising do you do?

Newspapers & group ads (which)

Magazines (which)

Other media (eg radio station)

Notice boards (where)

Other places

Why these (and why not these)?

Through:

Job Centres

Careers/connexions services

Schools/Colleges

EYDCP database

Why these (and why not these)?

Can we see some examples of your adverts?

Do you advertise when there is a vacancy or at other times?

If not already mentioned:

Do you recruit from:

- parents/carers/their contacts/contacts of current staff?
- contacts in other childcare organisations?
- through recommendations of college tutors?

Why not?

ORGANISATIONS WITH MULTIPLE SITES:

Are jobs advertised across the organisation?

Do staff move from other settings/parts of the organisation?

ALL:

Why do you recruit through these routes and not others?

What are the benefits?

What are the disadvantages?

How does it help you to recruit staff with the required qualifications?

How does it help you recruit staff who will stay?

Where do applicants tend to come from in terms of -

- Other jobs – in childcare – where else?
- School leavers
- College leavers
- Unemployed people
- Women looking after their own children
- Men
- Ethnic minorities
- Other

If different from current staff, ask why.

Section 3. Applications and selection of childcare workers

Roughly how many applications do you receive for a job vacancy (by type of job)?

Is this roughly the number you would like?

Are there enough of the standard you would like?

Have numbers of applicants or the standard of applicants changed in recent years?

IF YES: in what way?

why do you think this is?

Probe for effect of national/local campaigns

What is the acceptance rate of job offers?

What are the main reasons why applicants refuse offers?

What information are applicants given about the job in advance of their application?

- Job description
- Person specification

What do you look for when selecting childcare workers (by job)?
(at interview or in application)?

Probe for:

Experience

Background

Qualifications

Key skills, such as communication and team working (how are these known?)

Personality/ whether they will 'fit in'

Do you find references useful for deciding whether to recruit somebody?

Why/why not?

Do you carry out criminal record checks?

What do you do if you find an applicant has a criminal record?

Section 4. Recruitment problems

Have you had any problems with recruitment?

- which type of posts
- staff with particular experience/qualifications

Since when have you had problems with recruitment?

IF NO PROBLEM WITH RECRUITMENT:

Why is this?

What have you done?

What have others not done?

Are there things that you do that you feel are particularly effective for recruitment?

What do you feel is the cause(s) of your recruitment problem?

Get unprompted reasons, then prompt on:

- pay
- hours (number, times of work)
- demands of the job
- advancement/promotion opportunities
- competition from within the childcare sector
- competition from other sectors

Is there scope for you to change any of these (particularly pay and hours)?

What have you done about your recruitment problem?

What has been most effective?

Have you sought any advice on your recruitment problem?

What assistance have you had from the EYDCP on your recruitment problem?

Has this been useful/effective?

Have you been assisted with your recruitment problem by any other organisation?

Do you feel you need to improve how you go about recruitment?

Could help be provided for this (of what kind and from where)?

Section 5. Human Resources practices

When a new member of staff joins are they given:

Documents about their job explaining responsibilities, what to do if have a problem, leave arrangements etc?

Does anyone have the responsibility to tell them about these things?

Would you say that new members of staff are given induction training?

What does this involve?

IF NO: Is anyone given responsibility to show them what they should be doing in their job?

What does that involve?

What training do you offer staff (other than induction/initial training)?

On-off the job

Type, level, qualification

Is training optional or compulsory?

If optional: do staff generally take up opportunities for training?

Do you pay the fees or cover any other costs?

Are pay increases based on training received/qualifications gained?

What opportunities are there for advancement within the organisation?

- Pay
- Increased responsibilities
- Management

Do you promote many staff, or is it unusual?

Does training help in the recruitment or retention of staff?

Do you have regular staff appraisals?

Do you have regular staff meetings?

Do you have regular supervision meetings with each member of staff?

What sort of problems have arisen with your staff?
How did you deal with these problems?
Have you needed to dismiss anyone in the last year? What happened?
Why do you think these problems arise?
How do problems come to your attention (eg staff meetings, supervision)?

Are there any ways of managing your staff which you would like to improve?
Would you like any help with this? What kind?

Section 6. Staff retention

How many people have left in the last year (roughly)?
- after how long with the organisation

Why do they leave?

- pay
- hours (number, times of work)
- demands of the job
- advancement/promotion opportunities
- competition from within the childcare sector
- competition from other sectors
- personal circumstances of workers (including childcare needs)

Do you know what sorts of jobs are taken up by leavers?
IF IN CHILDCARE: Why do they move?

Are some types of people more likely to leave than others (eg by age)?

Do you feel you have problems keeping staff?

IF YES: What do you feel is the cause(s) of your retention problem?
Do you always have problems, or at certain times (when)?

Overall, are there any consequences of having a recruitment or retention problem (eg do they offer fewer childcare places, or more limited provision)

IF NO PROBLEMS WITH RETENTION: Why do you think this is?

ALL:

Do you feel you need to improve retention?

For how long have you felt this?

Could any help be provided for this (what)?

Have you taken any steps to improve retention?

What has been most effective?

