RESEARCH

Exploring the Field of Listening to and Consulting with Young Children

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Exploring the field of listening to and consulting with young children
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Executive Summary

Introduction

This research study was commissioned by the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Unit, now the Sure Start Unit of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The aim was to carry out a State of the Art Review into listening to and consulting with young children, under five years old. The focus of the review was young children's views and experiences of education and childcare. The principle objectives were to examine:

- *Methodology*: different approaches used in research and consultations for listening to young children, including those which can operate alongside listening to practitioners and parents and tools which are open to young children with special needs
- *Impact*: evidence gained of children's experiences and priorities and subsequent changes to attitudes and practice . This includes evidence of the impact of listening on practitioners, parents and young children.
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The final stage of the review was to identify good practice in listening to and consulting with young children, drawn from a range of early years provision

The research was undertaken by Alison Clark, Susan Mc Quail and Peter Moss of the Thomas Coram Research Unit which is part of the Institute of Education, at the University of London.

Key Findings

- Only a minority of childcare audits carried out by Early Years and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) during 2001-2002 seem to have focused on the views of children under five years old. An analysis of 50 childcare audits which included consultation activities revealed that only seven had concentrated on the under fives.

- The review demonstrated that some imaginative methods are being used by researchers, practitioners and consultants to listen to and to consult young children. These include methods adapted from work with older children including interviews, questionnaires, group work and participatory games. Other techniques such as observation have a strong tradition in the early years field. These have been combined with the use of multi-sensory methods including the use of media, role play, drawing and puppets.

- Key themes have emerged from the literature about young children's priorities in early years provision. These include the importance of friends, food, drink and cooking, outside play, the role of the staff , time to finish their activities and support for periods of transition.

- There were only limited examples in the published literature where the views and experiences of young children with disabilities have been gathered about early education and childcare.

- There was evidence of the impact of listening to young children occurring at an individual, institutional and strategic level. At an individual level, research indicated young children experienced increased self-esteem and social competency, together with an insight into decision-making processes. Impact at an institutional level included opportunities for practitioners to reflect on practice, changes to policies and to designs of outdoor and indoor spaces. There were few examples found of the impact of young children's views on change at a strategic level.

- This review points to the need for early years practitioners to bring their knowledge about the ways young children think and communicate into debates around consulting children and children's participation. Listening to young children needs to be part of a culture of listening which respects the views of adults and children. Research points to the importance of debating the principles of listening.

- At a policy level, the review reveals the place for training on listening, consultation and children's rights as part of initial teacher training and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQ). In addition, there are in-service training implications for early years practitioners and managers. There needs to be further discussion about appropriate ways to include the views and experiences of young children in the inspection process.

- This review reveals the small number of research studies carried out into young children's views and experiences of education and childcare. More studies should be undertaken which draw on children's expertise of different forms of childcare including childminding and their perspectives on the indoor and outdoor environment. There is a particular need to explore methodologies to include the experiences of young children with special needs and how to represent young children's views at a strategic level

- Comparative studies are needed which identify approaches to listening to young children in early years provision in other countries. These exchanges should be within the UK and within Europe. The literature review suggests that practice in Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy could be considered together with practice in Scotland and England.

Definitions

There are a range of definitions in use regarding 'listening', 'consultation' and participation. This research study has identified two different purposes for listening to and involving young children in education and childcare settings:

- everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children, giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities and
- one-off consultation about a particular issue, event or opportunity

Research Methods
The research study has based its findings on the following components:

- Literature review including articles, reports and material for practitioners on current practice covering all countries where English language literature is available.
- A review of a sample of 50 Childcare Audits to find examples where young children have been consulted. Two sources were used for this sample: childcare audits for 2001-2002 received by DfES by July 2002 and EYDCPs which identified themselves as consulting children in response to a related study to inform the Investors in Children initiative.
- Overseas reviews of articles from Denmark and the Netherlands to increase the scope of this study with material from two countries known to offer important contributions to listening to young children.
- Six case studies, five English and one Danish case study to highlight current practice. The six case studies were chosen to illustrate innovative approaches to everyday listening and to consultations across a range of early years provision. The selection process began by identifying early years settings through the literature and EYDCP childcare audits. This was supplemented by contact with key informants to include representatives of national early years organisations, arts organisations, academics and Sure Start Regional Managers.
- An invited seminar to bring together policy makers, academics, voluntary sector representatives and practitioners to discuss issues arising from the review about listening to and consulting with young children

Childcare Audits
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have been required to conduct annual audits since their formation in 1998, including gathering children and young people's preferences for childcare and other support services.

A review of this sample indicates that only a minority of EYDCPs are focusing their consultations for the childcare audits on the under fives. More research is needed to gather evidence of the particular issues which EYDCPs face in including the views and experiences of young children.

Seven EYDCPs from the sample of 50 identified consultation activities focused on the under fives: Ealing, Islington, Kingston upon Hull, Plymouth, Rotherham, Shropshire and Wigan. There were other EYDCPs which had included the under fives as part of a wider consultation. Islington EYDCP was unique in providing an extended period of training for staff on listening to young children, organised as part of its consultation by Save the Children which led to short term and long-term changes to everyday practice (Case Study Two).

Case Studies
The English case studies featured a rural playgroup, an Early Excellence Centre which had taken part in an EYDCP initiated training programme; an urban and coastal Sure Start programme and an Infant and Nursery school. The sixth case focused on an example of Danish early years provision for children under three. The case studies illustrated different aspects of the two purposes of listening to children identified in the review.

A. Everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities. Methods and approaches used in the case studies included:

- Prioritising time to listen to children talking, in groups and individually
- Using children's records of progress or 'profile books' as a daily listening tool
- 'Tuning in' routines to young children's rhythms, interests and developing skills
- Giving young children increasing control over their personal care
- Explaining, discussing and negotiating rules
- Seeking young children's opinions and solutions to problems which arise
- Developing ways of listening to and involving young children which open up more channels of communication with parents
- Designing personal 'passports' to listen to and empower young children with special needs
- Taking part in a training programme by a specialist organisation on listening to young children

B. One –off consultation about a particular issue, event or opportunity. Methods and approaches used in the case studies consultations included;

- Involving a Community Arts team to engage both parents and young children in consultations about a new building
- Involving older children to inform decisions about provision for children under four
- Employing an action researcher to involve young children in the planning and reviewing of services for parents and children.

Methods

The review brings together methods which have been used by researchers, practitioners and consultants to understand the views and experiences of young children about education and childcare. Examples are drawn from the review of literature in English and the reviews undertaken in Denmark and the Netherlands.

- Observation. Examples draw on the strong tradition of observation as a tool in ethnographic research and early childhood education practice. Observation is a starting point for other methods and is of particular importance in reviewing the experiences of pre-verbal children.
- Traditional consultation techniques. There is evidence of interviews, focus groups and questionnaires being used to gather the views of young children. Some publications have addressed ways of adapting these methods for appropriate use with young children, for example focusing on types of language used and the structure and setting on the interview.
- Structured and multi-sensory methods. There are a range of techniques for listening to young children which shift the balance away from the written or spoken word to approaches which focus on visual or multi-sensory methods. These include role play activities and the use of puppets. Participatory games have also been adapted for the under fives.
  These new approaches have incorporated the use of different media, for example cameras for young children to record their own perspectives.

Key Themes
There are a number of key themes which have emerged as matters of importance to the young children who have taken part in consultations about early education and childcare.

- The importance of relationships are mentioned in many studies, especially friends and key adults.
- Children referred to the quality of food and drink and their access to these facilities
- Access to the outdoor environment was another priority, in particular use of favourite equipment.
- Other studies highlighted the importance of having time for children to finish their 'projects'
- Young children discussed difficulties arising from transitions to new settings

There is a danger of making children out to be a homogenous group with identical views. This is particularly the case when we are reliant on such a small number of published work. This will only be redressed when more young children are given the opportunity to describe their experiences. This includes young children from diverse ethnic backgrounds as well as children with disabilities.

Inclusive Practice
A number of imaginative approaches are being used for gathering the views and experiences of young children with special needs. These methods are most effective when they result in empowering children in everyday routines. There remains a need for more research and development work into inclusive practices in young children's participation which opens up channels of communication for children from diverse communities and with different abilities.

Impact
There is evidence of the impact of listening to young children at an individual, institutional and strategic level. Firstly, research indicates that young children can experience increased self-esteem and social competency, together with gaining an insight into decision-making processes. At an individual level the impact of listening to young children can have an impact on parents and staff attitudes and perceptions of children's capabilities and insights. Secondly, impact at an institutional level has led in some instances to changes in policies and to designs of outdoor and indoor spaces. There were few examples found of the impact of young children's views on change at a strategic level.

Emerging issues
This review points to emerging issues for practice, policy and research.
Practice

- There is a need to help practitioners reflect on their skills in the light of emerging debates about young children's participation.
- Listening should be a reciprocal process. One of the challenges to practice is how to promote a culture of listening where children, staff and parents are respected and listened to.

- Debates around learning, listening and consulting need to be considered together. Listening to young children should not rely on a 'bolt on' activity but be part of everyday practice (Marchant and Kirby, forthcoming).
- There is need for debate about principles on which to base listening and consulting with young children. One starting point for discussion is the framework adopted by Clark and Moss (2001:5) in which listening is participatory, adaptable, multi-method, reflexive and embedded in practice.

Policy

- At a policy level, the review reveals the place for training on listening, consultation and children's rights as part of initial teacher training and NNEB training. These training needs extend to in-service training for early years practitioners and managers.
- There needs to be further discussion about appropriate ways to include the views and experiences of young children in the inspection process. There is the risk that quick, short hand methods will be adopted which fail to tap into the competent ways young children can express their points of view.
- The review shows little representation of young children's views at a strategic level. Time and resources need to be given to devising appropriate methods for representing young children at a national policy level.
- There are budgetary implications for implementing a participatory approach to providing early years services. This relates to the costs of consultation as well as the resource implications of taking young children's views seriously.