Have you tried to raise the status of your childcare workers? How?
How might this be done?

Have you sought any advice on retention?
Have you had any assistance from the EYDCP on retention?
 Has this been useful/effective?
Have you been assisted with your retention problem by any other organisation?

Are you aware of the Government's Work-Life balance campaign?
IF YES: Have you got a copy of the Government's good practice guide 'Creating a Work-life Balance'?
IF YES: What are your views on this?
 Are you implementing any of its recommendations?

Section 7. Increasing diversity in the childcare workforce

The Government is trying to increase the number of men, older people, ethnic minorities and disabled people working in childcare

- What do you think about this? (ask about each and 40+ and 60+)
- What would be the benefits?
- What might be the problem?

How could changes in the type of person employed in childcare be brought about in this area?
 Through your own practices?
 Through the work of the partnership/DfES/ careers service/ other?

Have the type of staff you employ (in terms of gender, age, ethnicity etc) changed at all in recent years (since 1998)?
Why? – through provider practices, partnership activities, DfES campaigns, other influences

Section 8. Contact with the EYDCP

What contact have you had with the partnership?
 Telephone contact
 Attended events organised by the partnership (eg seminars, recruitment fairs)
 Attended other events
 Visited by the partnership
 Written communication
 Other type of contact

FOR EACH: Who initiated the contact – you or the partnership?
IF THE PROVIDER: Why?
 Probe for concerns with recruitment and retention

IF THE PARTNERSHIP: Did you welcome the contact?

Section 9. Products from the partnership and DfES

Have you had any assistance from the EYDCP?

IF YES: What has this included?

- Job matching/vacancy database
- Group adverts
- Training
- Recruitment events
- Seminars
- Materials on recruitment and retention

Have you had any assistance from an EYDCP in another area?

(IF YES, ASK AS ABOVE)

What have you found useful?

What have you found not so useful?

What kinds of events would you like the partnership to hold?

What kinds of services would you like the partnership to provide?

Have you seen any DfEE/S materials on recruitment and retention (eg the toolkit)?

IF YES: Was the guidance helpful?

Did you change your practices as a result?

What was the outcome?

IF NO: Why not?

What kind of materials on recruitment and retention would you find useful?

- Content
- Format
- Style

Is there any other information or assistance with recruitment or retention which you would like from the EYDCP or DfES?

Section 10. Their own employment

How long have you worked here?

What did you do before you worked here?

How did you get into your current job?

Roughly how long do you expect to stay?

Where might you go?

What do you like and dislike about the work?

How might it be improved?

What help could be provided by the EYDCP or by the Government?

If have time

What do you think is good about working in your setting?

What is not so good?

Recruitment and retention of childcare workers
NIESR Study for The Department of Education and Skills

1. Please list each group of staff in the first column (eg. Nursery nurse, nursery assistant, play leader) and then give numbers, pay and qualifications.

Job title	Number				Range of pay (approx) hrly or annual*	Typical qualifications of recruits
	Employees	Recruits in last year	Left in last year	Working part-time		

*Please give full-time equivalent

2. Please record number of employees in each category

Men	Ethnic minority	Age			
		16-24	25-39	40-49	50+

Topic guide: interviews with Staff

Section 1. Current and previous employment

Can you tell me about your job?
(Ask for title and brief description of duties)

How long have you worked here?
Have you worked in the same job all that time?

What did you do immediately before you started work here?
(Establish extent of previous employment in childcare and employment in other sectors)

Apart from paid work in childcare, have you ever worked with children as a volunteer?
(ask for details, and whether as parent/relative/friend or on work experience)

Section 2. The application process

Why did you first apply for this job?

Were you looking for a childcare job (nursery/playworker etc.) job in particular or were you looking at a range of jobs?

How did you know about the vacancy (or was it on spec)?

Was there anything that attracted you to this particular job and employer?

Did you see it advertised (where)?
What attracted you about the advert?

What information did you have about the job before you made your application?
(including word of mouth)
On aspects such as pay, hours of work, training, childcare, fringe benefits, the organisation – good/bad employer

Where did this come from?
Was the information useful?

Did the information (from workplace or other) encourage you to apply?
Did it help with your application or interview?
What (other) information would you have liked when making your application?

Have you ever been given any careers advice about childcare?
(ask for details of when, whether from careers teacher or adviser from careers service)
Did this encourage you to think about jobs in childcare?

Did you visit here before making your application or before your interview?
Was this useful?

Can you tell me about your interview?
What was it like?

Why did you take this job?

When you were looking for your current job:
Did you look at other job adverts (for jobs in childcare and elsewhere)?
Did you apply for any other jobs?
What happened?

Section 3. Induction

When you started here were you given:
Documents about your job explaining responsibilities, what to do if have a problem, leave arrangements etc?
IF NOT: Did a member of staff tell you these things?

When you first started here, were you given any training or instruction about how to do your job?

Section 4. Training

What training have you had for working in childcare?
(ask about length, on/off job, level and qualification)

Was this before or after you started working here?

Who organised the training (you or your employer)

Who paid for the training?

Do you like training?

IF DID TRAINING WHEN WITH A PREVIOUS EMPLOYER:
Did the training help you to get this job?

What did you think of the training you have had?

- Has it helped in your job?
- Has it made your job more enjoyable?
- Has it affected your job opportunities?
 - with your current employer? - with another employer?

Section 5. Views about the job

What do you like about this job?

What motivates you to remain in your current job?

What motivates you to remain in the field of childcare?

What do you dislike about this job?

Probe for:

- pay
- hours (number and time of day)
- demands of the job
- fitting in with own childcare/family responsibilities)
- opportunities for training/qualifications
- advancement/promotion opportunities
- management/treatment (bring in information from provider interview on management style, staff relations and problems)

What would you like to change about your job?

(use probes as above)

Do you have children living at home?

IF YES: How does your job fit in with your own childcare needs?

IF WORKING PART-TIME

Would you prefer to work more hours a week?

Why do you not currently do so?

Have you thought about combining 2 or more part-time jobs?

(probe for views, practicalities etc)

Roughly how long do you think you will stay in this job?

Why/what will affect when you move?

What would get you to stay longer?

What other jobs have you considered doing?

Why? What would be better about these jobs?

What would be worse about these jobs?

(use probes as above)

Have you looked at adverts for other jobs?

What attracts you about them?

Have you seen any adverts about working in childcare?

IF YES: probe for whether national or local and format/location

What did you think of the advert(s)

Do they say the right things?

What do you think could be done to encourage more people to take jobs in childcare?

Topic guide: interviews with Childminders

Section 1. Current and previous employment

Can you tell me about your job?

How many children do you look after?

What hours do you work?

How long have you been a childminder?

What did you do before you were a childminder?

(Establish extent of previous employment in childcare and employment in other sectors)

Apart from paid work in childcare, have you ever worked with children as a volunteer?
(ask for details, and whether as parent/relative/friend or on work experience)

Why did you decide to be a childminder?

Did you see any adverts?

What attracted you about the advert?

Did you know someone who was a childminder?

What did they tell you about it?

Section 2. Registering and setting up as a childminder

How easy or difficult was it to set up as a childminder?

What were the main difficulties? (if any)

Did you get information about childminding before you registered?

Through visit to library, council 'shop', play group

Through telephone enquiry:

Where to?

What information were you given?

- Was the information useful?
- Did the information encourage you to register?

Did you have any reservations or concerns about becoming a childminder?
(probe for details)

Did the information help with these?

What (other) information would you have liked when you were setting up as a childminder?

What did registering as a childminder involve?
How long did it take?
What did you think of the registration process?
Could it be improved in any way?

Did anyone give you any help in setting up as a childminder? Who?
How useful was the help you were given?

Have you ever been given any careers advice about childcare?
(ask for details of when, whether from careers teacher or adviser from careers service)
Did this encourage you to think about working in childcare?

Section 3. Clients

How do you find clients?
- Advertise (where?)
- Referrals from childminding body
- Recommendations through friends/existing clients/playgroups

How easy is it to find clients?
Is it easier to find full-time/part-time/after-school/holiday children?
What ages are easiest/most difficult to find?

Is it easy or difficult to find clients who want the hours you prefer to work?

What are your fees?
What arrangements are made for holiday and sickness?
What arrangements do you have for giving notice (on either side)?

Section 4. Training

Have you had any training specifically for your job as childminder?
(ask about length, level and qualification)

Was this before or after you started working as a childminder?

Who organised the training?

Who paid for the training?

What did you think of the training you have had?
- Has it helped in your job as a childminder?
- Has it made your job more fulfilling? How?

Has training raised your status as a childcare worker?

IF YES: In what way?

In whose eyes?

Section 4. Support and facilities

Where you given a grant when you first registered as a childminder?

(how much)

Did this cover the costs of setting up?

Did it influence your decision to register as a childminder?

What services and facilities do you have access to as a childminder?

- toy libraries, equipment loans
- support groups, networks of childminders
- training

Have you been told about networks?

Would you join one?

What services and facilities would you like, which are not currently offered?

Section 5. Inspection

How frequently are you inspected?

What does this involve?

Do you find the inspection helpful or not?

Probe for positive and negative aspects of the inspection process

Could it be changed in any way?

Section 6. Views about the job

What do you like about working as a childminder?

What do you dislike about it?

Probe for:

- hours (number and time of day)
- demands of the job
- opportunities for training/qualifications
- fitting in with own childcare
- control/being one's own boss
- status
- pay

How do you view childminding in terms of career development opportunities?
Roughly how long do you think you will stay working as a childminder?

- Why will you stop?
- Would anything make you likely to continue longer?
- What would you then expect to do?

What other jobs have you considered doing?
Why? What would be better about these jobs?
What would be worse about these jobs?
(use probes as above)

Have you looked at adverts for other jobs?
What attracts you about them?

Have you seen any adverts about working in childcare?
IF YES: probe for whether national or local and format/location
What did you think of the advert(s)
Do they say the right things?

What do you think could be done to encourage more people to become childminders?
IF ETHNIC MINORITY/MALE/OLDER/DISABLED, probe for views on what could be done
to encourage similar people to become childminders

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