Research

- This review reveals the small number of research studies carried out into young children's views and experiences of education and childcare. More studies should be undertaken which draw on children's expertise of different forms of childcare including childminding and their perspectives on the indoor and outdoor environment. There is a particular need to explore methodologies to include the experiences of young children with special needs and appropriate methods for representing young children's views at a strategic level.
- Comparative studies are needed which identify approaches to listening to young children in early years provision in other countries. These exchanges should be within the UK and within Europe. The literature review suggests that practice in Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy could be considered together with practice in Scotland and England.

Summary

This review has been undertaken at a time of growing interest in listening to young children by practitioners, policy makers and academics. The review has highlighted examples of everyday listening and consultations in a range of early years provision. The review has indicated the types of methodologies available but also the increasing body of evidence into the impact of listening.

Young children will best be served by changes to policy and practice which remain alert to their differing perspectives and interests as well as their needs.

Introduction

This research study was commissioned by the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Unit of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The aim has been to carry out a State of the Art Review into listening to and involving young children, with an emphasis on children under five. The focus has been listening to young children's views and experiences of education and childcare.

The research was undertaken by Alison Clark, Susan Mc Quail and Peter Moss of the Thomas Coram Research Unit which is part of the Institute of Education, at the University of London.

I. Background

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in accessing and understanding children's perspectives on their own lives. This has been linked to debates about 'listening to children' and 'children's participation'. There have been legal, political, economic and academic reasons for this interest.

The main legal influence has been the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the UK in 1991. There have also been political initiatives in a number of countries to represent children's views and to safeguard their interests. There have been important developments in the UK with the appointment of a Children's Commissioner for London in 2000 and a Children's Commissioner in Wales in 2001. The Government has created the Children and Young Peoples' Unit and announced the involvement of children and young people as a core principle across Government Departments CYPU 2001). There remains no Children's Right's Commissioner for England.

Children's perspectives have also an economic dimension. During the 1990s, there has been a shift in emphasis towards treating children rather than their parents as 'consumers' of the services and goods children receive. Childcare Audits are one of the most recent policy expressions of this desire to include children's views in the improvement of services.

Interest in children's perspectives has been further stimulated by significant conceptual and theoretical developments, in particular a shift in how children are viewed by the social science disciplines. A new sociology of childhood, or childhood studies, for example, has been taking shape in recent years. Children are seen not as a group of 'becomings' but as 'beings' whose ideas, approaches to life, choices and relationships are of interest in their own right (James and Prout, 1997). Recognising children's competencies can help adults reflect on the limitations of their understanding of children's lives (Tolfree and Woodhead, 1999). Children, like adults, are 'social actors' making sense of their lives. This change in emphasis places great importance on gaining children's perspectives.

The increase in interest in listening to children is set against a historical focus on listening to children as part of discourses on learning and pedagogy. Several pedagogical traditions within early childhood education place listening and responding to young children's interests and needs at the centre of good practice (Nutbrown,1996; David, 2000; Rinaldi, 2001)
These legal, political, economic and theoretical considerations have given rise to a number of different definitions of listening, consultation, decision-making and participation.

II. Definitions of listening, consultation and participation

Listening to children focuses on the role of the adult in relation to the child. Listening can imply a passive process (Alderson, 2000) or an active process of exchange of meanings (Rinaldi,1996; Clark and Moss, 2001). Carlina Rinaldi, former head of the preschool services in Reggio Emilia speaks of 'a pedagogy of listening':

> "Listening is an active verb, which involves giving an interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who are being listened to." (Rinaldi, 2001: 4)

Participation is the act of taking part in or 'becoming actively involved' or 'sharing (in)' (Collins English Dictionary, 1991). This implies a sharing of power (Miller, 1997). Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation provides one way of understanding the different distributions of power in activities which may claim to be participation; from tokenism to power-sharing. This model was devised to discuss adult participation.

Hart (1997:41) has modified this model to try to outline what forms children's participation can take. The three lowest rungs of the ladder are labelled as non-participation: manipulation, decoration and tokenism. This rises through consulting and informing to shared decision making, to participation as child-initiated shared decisions with adults. Alderson sees 'the ladders as perhaps useful, not so much as markers to measure progress up the levels, but as ways of clarifying and checking how much children are involved in each part of a project, and how much more they might be involved depending on what is practical and effective.' (Alderson, 2000: 93).

The concept of 'children's participation' can mean their active engagement with individual tasks or activities but also has a wider meaning, implying involvement in the decision-making process. Participation may happen at different levels within an institution. A child at nursery may be involved in choices about day to day routines such as whether she has apple juice or milk at break time. Participation at an organisational level might involve this child in choosing her key worker. Participation also implies some ownership of the decision-making process whereas consultation may stop with seeking advice.

Decision-making is not synonymous with participation - although sometimes thought to be. Murch, et al (1998) describe this confusion in the legal arena:

> 'many adults including welfare professionals, solicitors and judges confuse 'participation' with decision-making. They are reluctant even to speak to or listen to children because they see this as inappropriately asking the child to

decide.'

This misunderstanding may also make children fearful of participation. This highlights the need for adults and children to be clear about the meanings they give to this important process.

Consultation Borland offers a definition of consultation as 'ways of seeking the views of children as a guide to action' (2001). She supports the view that consultation should be used as a wider concept than participation. Hart (1997) however argues that participation is the more basic idea – the crucial issue being the extent to which individuals are empowered to make decisions on matters that concern them, with consultation only one among a number of levels of participation.

This review has chosen to use the key terms 'listening' and 'consultation' in the following ways:

Listening is understood to be

- an active process of communication involving hearing, interpreting and constructing meanings
- not limited to the spoken word
- a necessary stage in participation in (a) daily routines as well as in (b) wider decision-making processes

This is different from consultation which should involve listening but is listening with a particular purpose:

- 'ways of seeking the views of children as a guide to action' (Borland, 2001).

Listening and involving young children have different purposes in their early years education and childcare settings:

- everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children, giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities
- one-off consultation about a particular issue, event or opportunity

These two themes of every day listening and consultation have been explored in the following review.

III. Aims of the review

Set against this background, the review investigates two particular aspects of listening to and involving young children:

- Methodology: this includes different approaches used in research and consultations for listening to young children, methods which can operate alongside listening to practitioners and parents and tools which are open to young children with special needs
- Impact: this relates to the evidence gained of children's experiences and priorities and subsequent changes to attitudes and practice . The review has investigated evidence of the impact of listening on practitioners, parents and young children.

The review included the following elements:

1. Literature review to include articles, reports and material for practitioners on current practice to cover all countries where English language literature is available.
2. A review will also be made of Childcare Audits (2001-2002) to find examples where young children have been consulted.
3. Overseas reviews of articles from Denmark and the Netherlands to increase the scope of this study with material from two countries known to offer important contributions to listening to young children.
4. Six case studies, five English and one Danish case study to highlight current practice
5. Seminar to bring together policy makers, academics, voluntary sector representatives and practitioners

This report is in seven sections and covers the following topics:

Section 1 EYDCP Childcare Audits
Section 2 Case Studies
Section 3 Methods
Section 4 Key themes
Section 5 Inclusive practice
Section 6 Impact of listening
Section 7 Emerging issues

1 EYDCP Childcare Audits

1.1 Introduction

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have been required to conduct annual audits since their formation in 1998. This includes the requirement to gather children and young people's preferences for childcare and other support services.

Table One EYDCP surveys and consulting young children and parents (1998-2001)

	1998-1999	**1999-2000**	**2000-2001**
	Percentage		
EYDCPs in survey	**93**	**86**	**63**
Consulted children	**71**	**94**	**84**
Consulted parents	**No data**	**98**	**92**

Source: The Daycare Trust

Table one shows that consultations with children for the childcare audits has risen and dropped again over the period 1998-2001. More EYDCPs consult with parents than with children. What isn't clear from these figures is the number of childcare audits which have included consulting pre-school children.

1.2 The sample

Our review has looked at a sample of 50 EYDCP childcare audits for 2001-2002 to ascertain the extent to which pre-school children were being consulted (see Appendix E for details). Two sources were used for this sample:

Study A. A sample (89/121) of the childcare audits for 2001-2002 were studied. This number refers to those audits received by the DfES by mid-July 2002. Only a third (27: 33%)[1] made mention of activities relating to consulting with or listening to children.

Study B. In another study at Thomas Coram Research Unit, colleagues contacted all EYDCPs in April 2002 by email to enquire about consultations with children as part of the planning for Investors in Children. Thirty four of the respondents identified themselves as involved in consultations with children since April 2001. Eleven of these EYDCPs were already identified in Study A giving 23 new EYDCPs identified as consulting children. Study A and B together gave our sample of 50 EYDCPs.

1.3 Focus on the under fives

There was little uniformity in the way the consultations were recorded. For example the age range of children consulted, included 0-14 year olds, 3-14 year olds, 5-11

[1] This was the material available in the DfES files on the two days of visit. It may not therefore be complete

year olds or children in Year 6 at primary school.

Seven EYDCPs from the sample of 50 identified consultation activities focused on the under fives:

Ealing	2-5 years
Islington	Under fives
Kingston upon Hull	Under fives
Plymouth	3-4 years
Rotherham	2-4 years
Shropshire	0-7 years
Wigan	Under fives

Kingston upon Hull EYDCP commissioned the Daycare Trust to review the childcare audit carried out in 1999. Consulting with the under fives was identified as one gap in the data. The Daycare Trust undertook a followup consultation with parents and children which included talking to 33 under five year olds. These children used a 'magic microphone' (taperecorder) and took photographs of favourite activities, toys and people
Daycare Trust (2000)

There were other EYDCPs which had included the under fives as part of a wider consultation e.g. Newcastle Children's conferences for 3-14 year olds.
Islington EYDCP was unique in providing an extended period of training for staff on listening to young children, organised as part of its consultation by Save the Children which led to short term and long-term changes to everyday practice (see Case Study Two).

The childcare audits are one of several ways in which EYDCPs may choose to consult young children.

Save the Children and Birmingham EYDCP celebrated the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by staging a giant Graffiti Wall project. Children from 40 schools, out of school clubs, playcentres and nurseries participated by making collages on calico to express their feelings about different rights.

1.4 Conclusion

A review of this sample indicates that only a minority of EYDCPs are focusing their consultations for the childcare audits on the under fives. More research is needed to gather evidence of the particular issues which EYDCPs face in including the views and experiences of young children.

2 Case Studies

2.1 Introduction

The six case studies have been chosen to illustrate innovative approaches to

everyday listening and to consultations across a range of early years provision (see Appendix A for methodology).
The question of how to identify good practice in this field is open to discussion. The following selection criteria have been developed from the literature and with reference to continuing work in the field, in particular the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Working Group on listening to young children (Marchant and Kirby, forthcoming):

- Young children's views are respected and listened to
- A range of methodologies are used to listen to young children's views including visual and non-verbal tools
- Young children's opinions are sought about day to day matters as well as for specific consultations e.g. for new equipment or changes to the environment
- Young children receive feedback about any changes to practice which result from their involvement
- Special focus has been given to including the views and experiences of children with special needs
- Range of preschool settings to include playgroups, nursery classes, Early Excellence Centres and Sure Start programmes. One EYDCP will also be featured
- Range of geographical locations to include inner city, rural, coastal and suburban

Table Two summarises each of the case studies. This is followed by a fuller description of each case study.

Table Two Case Studies

Case Study One: Playgroup
Wistanstow playgroup in the village of Wistanstow, Shropshire is a small rural playgroup catering for children from the age of 2 years six months to school age. The playgroup meets in the village hall, a mock-Tudor building which is used by other community groups throughout the week. The shared use of this non-purpose built building means that equipment has to be tidied away each day. Despite the practical difficulties the playgroup is run on the principle of empowering young children in day to day decision-making.
Case Study Two: Early Excellence Centre and EYDCP
Fortune Park Early Years Centre is an inner city nursery in the London Borough of Islington. Islington EYDCP commissioned Save the Children to carry out a programme of training on listening to young children for practitioners in pre-school provision. This is a unique example of long-term training programme by an EYDCP focusing on listening to and involving young children.
Case Study Three: Sure Start Programme
Sure Start Blakenall and Sure Start Alumwell and Pleck are two Sure Start programmes in Walsall in the West Midlands. Sure Start Blakenall is working with a community artist to involve children and parents in the designing of features within the 'new build.' Sure Start Alumwell and Pleck employed the play work training agency PLAY.TRAIN to gather children's views and experiences of the local area.
Case Study Four: Sure Start Programme
Sure Start Great Yarmouth, a coastal town, is situated in one of the fifth most deprived boroughs in the country. This Sure Start programme has employed an action researcher from the beginning to incorporate children and parents' views and experiences on existing services and plans for future provision. This Sure Start programme is organised on an integrated model with team members employed across a range of family support services. The impact of listening to young children is beginning to have a wide impact.
Case Study Five: Infant and Nursery School
The Coombes Infant and Nursery School, Arborfield, Berkshire has a national reputation for its use of the outdoor environment. The school is based on the principle of 'learning by doing'. Listening to young children's views is part of this process.
Case Study Six: Early years provision in Denmark
Studenterradets Vuggestue is a university nursery in the centre of Copenhagen. Children under three attend the nursery. A focus is placed on young children's 'self-management'. Practitioners give the highest priority to observing and supporting young children's interests and desires.

2.2 Case Study One: Playgroup

- everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children, giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities

Context

Wistanstow playgroup in the village of Wistanstow, Shropshire is a small rural playgroup catering for children from the age of 2 years six months to school age. The playgroup meets in the village hall, a mock-Tudor building which is shared with other community groups.

The joint leader of the playgroup is Judy Miller who has worked with young children for over twenty years and is a writer and trainer on young children's rights (se Miller, 1997).

There is an easel at the children's height at the entrance to the village hall where Wistanstow playgroup meets. Children find their names from a pile of labels and attach it to the board to register that they have arrived for playgroup. This beginning is indicative of the children's role at the playgroup: children as active, competent participants.

Communication

A priority is given to listening to children's talking. The playgroup sessions are structured so as to enable practitioners to spend as much time as possible listening to the children's ideas and concerns. Adults sit at the children's level as the children are engaged in activities and on the day when children stay to lunch.

Close attention is paid to the *language adults use*. Practitioners focus on open questions which do not dictate the desired answer. They use reflective listening techniques by which practitioners repeat what they have understood children to be saying back to children to check understandings.

Routines

Routines are based on *children's rhythms and interests*. Children become familiar with the routines, for example, when is it time to tidy up ready for lunch? This familiarity enables children to play an active part in the smooth transitions between one activity and another.

Drinks and snacks are designed in such as way as to not only meet children's physical needs but also to give children choices and to develop their skills. Drinks are placed in small jugs so young children can help themselves and learn how to pour their own drinks.

Supporting playing and learning

There is no adjacent play area so the *indoor environment* has been organised to allow bikes and large play equipment to be available each day.

Children are asked which *activities* they would like to be available and play an active part in setting up and tidying away. It is not always possible to respond immediately to children's requests. The limited storage space means that some equipment has to be stored away under the stage or in practitioners' own homes.

Observation notes are shared with the children and practitioners respond to children's requests to document particular achievements.

At *Circle time*, children can show other children and practitioners pictures, models or an item from home that they are proud of. This is not, however, compulsory.

Decision-making

Children are introduced to the *decision-making processes* needed to run a playgroup. Children are involved in specific projects to choose play equipment, e.g. new play animals. The choices given to children are small in scale but genuine. Care is taken not to ask for children's involvement in a decision in which their ideas could not be considered.

Children are given the opportunity *to join in or opt out* of activities and trips.

Sometimes, children's own ideas lead to a new activity or event. (see section on Impact).

Relationships

Rules are explained, discussed and negotiated so children understand how the rules have come about.

Children's *opinions and solutions* are sought about problems which arise.

Summary

This case study illustrates an early years setting where listening to and involving young children is embedded in practice. The practitioners have found creative ways to place young children and their ideas 'centre stage' –despite the considerable restrictions of this shared space.

2.3 Case Study Two: Early Excellence Centre and EYDCP

- everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children, giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities

Context

Fortune Park Early Years Centre is an inner city nursery provided by the local authority, which has been awarded Early Excellence Centre status, in the London Borough of Islington. Islington EYDCP commissioned Save the Children (London) to

carry out a programme of training on listening to young children for practitioners in early years provision.

> After several meetings and long discussions on who is the actual customer, it was agreed that the people we really required the views of …were the children. We then invited two members of Save the Children along to our next meeting to plan with us how we could progress this.'
>
> EYDCP Officer, Islington

The training programme was based on young children's participation using a children's rights framework. The project (1999-2000) was linked to work by Save the Children in Hackney and the West Midlands. The programme in Islington comprised two two-day courses each involving practitioners from six early years settings-both statutory services and voluntary organisations. Practitioners then worked on developing their ideas in their own centres, with support from Save the Children. The work was presented at a conference and has been produced as a training manual (Fajerman, 2000).

Fortune Park was one of the settings which took part in this training. The case study which follows describes how Fortune Park has built on this theme of young children's participation.

Supporting play and learning

The *profile books* have become an integral part of listening to and involving young children in their learning. This channel for communication is begun before the children start at the nursery. Their keyworker, the member of staff who will work closely with the child, makes a home visit and takes photographs of the child and his favourite things. On the child's first day in nursery the profile book is there with their photographs already in place. These books become a positive record of young children's achievements and changing interests.

The profile books are an important tool for listening to *very young children*. Children under one can take pleasure in having a book about themselves and in sharing the books with other children and adults. The books are stored in boxes kept at floor level so children can help themselves.

As children grow older they are able to play a more direct role in recording experiences themselves and are able to revisit past books and to talk about and reflect on how they have changed.

Listening to and involving parents and children

The profile books open up *new channels of communication* between the nursery and the parents and carers and also between parents and their young children. The photographs and accounts are a way of listening to what is important for their children. Parents can use the books to describe particular interests or milestones which the children reach at home. This provides another powerful way for practitioners to listen to what is important for individual children.

Listening to children with special needs

Children with special needs make a *personal passport* with their keyworker which they take with them when they move to a new setting. This is in addition to their profile books. The passport describes themselves, their families and what they like to do. It gives the children the opportunity to explain their everyday needs. This can empower children through sometimes difficult periods of transition.

Summary

Fortune Park illustrates a nursery where the principles of listening to young children are embedded in everyday practice. The profile books have become a powerful voice for young children in the centre.

The training programme by Islington EYDCP has been an important stimulus for this on-going exploration of young children's participation.

2.4 Case Study Three: Sure Start Programme

- one-off consultation about a particular issue, event or opportunity

Context
Sure Start Blakenall is one of the Trailblazer programmes and Sure Start Alumwell and Pleck is a Fourth wave programme and is at an earlier stage in the planning process. Both of these programmes cover areas of deprivation in Walsall, West Midlands. Each have chosen to consult young children and parents as part of their development work.

During the week of the case study visit, parents and young children from the Blakenall area were going on a trip with an artist to the local glass factory. Handprints of the children and parents were being cast in glass to be used in a glass wall in the new Sure Start building.

Community Arts

Walsall has a strong local authority Community Arts Team. Listening, involvement and participation are at the centre of this work:

> 'Community arts is about encouraging people to speak out and involving and effecting change, often in high profile ways, especially for those who might not have been listened to before.' Community Arts Manager

This expertise has added an important dimension to the approach to listening adopted by Sure Start Blakenall. Listening through the arts was included in the

delivery plan and has remained a central part of the programme.

A community artist was commissioned to listen to the views and experiences of young children, parents and older members of the community and to use these ideas as a basis for planned artworks within the proposed new Sure Start building.

There have been two phases to the project to date.

Phase one: 'talking and making'. The artist ran arts activities in different locations across the area. The aim was to find out from local residents of all ages what is was like to grow up in this part of Walsall. This work included visits to centres with pre-school groups and also interviewing adults and young children in the street.

Arts activities included making a height chart with children from a local playgroup including pictures of things they liked to do. Other sessions involved taking photographs of the children and making mobiles of favourite things.

These arts activities were the basis for talking and listening. The artist devised a prompt list of themes for children and adults to think about in relation to their everyday experiences of living in Walsall. These included:

- special days
- treasures and souvenirs
- playtime
- special places
- bathtimes
- bedtimes

The young children's and adults' views and experiences were collected in scrapbooks. This documentation formed the basis for the next stage of the consultation.

Phase two: listening turned into design. The artist used the comments and ideas from the scrapbooks to identify key themes. These formed the basis for discussion with the architect and the building steering group. Designs identified to date include a glass wall containing treasured objects, fencing made into a washing line design featuring cutouts of memorable clothes identified by the participants and a sculpture modelled on water running down a plughole.

Older children as consultants. Sure Start Alumwell and Pleck commissioned the playwork training agency, PLAY.TRAIN, to carry out a consultation with six year olds to inform their planning of services for younger children.

PLAY.TRAIN worked with two groups of six year olds in local schools. Some of these sessions focused on what the children recalled being brought up in this part of Walsall. The children were also taken on trips to other areas to see ideas for play spaces.

The children's recommendations are being used to inform current changes to the outdoors environment and the future plans for a new building.

Consultations and timescales

Three year olds in Blakenall, involved in discussions about the new build, may be too old to use the facilities by the time the site is finished. However, they have had the opportunity to have fun and work with an artist. This highlights the importance of providing activities of value in themselves to the participants. This is of particular importance in areas such as this where there is a sense of 'consultation fatigue': too many people have asked for opinions which have not been acted upon.

Summary

These Sure Start programmes demonstrate imaginative approaches to listening to and involving young children. Both have taken seriously the need to consult young children and have chosen to bring in a specialist organisation to help to do so.

2.5 Case Study Four: Sure Start Programme

- one-off consultation about a particular issue, event or opportunity

Context

Sure Start Great Yarmouth, a Norfolk coastal town, is situated in one of the fifth most deprived boroughs in the country. This Sure Start programme is one of the initial Sure Starts or 'Trailblazers'. Sure Start Great Yarmouth has adopted an integrated approach to service delivery, with Sure Start workers employed across a range of core services including health, education and social services. From the beginning the team has included an action researcher from the beginning to incorporate children and parents' views and experiences on existing services and plans for future provision. Action research is a form of inquiry rooted in a real life context. It is concerned both with action (solving actual problems in real situations) and research (Rapoport, 1970).

The action researcher has a background in emancipatory research in which adults with disabilities are enabled to communicate their views and bring about change. This emphasis on encouraging the voices of the less powerful is relevant in the context of Sure Start. This programme in Great Yarmouth has a high number of refugees and asylum seekers, many of whom are living in temporary accommodation.

Methods for listening

Sure Start programmes work with young children under four and their families. It was therefore important to listen to young children at the same time as working with parents.

The action researcher began by *talking to children* in their own homes whilst she was conducting 'parental satisfaction surveys'. Inviting children to *draw* was a useful way in to talking to the young children.

Following a three day training course on listening to young children, organised by the Children's Society (London) the researcher explored different methods for listening to the views and experiences of young children. The researcher adapted tools described in the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001).

- Children took the researcher on a tour of the centres pointing out important places
- The researcher took photographs of places and people at the children's request. These were taken at the children's height.
- Dolls and puppets were also used to act as intermediaries for children to talk about their early years experiences.

The Mosaic approach is intended to be a flexible set of tools. In keeping with this adaptability the researcher changed elements of the approach to fit the particular context in Great Yarmouth e.g. the hall proved too noisy for the children to make taperecordings of the tour.

Listening to parents and children's cultural needs

The researcher discovered that some of the parents were concerned about the use of tape recorders. These parents were refugees and asylum seekers and associated being taped with surveillance. This alerted the team to the need for openness and sensitivity to parents throughout any consultation with young children.

Listening to young children in an integrated service

The principle behind these consultations are that 'children are experts in their own lives' (Langsted, 1994). This underlying principle has had an impact on how other professionals in partner agencies approach young children. This has led to a more holistic approach to service delivery in agencies whose primary role is to work with adults but many of whom are also parents of young children.

Summary

Sure Start Great Yarmouth is an example of a programme who have engaged from the beginning with the complexities of listening to an involving young children in the planning and reviewing of services for parents and children. This exploratory work has potential to make an important contribution to how existing services are run and what future services should be developed.

2.6 Case Study Five: Infant and Nursery School

- everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children, giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities

Context

The Coombes Infant and Nursery School, Arborfield, Berkshire draws children from the neighbouring village and the Arborfield Garrison. Since opening in 1971 the school has developed the outdoor environment and has a wide reputation as a pioneer and leader in environmental development and education. This is a school where children are seen as competent members of a learning community:

> 'I expect the children to make decisions…to believe themselves that they have surprising abilities.' Headteacher

These expectations have an impact on children's role indoors and outdoors. The examples which follow feature the Nursery class attended by children age three to four years old.

Routines

Children in the Nursery class are encouraged to develop *independence*. At the start of the session, for example, children find their own labels and hang them on their pegs.

Drinks and snacks are available to the children during the first part of the morning. The snacks are placed on a low table accessible to children. They are encouraged to help themselves to a drink and are given a choice of snacks and drinks.

Circle time provides an opportunity for children to listen to each other in a formal way.

Supporting play and learning

Close attention is paid to *children's current interests*. Children are asked for ideas for role play in the classroom. The home corner, for example became a hairdressers following discussions with the children.

The outdoors is an integral part of the learning environment at this school. *Access to the outdoor environment* has been changed after observations of how the young children were using the space. A nursery garden has been created to allow the youngest children more freedom. An overgrown wood has been cleared to enable children to play among the trees.

The children play an active part in creating and maintaining the outdoor environment. One example is the sunflower garden, where every member of the school plants, waters and harvests the sunflowers.

Communication

Rules are not imposed but carefully explained to the children:

> 'We have had to put some limits on playing monsters because of other children being scared. It is a question of having limits and explaining them to others.' Nursery teacher

Children are encouraged to play an active role in *settling disputes* through listening to each other.

Practitioners have a respect for children and are not afraid to say sorry.

School prospectus

Young children's impressions of the school are included in the prospectus.

One child explained their favourite things:

> 'Working outside…doing maths outside…going down the path to the Bluebell wood. Going in the rabbit playground and going to the sunflowers.'

Summary

This Infant and Nursery school is based on the principle of 'learning by doing'. Listening to young children's views is part of this process. There are opportunities for children to play an active part in the indoor and outdoor activities and routines.

2.7 Case study Six: Overseas Early years provision

- everyday listening by those who regularly work with young children, giving opportunities for decision-making in routines and activities

Context

Studenterradets Vuggestue is the University nursery in Copenhagen, for children under three. The nursery had been the focus of an influential piece of qualitative research in the eighties carried out by Anderson and Kampmann (1996). They used participant observation, including the use of videotaping to look at children's self-management- translated as participation in decision-making or self-determination. As a result of this research this nursery and others changed from a structured pedagogy to a self-manangement pedagogy which is based around children playing a central active role in their learning and development.

Observation

The nursery gives a high priority to watching and listening to young children. This is seen as the key to discovering more about the relationships between children and their support and understanding of each others needs and interests.

> ‘Even if the children can’t speak it is a big thing for us to ‘read their language’- we put a lot of effort into getting to know the children as individuals’.
>
> Nursery teacher

Observation and listening is a part of reflexive practice: what is going on for this child right now.

Communication

Practitioners work on the basis that it is always preferable to ask children, from a very young age, rather than assume the answer.

> ‘We don’t just think it, we say it. We tell the children what we think’
>
> Nursery teacher

This applies to the small details of the everyday routines. Practitioners will ask children if they need their nappy changing and whether they are ready for a sleep.

Friendships

Supporting young children’s friendships is an important part of the practitioners’ role in the nursery. If two children are beginning to get on well plans are changed in order to support this developing friendship. There is a similar flexibility to allocating keyworkers. Children who are appear to ‘gel’ more with one keyworker than another can change over.

Expectations

The nursery used the following key words to describe their aims for children. They wanted to see children in their nursery:

- Playing (creative, challenging, curious,)
- Making choices
- Comfortable
- Conquering
- Insisting
- Communicating (verbally and non-verbally)
- Caring (for each other and towards the adults)
- Helping each other

‘Hidden places’

There are hidden away corners in the nursery where young children can be private if they want to. During the case study visit, one eighteen month old girl took the researcher to see a seat tucked away under the eaves, just wide enough for two small children to sit together but no space for an adult. Young children’s need for private spaces was recognised as well as public areas where adults and children could sit and talk together on sofas.

Summary

This is a nursery where young children are respected and given control over their basic needs. Listening is embedded in everyday practice. The structures are built around the children rather than the other way round. Practitioners are able to change routines according to young children's changing interests and developing skills.

3. Methods

3.1 Introduction

Choosing methodologies is one of the possible barriers to listening to and involving young children. What approaches are appropriate? How can the experiences of non-verbal children be included? Which methods will lead to findings that can impact on practice? This section brings together methods which have been used by researchers, practitioners and consultants to understand the views and experiences of young children about education and childcare. Examples are drawn from the review of literature in English and the reviews undertaken in Denmark and the Netherlands.

3.1.1 Conditions for listening

Each of the methods described below require careful planning in order to promote effective listening. Researchers, consultants and practitioners need :

- to be clear about the purpose of the exercise and the extent to which children's views can be incorporated (Miller, 1997)
- to pay attention to the best time of day, the timespan needed and the appropriate person to carry out the work (Tolfree and Woodhead, 1999; Baxter 1993); 'It is important that children are in an environment that is familiar and comfortable to them and that adults known to them whether staff or parents are available' (Stuart et al., 2001).
- to be committed to helping children use the different methods and equipment to express their views concerning their likes and dislikes; to really listen to what the children are saying; to be non-judgemental and let children ask their questions (Cousins 1999); and to be able to set aside adults' own agenda (Shier, 1999).
- to be prepared and willing to involve parents and practitioners as well (Clark and Moss 1991).
- to design activities that are enjoyable and varied, in order to encourage children of all ages to participate voluntarily; children have different ways of expressing themselves and the methods need to capture this (Cousins 1999; Miller 1997, Clark & Moss, 2001)
- to feed back to the children the outcomes of the exercise, including the perspectives about themselves (the staff) and continue the process

There is a need for long-term evaluation of the different methods in this continually growing field.

3.2 Observation

There is a strong tradition of observation within early years education as a tool for understanding young children's abilities, needs and interests (for example, Smidt,1998). Observation becomes increasingly important the younger the age of children involved (Elfer and Selleck, 1999). Participant observation is a particular approach to observation used in ethnographic research. This is a qualitative

approach 'which gives importance to the interpretation of actions and the contexts in which they occur' (Greig & Taylor, 1999:81).It involves a familiar person spending extended periods of time in a setting observing and recording the interactions of children and adults. This method is particularly relevant when eliciting information from or about infants (Leavitt, 1995). The advantage is that part of the agency can be shared with the child and thus reduces the power of the interviewer (Brooker, 2001, Carr 2000, Mauthner, 1997).
Observation can inform other methods including participatory methods where children are able to play an active role (Clark and Moss, 2001).

3.3 Interviews

3.3.1 Individual interviews are among the most popular tool used for gathering the views of older children and adults. Some concerns have been expressed as to its appropriateness as a tool for listening to young children. Children may try to 'second guess' what adults hope they will say. This is particularly true in an educational context where children are used to the teacher knowing the answer (Garbarino et al., cited in Gollop 2000). Children being questioned may become monosyllabic (Tizard & Hughes 1984) and Gollop (2000) notes for some cultural groups, it is not appropriate for children to be interviewed on their own. There is also a need to recognise that interviews are more intrusive than observation which is a 'passive' research method (Brooker 2001). Langsted (1994) suggests we need particular inventiveness and ingenuity in devising interviews for children. He took part in a Scandinavian project in which children were interviewed about their daily life at home and at early childhood centres. Interviewers observed the children and then took them on a sightseeing trip of their daily lives.

3.3.2 Child conferencing is a particular form of informal structured interview which has been devised for the express purpose of finding out about young children's views of their early childhood provision (Dupree, Bertram and Pascal, 2001). This method has been used in the Effective Early Learning Programme to include young children's voices in evaluations.
Child conferencing has been adapted as one of the tools in the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) as a recognition that some young children respond to the opportunities for talking, in a structured way whereas others will find more play-centred approaches easier to take part in.

3.3.3 Group interviews can be seen rather as a conversation 'a group conversational encounter with a research purpose' (Lewis,1992: 413). This can be more effective as 'children talking together replicates the small group setting that they are familiar with in the classroom' (Mauthner, 1997) and again diffuses the power relationship (Brooker, 2001). Lewis notes the advantages as eliciting responses of greater breadth and depth, of less intimidated children and enhanced validity through obtaining both consensus and different views. (Lewis 1992; Carr 2000).
All interviewing needs a familiar environment with trusted adults (Brooker, 2001). Morrow says 'respect needs to become a methodological tool in itself' (Morrow 1996: 100). In order to build a full picture of children in relation to their language, cultural group or class the interviewer should acquire knowledge about their home backgrounds *before* planning and then asking the questions (Brooker 2001). Maintaining rapport and monitoring the child's comfort is an ongoing process and at

the end of the interview there must be appropriate debriefing with praise and thanks (Gollop, 2000). In group interviews it is important to ensure that each child gets their say (Mauthner, 1997).

3.3.4 Child-to-child interviews. The power dynamics between adults and children can be reinforced in an interview situation. This is an important consideration when interviewing young children. One response to this question has been an exploration of the role of children as interviewers interviewing other children. This 'child-to child' technique has been pioneered in International Development as a tool for conveying information to children as well as to discover their views. Playworkers in the UK have adapted this approach to work with younger children. Playtrain, a playwork consultancy has trained children, including children with special needs to act as special consultants (see also Case Study Three).
There has been little work undertaken into the possibilities of children of four and five acting as consultants for understanding the lives of even younger children. Clark and Moss (2001) explored this possibility with four year olds looking at the lives of children under two in their nursery.

3.4 Questionnaires

This method used for gathering the views of older children and adults in academic and market research has been adapted for use with younger children. Gadd and Cable (2000) used questionnaires among other techniques: children drew faces to record how they felt about specified activities. This method runs the risk of being tokenistic if this approach is used as the only way for young children to convey their views and experiences.

3.5 Structured activities

Several research projects have developed specific activities for listening to young children about their pre-school experiences. Evans and Fuller (1996) utilised the popular role play activity of listening on telephones as a research tool. Armstrong and Sugwara (1989) developed the Day Care Center Toy and interview questionnaire. Puppets have also been used as a formal tool for listening to young children as in the Berkeley Puppet Interview (Measelle, et al. 1998). Toys and puppets have been used more informally in consultations with young children as 'intermediaries'. The Daycare Trust (1998) introduced a teddy to groups of children in pre-school settings and asked children to explain to teddy about their nursery.
Story telling has also been used in conjunction with puppets or children have been given an unfinished story to complete (Carr, 2000).

Personna dolls are another specialised prop which has been used to listen to young children. These dolls are designed to help children explore different feelings, in particular about ethnicity and disability (Save the Children (1990); Vandenbroek, et al. 2002; Hall, Hughes and Jarrett, 2002).
There are activities which have been developed as participatory tools for use by playworkers. Such games have been devised mainly for use by older children and adapted for the under fives. Ranking games (Tolfree, 1999; O Kane 2000) are one example where children are given a set of cards or photographs of activities or

issues to rank in order of importance. A fishing game has been used (NEYN/London Borough of Redbridge 1998) where children use a rod and magnet to choose 'happy' or 'sad' faces as a tool to express their feelings.

3.6 Multi-sensory approaches

There are a range of techniques for listening to young children which shift the balance away from the written or spoken word to approaches which focus on visual or multi-sensory methods.

3.6.1 Cameras

Cameras and photographs have been used in several research projects and consultations with young children. This has included activities where children have taken their own photographs of important places and people in their pre-school setting (Gadd and Cable, 2000; Clark and Moss, 2001). The 'London on your doorstep project' (Children's Society/ Save the Children 2001) used children's photographs as one tool to find out about their experiences of the wider environment. Several Danish studies (e.g. Staunaes, 2000; Rasmussen,1999) have asked children to take photographs as a starting point for interviews. The photographs also serve as a representation of children's experiences which might not be easily articulated in other ways. Other projects have used photographs taken by adults as a stimulus for exploring young children's views (Warming 2002a and b).
(see Appendix C: Danish Review for details).

The action researcher worked with young children to gather their impressions of their pre-school settings by asking what were the important places. In this instance the researcher took the photographs as instructed by the children. The photographs were then used as a further talking point with the children. Case Study Four

3.6.2 Tours and mapmaking

These techniques have been adapted from participatory approaches used in International Development, known as Participatory Appraisal. Such methods have been devised to enable non-literate communities to articulate their local knowledge of an area and so engage with the development process (Johnson, et al., 1998). Tours involve young children taking researchers or other adults on a guided walk around their pre-school setting (Clark and Moss, 2001). Children can be in charge of the direction of the tour but also of how the experience is recorded, through children taking photographs, making drawings and audio-recordings. Photographs and drawings can be incorporated into maps by the children.

3.6.3 Audio-recording

Young children have been involved in making tapes about their pre-school experiences. In addition to the example of the tours given above, Cousins (1999) and Evans and Fuller (1996) both found young children to be fascinated by the sound of their own voice. Use of such equipment requires a period of familiarisation for the children.

3.6.4 Arts activities

Drawing and other arts activities have been used as another avenue for young children to express their views and experiences. In Redbridge (1998) children decorated plates with happy and sad faces and then used these on a tour of the facility to indicate how they felt about the environment and activities. Listening to children talking about their own drawings can reveal important insights into their understandings. There is little evidence of this being used as an element of consultations with young children about education and childcare.

Role play can be an important tool for young children to express their feelings (see structured activities above). This can be another way for listening to young children which can involve their whole bodies and all their senses. Cousins (1999), Finch (1998) and Miller (1997) have each demonstrated how powerful a tool drama can be for helping children to explore their experiences of their pre-school environment.

3.7 Conclusion

This extensive list of methods demonstrates the range of tools available for listening to young children. These techniques have been described in isolation above. However, most studies have adopted more than one method. The Danish review supports this finding:

> 'This is not just for the purpose of triangulation, but rather to create manifold perspectives and to listen more effectively.'
> (Warming, Appendix C: Conclusion).

4 Key themes

4.1 Introduction

The subjects for consultation and research about young children's experiences of education and childcare are wide-ranging. In some cases young children have been asked about their everyday experiences in the setting: the routines, the role of children and adults, the activities and the premises, (Miller 1997; Clark and Moss, 2001).

Other consultations have had a more specific focus. These have included:

- rules, discipline and resolving conflicts (Finch 1998; Miller 1997),
- outside play and planning new play areas (Miller 1999)
- moving to new premises (NEYN/Redbridge, 1998)
- transitions from nursery to school (Brooker 1996; Stephens et al., 2001)
- transitions from setting to setting within the same day (Cousins, 1999; Smith, 1999; Wiltsher 1999)

The studies undertaken to date, in the majority of cases have involved small groups of children. The exception to this is use of child conferencing by Dupree, Bertram and Pascal (2001)(see **child conferencing** above). Between 1994 and 1995 some 945 young children were interviewed using child conferencing as part of the Effective Early Learning Programme (EEL). The children were asked questions relating to five of the dimensions of quality identified in the programme: aims and objectives, learning experiences, learning and teaching styles, staffing and relationships and interactions.

Young children have raised the following key themes in the studies which have been undertaken to date:

4.2 The importance of friends

'The children saw their friends as a support system and talked about looking after their friends' (Daycare Trust 1998:18). Children talked about practitioners as well as other children being their friends (Clark and Moss, 2001). Warming observes (See Appendix C Danish review) that children's friendships often become a key theme when studying other issues as a result of listening to what is important for children (e.g. the BASUN project, Langsted,1994).

4.3 Food and drink

Children enjoyed taking responsibility for themselves and being able to get a drink when they wanted rather than having it brought to them at a particular time (Daycare Trust, 1998; Cousins, 1999)

Drinks are placed in small jugs so the children can help themselves.

Case Study One

Children under three can help themselves to snacks throughout the day. The chairs are designed so children under two can climb up to the table themselves.
Case Study Six

4.4 Creative Arts

These were the most popular activities identified by young children in the EEL programme **(**Dupree, Bertram and Pascal (2001). Children were asked 'what do you like doing best at nursrery?' When their answers were analysed the following areas emerged as the best activities: imaginative play (44%); creative activities (42%) and water, sand and playdough (25%).[2]

4.5 Outside play

Children often put the garden among their list of favourite activities (Daycare Trust, 1998; Cousins, 1999). Children in the EEL programme placed physical activities and outdoor play as among the best activities (24%) next to the creative arts (Dupree, Bertram and Pascal (2001: 11). Some children have expressed concern that they are not allowed to go out when and as much as they would like (Cousins, 1999).

4.6 The role of adults

Some young children have discussed liking adults who help them to do things and play with them (Daycare Trust 1998;Clark and Moss, 2001). Others have expressed a dislike of adults shouting or raising their voices (Wiltsher, 1999; Cousins 1999); in after school clubs children liked the fact that staff were less directive (Wiltsher, 1999). Children have also raised the importance of having adults to keep order and help them feel safe (Clark and Moss, 2001).
However the four year olds interviewed by Cousins (1999) expressed reservations about some of the ways power was exercised over them. Children disliked being hurried and not allowed to finish what they were doing or making and being told to tidy things away. These sentiments were echoed by some of the young children in the EEL programme. For example:

> 'I don't like having to stop.'
> (Dupree, Bertram and Pascal, 2001: 13)

4.7 Achievements
There have been several recorded examples of young children's expressed pleasure in seeing evidence of their achievements in their pre-school settings. Children in the Daycare Trust consultation were proud of things they had made themselves (Daycare Trust 1998). Three and four year olds photographed their drawings and pages from their profile books which recorded their progress (Clark and Moss, 2001).

[2] The children often indicated more than one 'best activity' as the percentages indicate

4.8 Transitions

Newcomers (to out of school clubs) often felt nervous on their first day and would have been reassured by some information beforehand on how out of school clubs differ from school or a guided tour of the place and someone to look after them for a while (Smith 1999; Wiltsher 1999)

Brooker interviewed children in a reception class about school. She found that though looking forward a great deal to school, they already saw it as a place where their own preferences (for creative play) would take second place to the perceived adult preferences for academic learning (Brooker, 1996). The longitudinal study by Stephens (2001) into transitions to primary school highlighted some children's negative feelings about the change from a self-directed manner of working in nursery to a more directed approach in school.

4.9 Conclusion

Caution must be taken in reaching general conclusions about what 'young children' have revealed as important themes, as a result of small numbers of studies undertaken. Young children are as diverse a group of individuals as any section of society classified on the basis of age. However, as the views and experiences of young children have been underrepresented until recently, it is important to draw together those accounts which have been made available.

Further studies are needed to broaden the range of young voices which are being heard, to include for example more of the experiences of young children with special needs.

5 **Inclusive practice**

5.1 Introduction

The review has found little evidence of research and consultation activities which have focused on listening to young children with special needs or young children from minority ethnic groups about every day issues in education and childcare.

5.2 Children with special needs

A study by Save the Children (forthcoming) has sought to redress the paucity of studies in this area. The Choose project has worked with children from 18 months old to four years six months in a day nursery, family centre and a Sure Start programme. The project has worked with practitioners to increase the children's day to day involvement in their early childhood environment

One study (Wiltsher 1999b) carried out with older children with special needs indicated that when staff gave children more choice and asked their opinions they found that they had very often underestimated their abilities.

There has been some pioneering work carried out by the specialist training and consultancy organisation Triangle using participatory methods with children with special needs. The publication 'Learning on all channels' and 'Tomorrow I go' illustrate how a range of tools including the use of photographs and interactive games can reveal important details for practitioners and parents about children's views and experiences. This approach is an important example for practitioners and researchers seeking to listen to younger children with special needs.

It is necessary to consider both aspects of listening to and involving young children with special needs: everyday listening and consultations. The impact of listening will be of limited value if this group of children are consulted about wider policy but are not listened to about the details of their daily lives.

Tom needs to take daily medication. There are photographs of him taking his medicine in his profile book. Now he goes to fetch his profile book when it is time for his medicine. He opens up the book at the page and says: 'It makes me sad and then its ok'. The documenting has helped to give status to the routine and has empowered him to play an active part in the process.

Case Study Two

5.3 Children from minority ethnic groups

There have been few documented accounts of studies which have focused on listening to and involving young children from ethnic minority groups. Lancaster (forthcoming) trained a group of older children with experiences of being refugees, to act as consultants with younger children from similar backgrounds.

Sure Start Great Yarmouth (Case Study Four) have a high number of refugee

children in their programme. The consultative work with children and parents will enable the views and experiences of children from diverse minority ethnic groups to effect change in how the programme is delivered.

The review from the Netherlands (see Appendix D) describes how policymakers there are concerned to increase the number of children from minority ethnic groups who have access to early years provision. There has been an emphasis in the Netherlands on developing methods for listening to and involving children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.4 Conclusion

A number of imaginative approaches are being used for gathering the views and experiences of young children with special needs. These methods are most effective when they result in empowering children in everyday routines. There remains a need for more research and development work into inclusive practices in young children's participation which opens up channels of communication for children from diverse communities and with different abilities.

6 Impact

6.1 Introduction

This section moves on from discussing methods to focus on what has been documented about the results of listening to young children. The impact of listening can occur at different levels:

- Individual level
- Institutional level
- Strategic level, regional or national

6. 2 Individual level

The initial impact of listening occurs at an individual level starting with the impact on the children themselves, on those practitioners directly involved and the possible impact on the children's parents.

6.2.1 Impact on young children

Everyday experiences can change. The most direct impact of listening to young children can be that practical details may change. This may mean that children are allowed to do new things (Miller, 1997): for instance water is made available all the time and children are allowed to take as much or little food as they want rather than having it heaped on their plates; or children plan their activities using a clock (NEYN, 1998; Brooker 1996) or the environment is planned and new strategies and activities introduced to minimise conflict (Finch, 1998)

A child in the playgroup had a question for one of the leaders: 'Why is it that we have a Father's Day and a Mother's Day but not a Children's Day?'
The playgroup leader asked if the children would like to have their own 'Children's Day'? They were very positive about the idea and worked with the adults to plan the day.

Case Study One

Raising self-esteem. Researchers and practitioners have commented on the impact of listening to and involving young children on their confidence and developing self-identity (Lansdown, 1995; Bartlett, 1999; Lancaster (forthcoming). This can be of particular benefit to shy or withdrawn young children.

Cathy was a shy child who had taken a long time to settle in the nursery. Her keyworker commented on how Cathy's confidence had grown during the period she was involved in the listening project. She had taken great pleasure in taking her own photographs and making her maps. These she was happy to show with great pride to her parents and keyworker.

Listening to Young children: the Mosaic approach (2001: 60)

Developing skills and understandings. Young children may also gain new skills as their confidence builds. These skills may be social as discussed above or practical skills related to the methods used for listening e.g. in photography or using audio equipment.
Listening to young children may also give them space in which to reflect on their early years experience and in so doing, help them to process and understand what is happening.

> 'It's not so much a matter of eliciting children's preformed ideas and opinions, it's much more a question of enabling them to explore the ways in which they perceive the world and communicate their ideas in a way that is meaningful to them.' (Tolfree and Woodhead, 1999:2)

This is in keeping with Vygotsky 's concept of language (1978) as not only a means of communication for children but a means of organizing their ideas and understandings.

Children's own views on the impact of listening
Young children's views on being consulted have seldom been recorded. This information could give a valuable insight into approaches being tried. These views could be gathered as a routine part of every evaluation and research project with young children to inform future debate.

6.2.2 Impact on practitioners

Practitioners can feel *enabled* by the process and encouraged to make the process of participation continuous (NEYN 1998; Stirling Council 2000).

> 'Staff were required to rethink their assumptions on children's capacity to engage in decision-making and service planning. By promoting a children's rights approach, the door was left open to further engagement on participation and to exploring other ideas.'
> Save the Children representative
>
> 'Its now a part of how we work day by day'.
> Headteacher
> Case Study Three

Reciprocal process. Working in a more democratic way with young children can relieve practitioners from the burden of needing to know all the answers.
This impact of listening has been recorded by practitioners who were involved in the Effective Early Learning (EEL) programme:

> 'One of the most rewarding aspects of our involvement with the EEL project has been the children's responses to the interview schedules. Their views on the way the school is run, the teacher's jobs and the
> parent's involvement have been expressed very naturally and with great insight. They also come up with some surprises and made us think.'
> (School Enquiry and Research Newsletter (2000) quoted in Dupree, Bertram and Pascal 2001: 19).

Warming notes (Appendix C: Conclusion) that the impact of numerous studies on listening to children's perspectives in Denmark has been to stimulate reflection and discussion.

Child protection. There is the possibility that listening to young children may lead to some children sharing serious concerns with practitioners. This is more likely to be the case if listening is embedded in everyday practice and if listening to children is not limited to adult-led agendas. Such circumstances will be rare but reflect the responsibilities which come from taking children seriously.

6.2.3 Impact on parents
Increased awareness of children's competencies. Evidence from research and the case studies suggest that parents can be surprised by their children's abilities to express their views. Children may, for example demonstrate competence in using different media. Some parents of children involved in the development of the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) were surprised and pleased in witnessing their three year old children's abilities in using a camera. Such re-evaluating can help parents to raise their expectations and reconsider their relationships with their children.

Parents were taken back by how capable their young children were of taking part in an interview and sharing their perspectives with another adult. Case Study Four

6.3 Institutional level
Opportunity to reflect on practice. The sharing of children's perspectives can provide the chance for organisations to reconsider the relationships they have established with young children as well as to rethink routines and activities. This process of reflection can be 'contagious' in a multi-agency environment, with changes to one organisation's practice leading to changes in neighbouring organisations.

The work of the action researcher in the integrated Sure Start team has led to other agencies considering the possibilities of new ways of listening to young children in the family support services they provide.

Case Study Four

Changes to policies. The definition used at the beginning of this paper referred to consultations as 'ways of seeking the views of children as a guide to action' (Borland, 2001). Listening to young children should result in reflection on practice which will at times lead to a change in policies. These may be small changes in everyday routines (see above) or wider changes such as to the structure of the day. This impact of listening to young children requires further study.

Changes to the design of a new environment. Young children can make insightful comments about their perspectives on indoor and outdoor spaces (Clark and Moss, 2001). This is a source of little used expertise in this country which architects and landscape architects could use in the development of new environments. There is evidence form Denmark (Nielsen, 1993) of an architect talking with children about their wishes and making drawings of their dreams about the outdoor environment and interior decoration.

Parents and children had talked to the artist about how the children were fascinated by bright lights. After discussions between the artist and the architect sparkly lights have been included in the building plan, at skirting board height.

Case Study Three

6.4 Strategic level

The impact of listening to young children at a strategic level is the least documented. This third level relates to how to make the lives of young children more visible to policy makers and planners.

Disseminating of local projects. There is the possibility of an initiative reaching a strategic audience having had an impact at an individual and institutional level. One example (Case Study Two) is the training programme by Save the Children which was collated into a training pack and recommended at a national level to EYDCPs.

Special consultations. There have been a limited number of initiatives to bring the views and experiences of young children to the attention of strategic planners. The 'London on our doorstep' project (Childrens Society/Save the Children) was unusual in being commissioned to gather the views of children in early years provision in a particular locality. This project fed into the Greater London Assembly discussions about a Children's Strategy.

There have been a number of interesting initiatives in Denmark, two of which are described here.

The Minister of Social Affairs invited all Danish children in 1994 to send her letters and tell her about their lives in words and pictures. 3,300 children responded. Over 400 responses were from children under six years old. Some were from individuals, others were from whole daycare institutions. The material was handed over to the Children's Council. This resulted in a publication and a travelling exhibition of large posters (Heering, 1996)

The Children's Council has a telephone line where children can record their opinions on any issue they identify. The Children's Council has established eight advisory groups whose members are all children. The members of one group are from an early years institution. The practitioners in this setting have experimented with different techniques such as role play and group discussions to gather young children's views about the given subjects.
(Backe, 1996)

6.5 Negative impacts of listening and consulting?

Lack of purpose and commitment. The impact of listening to and involving young children will depend on the context of the listening. It is of particular importance in the case of consultations that practitioners and policy makers are clear about the purpose of the exercise. There is also a need for a commitment at a policy and practice level to implementing the findings. There is the possibility that listening to young children's views and not responding could have a negative impact:

> 'Asking children what they think, but taking it no further will send a message that there is little real interest in their view.' (Mooney and Blackburn 2002).

This could have a long term effect on their willingness to engage as older citizens:

> 'Also if children do not see any concrete results then they quickly lose enthusiasm for participation and all the initiatives to involve them will fizzle out' (Peeters et al., 2001)

Consultation or surveillance? There is the risk that the drive to listen to and consult children and young people becomes another invasion of their time, thoughts and spaces rather than an empowering process. There is an irony that the more imaginative the methods become for listening to young children, the greater the possibility of invading their private worlds. Listening to young children places a great responsibility on the adults involved. There will always be the need for discussion and negotiation with children about what material is private knowledge, what can be shared at an individual level with practitioners and parents and what ideas can be discussed more widely at an institutional or strategic level.
There is the need for researchers, practitioners and policy makers to safeguard young children's privacy and to respect the right to be silent.

6.6 Conclusion

There is more evidence on the impact of listening at an individual level on children and on practitioners than has been recorded about the effect on parents.
There is less material available about the impact at an institutional and a strategic

level. More research and development work is required into how young children's experiences and expertise can be brought into the political arena at a regional and national level.

7 Emerging issues

7.1 Introduction

This paper has drawn together material from the literature reviews and case studies to identify the methods used for listening to young children and the impact of listening and consultation. This final section combines these findings
with points raised by participants at the invited seminar to suggest emerging issues for practice, policy and research.

7.2 Practice

Bridging the gap between listening and learning. One of the challenges for early years practitioners is how to bring their knowledge about the ways young children think and communicate into debates around consulting children and children's participation. Nutbrown encourages early years practitioners to take a lead in this when she talks about 'respectful educators-capable learners':

> 'Adults with expertise who respectfully watch children engaged in their process of living, learning, loving and being are in a better position to understand what it is these youngest citizens are trying to say and find ways of helping them to say it.' (Nutbrown,1996:55)

Listening and observing young children has been fundamental to early years practice since the pioneers of early childhood practice (Smidt, 1998: 108). This principle can enable early years practitioners to provide environments which support everyday listening to young children. There may be a need however to help practitioners reflect on these skills in the light of emerging debates about oung children's participation. Once confident in these abilities practitioners could be well placed to help make the lives of young children more visible at a strategic level (see 6.4 above)

Reciprocal process. Listening to young children is time-consuming. This is not a process which can be rushed or fits well in a culture driven by targets. There is also the need to consider how practitioners are listened to within the early years provision in which they work. An environment which respects and listens to the views of three year olds needs also to respect and listen to the views of sixteen year olds on the staff or people of whatever age and position.

Everyday practice. Debates around learning, listening and consulting need to be considered together. Listening to young children should not rely on a 'bolt on' activity but be part of everyday practice (Marchant and Kirby, forthcoming). This presents a particular challenge for those involved in consultations. How can these focused periods of listening become part of the established culture of how an organisation relates to young children: a culture of listening.

The form this listening takes will depend on the context of the early years provision in question. This may be different for a playgroup and a Sure Start programme, for example but certain principles can be established.

Principles of listening. There is need for debate about principles on which to base listening and consulting with young children. One starting point for discussion is the framework adopted by Clark and Moss (2001:5)

- Participatory
  - treats children as experts and agents in their own lives
- Adaptable
  - allows practitioners freedom to adapt to their early years setting
  - can be used for a variety of purposes including looking at lives lived rather than knowledge gained or care received
- Multi-method
  - recognises the different 'voices' or languages of children
- Reflexive
  - includes children, practitioners and parents in reflecting on meanings
  - addresses the question of interpretation
- Embedded into practice
  - listening which seeks to establish a climate of listening.

Widening the debate. Current practice in listening to children is spread among a multitude of different disciplines and settings. This review has focused on young children's views of education and childcare. There is a growing body of expertise and experience in listening to older children about such topics as legal issues, the environment and health. There is also expertise to call on from the established fields of Community Arts, Community Development and International Development which have the potential to enrich and diversify the growing knowledge base about listening to young children.

Policy

Training implications for early years practitioners. Issues around listening, consultation and children's rights need to be discussed as part of initial teacher training and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQ). There are in-service training implications for early years practitioners and managers. The review of the EYDCP audits suggests that EYDCPs need to be the focus of training initiatives in this field. Similarly, the limited evidence gathered from Sure Start Regional Managers for this reviews suggests that listening to young children could be the focus for training across Sure Start programmes.
However there is a note of caution from the Danish perspective about the models of training needed. Practice has been changed as a result of reflection and discussion 'rather then the easy implementation of some strict recommendations or training material' (Warming, Appendix C: Conclusion).

Inspection. There needs to be further discussion about appropriate ways to include the views and experiences of young children in the inspection process. There is the risk that quick, short hand methods will be adopted which fail to tap into the competent ways young children can express their points of view.

Appropriate representation. Young children's views cannot be represented so easily at a strategic level than older children and young people. One reason is that participation at a strategic level is bound up with adult-led structures for debate. A national conference is not a conducive environment for three year olds to attend in person. However, imaginative ways need to be discussed for bringing young children's perspectives to this audience.

Initiatives. During this period of rapid change in early years provision, it is important that listening to and consulting with young children becomes a central feature of new government initiatives. The role of young children in the proposed Children's Centres should be discussed and their on-going involvement in planning, maintaining and reviewing services be considered.

Resources. There are budgetary implications for implementing a participatory approach to providing early years services. This relates to the process factors referred to above and also to the resource implications of taking young children's views seriously.

Research

Individual level. There have been small number of studies carried out into young children's views and experiences of education and childcare. More studies should be undertaken which draw on children's expertise. These include:

- experiences of different types of early years provision. One identified gap is young children's views of childminding.
- young children's perspectives on the indoor and outdoor environment, particularly at a time of new building programmes in the early years.

There is a particular need to explore different methodologies for including the experiences of young children with special needs.
Impact studies should include children's perspectives on being consulted. This could include retrospective accounts from older children about their early years experiences (Ramussen and Smidt, 2001). This should be in addition to further work into the impact on practitioners and parents.

Institutional level. Comparative studies are needed which identify approaches to listening to young children in early years provision in other countries. These exchanges should be within the UK and within Europe. The literature review suggests that practice in Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy could be considered together with practice in Scotland and England.

Strategic level. There is a particular need for research and development work into appropriate ways for making the lives of young children visible at a strategic level. Such research would consider how expertise in everyday listening could be used in new ways to promote the views and experiences of young children, but at the same time not to exploit them.

Summary
This review has been undertaken at a time of growing interest in listening to young children by practitioners, policy makers and academics. The review has highlighted examples of everyday listening and consultations in a range of early years provision. The review has indicated the types of methodologies available but also the increasing body of evidence into the impact of listening.
Young children will best be served by changes to policy and practice which remain alert to their differing perspectives and interests as well as their needs.

Appendix A Methodology

1. Literature review

The review of literature began by developing a list of key terms for the study. These terms formed the basis for the subsequent searching of electronic databases and other sources described below.

1.1 Development of key terms for the study:

- Children's Rights**: autonomy, empowerment, participation, citizenship**
- National Policy
- **Theory of Childhood:** sociological
- **Research:** empirical, ethics, methods
- **Childhood attitudes**: views, perspectives
- **Consultation Initiatives:** local authorities, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs), Greater London authority (GLA)
- **Methods of Consulting:** art, drama, questionnaires
- **Methods of Communication:** talking to, listening to children, observation
- **Theories of learning:** curriculum, pedagogy, programs
- **Settings:** pre-school, day nursery, nursery school, school, out of school/wraparound, transitions
- **Special needs:** disability, culture, language, religion, disturbed children
- **Practice guidelines**
- **Training Materials**
- **Impact/outcomes**

1.2 A search was made of paper sources in the Institute of Education library and the National Children's Bureau (NCB). The NCB library produces a bibliography on the subject of consulting children, which provided the starting point for this review.

1.3 Searches of academic electronic databases included the British Education Index (BEI), International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS) and Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). The following sources were not obtainable: the Australian Education Index and the Canadian Education Index in electronic form.

The table below shows the search history, using the key terms and related terms.

Table 1: **Search history for Listening to Children Literature Review**

No	Key words	IOE catalogue		BEI		ERIC 1980 to current		IBSS	
		S	R	S	R	S	R	S	R
1	Young children	299	30	25	1	18236		309	11
2	Children's views	9	0	0		0		0	
3	Children's Perspectives	17	2	3	0	0		4	0
4	Consulting children	10	0	1	1	0		0	
5	Pre-school children			25	1			0	
6	Pre-school education							0	
7	Childhood attitudes	1	0	156	2	1457		0	
8	5+6+7					69	11	0	
9	Daycare			5	3	10231		0	
10	9+7					177	16		
11	Childcare							4	0
12	Pre-school programs								
13	Nursery school	303	0						
14	Nursery education	20	1						
15	Children's perceptions			5	2				
	Total		33		10		27		11

NB: **S** = search revealed; R = relevant sources

Key to bibliographic directories

IOE = Institute of Education
BEI = British Education Index
IBSS = International Bibliography of Social Sciences
ERIC = Education Resources Information Centre

1.4 An important source of material on listening to and consulting with young children rests with voluntary sector organisations. The reviewer made contact with a number of these organisations with expertise in carrying out consultations – the

National Early Years Network(NEYN), Save the Children the Children's Society and Coram Family for access to their bibliographies and grey literature on the subject of listening to and consulting with children.
The reviewer was also given access to unpublished material on listening to young children being developed by Coram Family. The forthcoming publication will contain resources for parents and practitioners on listening to young children, including a reader and CD Rom.

1.5 The material gathered in the review was supplemented by a search of current Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) audits for examples of consulting children (see Appendix E for details.)

1.6 The search results have been compiled into a bibliography using the bibliographic package, Endnote for future use.

2. Case studies

2.1 The question of how to identify good practice in this field is open to discussion. The selection criteria we have used has been developed from the literature and with reference to continuing work in the field, in particular the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Working Group on listening to young children.

2.2 The following criteria were used to select the case studies:

- Young children's views are respected and listened to
- A range of methodologies are used to listen to young children's views including visual and non-verbal tools
- Young children's opinions are sought about day to day matters as well as for specific consultations e.g. for new equipment or changes to the environment
- Young children receive feedback about any changes to practice which result from their involvement
- Special focus has been given to including the views and experiences of children with special needs
- Range of preschool settings to include playgroups, nursery classes, Early Excellence Centres and Sure Start programmes. One EYDCP will also be featured
- Range of geographical locations to include inner city, rural, coastal and suburban

2.3 The selection process began by identifying early years settings through the literature and EYDCP childcare audits. This was supplemented by contact with the following individuals

- Key informants (8) to include representatives of national early years organisations, arts organisations and academics
- Sure Start Regional Managers to identify programmes which are engaging young children in the design and review of services.

2.4 The key informants whose expertise contributed to the selection of case studies were:

Sue Owen, Early Childhood Unit, National Children's Bureau
Kathryn Humphries, Learning through Landscapes
Jo Belloli, Polka Theatre, Wimbledon
Chris Pascal, National Evaluator, Early Excellence Centres
Celia Burn, Sure Start Regional Manager
Julie McLarnon, Children's Society
Nicky Road, Save the Children
Eva Lloyd, National Early Years Network

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Appendix C Danish Review

Literature review on listening to young children: views and experiences of childcare, education and services for families

Hanne Warming

Introduction

In Denmark, most young children are taken care of outside their home for most of the day, as both their parents are employed. This is especially true of children from three years onwards (88%[3]). For children under three years the rate is 57%[4], and for children under 1 year the rate is 15 %[5], owing to maternity leave, parental leave and waiting lists. On average Danish children under the age of 16 years spend around 37 hours a week in day-care institutions and schools[6]. Thus in quantitative terms, Danish children are highly institutionalised. However, from a more qualitative perspective concerning everyday life in the institutions, this picture must be modified as from an international perspective, Danish day-care institutions appear, comparatively speaking, not to be very institution like. Thus both Teresa Harms and Judith Wagner characterise the Danish day-care institutions as more homelike and cosy with close child - adult relationships, and where a high priority is given to children's play and self-management (Harms 1997, Wagner 1997).

Historically, the Danish childcare institutions have been more oriented towards education especially during the seventies and to some extent the eighties. In this period the so-called "structured pedagogic" was the most dominating pedagogical approach. This focused on how the young child – by virtue of the intervention from adults - could be prepared for the "real world", and could be developed into a competent school child. In the day-care institutions this was achieved through scheduled activities and goal oriented organisation of children's daily life. During the eighties and nineties a critical attitude to this pedagogical approach developed, and several pedagogical development projects relating to children's self-management were initiated[7]. Today, most of the institutions prioritise, to some extent, children's self-management or participation in decision making, in addition, a great deal of emphasis is placed on holistic development through play rather than having scheduled activities throughout the day. The purpose being to develop certain capacities and skills (Vejleskov 1997, Broström et.al. 1997a & b, Broström & George 1997). Still, it is an ongoing discussion politically as well as in the institutions, whether the pedagogic - through more scheduled educational activities - should focus more on preparing the young children for school.

[3] 2001. Source: Danmarks statistik: http//www.statitikbanken.dk
[4] 2001. Source: Danmarks statistik: http//www.statitikbanken.dk
[5] 2001. Source: Danmarks statistik: http//www.statitikbanken.dk
[6] Source: Reksten & Jørgensen 1996
[7] Many of these development projects were part of the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs' project "Children's active co-operation in society" in the-mid nineties. Some of these are reported in Larsen & Sigsgaard 1981, Andersen & Kampmann 1988, Wiborg 1989a & b, Kristiansen 1991, Paulsen 1992, Bayer 1995, Kilt et.al. 1995, Hare & Bayer 1996, Fisker 1996a & b, Gundelach 1996, Graversen et.al. eds.1996, Madsen ed.1996, Sigsgaard et.al. 1998, Andersen 2000

Danish children, typically, first attend school when they reach the age of six. However, their parents in conjunction with the day-care institution and the school can choose to let them start the year before or the year after. The child's first year at school is spent in a so-called pre-school class (Kindergarten class). Some years ago, there was usually no "proper" teaching in the pre-school class. Today, there is some teaching. Furthermore, many schools operate from what is called "common settling in", which means that the pre-school class, first class, and second class are periodically taught and work together. For these reasons, pre-school will probably become obligatory in the future. These young children attend school for approximately four hours a day. After school is over, the children typically go to a day-care institution or are taken care of by pedagogues at the school. As most children are in institutions all day long, there has been a discussion as to whether it would be a good idea to make "whole day schools" with a greater integration of play and education. The argument in favour of whole day schools is that it would mean that the children's life would be less fragmented, and that it would optimise learning conditions[8]. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that schools have more a tradition for discipline and less of one for children's self-management. From this point of view, a `whole day school´ implies a risk of increased discipline, educational colonisation, and instrumentalisation of children's play[9].

Review

Methods

Listening to young children's views can be done either directly by asking them questions and involving them in development tasks, or indirectly by observing them and/or leaving more room for self-management. Of course, one can also integrate the direct and the indirect methods. In this review, I will start out by discussing the indirect methods. Then I will turn to the more direct methods of asking the children, and I will finish by examining the integrated methods and the methods that involve the children. In this discussion I will report who has used the different methods and for what purpose (research or development/change of prasis) as well as the related epistemological considerations.

Participant observation

When participant observation is used as a method of listening to children's views, the focus of the observations is typically on how the children act and react in different situations. The goal is to get an insight into the children's motives, emotions, and thoughts in their everyday life (Kampmann 2000), to get an insight into the children's culture, including what is important for the children and their barriers for their self-management. Researchers such as Andersen & Kampmann (1988 & 1996), Diderichsen (1991), Ahlmann (1996, 1998a & b), Gulløv (1998), Jørgensen & Thyssen (1999), Gulløv & Bundgaard (2001), Thyssen & Hansen (2002) and Ottosen & Bengtsson (2002) have used this method adopting a peripheral membership role (Adler & Adler 1987), others including Andersen & Kampmann, Ahlmann and Gulløv & Bundgaard have extended this practice with the use of videotaping. The choice of this role is sometimes related to a focus on child - child interactions, on the children's culture without the participation (or disturbance) of adults. James, Jenks & Prout (1998) have termed this approached "the tribal child". This is also the approach of

[8] See Enoksen 1989, Holm & Lau 1998, Lau & Nielsen 1999
[9] See Raagaard 1996, Jensen 1997, Jensen 2000, Thorup 2002a & b, Raymond & Larsen 2002

Andersen & Kampmann (1988 & 1996) as well as Gulløv (1998), and to some extent, but not exclusively, in Thyssen & Hansen (2002), whereas for Diderichsen (1991), Ahlmann (1996, 1998a & b) and Jørgensen & Thyssen (1999) the child -adult relation is in focus. In Andersen & Kampmann's study (1996) and in Ahlmann's study (1996, 1998a & b) the physical environment is also investigated as an important factor for children's self-management. In all of these studies, the children's actions and interactions (either with other children or with adults) are at the centre of attention.
Diderichsen (1991), Ahlmann (1998a), Jørgensen & Thyssen (1999), Kragh-Müller (2000) and Nielsen (2001) emphasise emotional expressions as an important way to listen to and understand what the children tell us, especially regarding children who - because of their age or other reasons - can not express their views in a linguistically elaborate fashion. Furthermore Kragh-Müller (1994a) points to observation of children's play as a way to listen to these children.

In addition, practitioners have used observation as a method of listening to children's views, often in relation to experiments which involve leaving more room for children's self-management. In terms of methods, these observations often are inspired by Hedegaard's guidelines for observation of young children[10]. These focus upon what is important for the child: what does the child want, what does the child do and say, and how are these endeavours met. Thus this method is based on a contextualized and interactional understanding of the child, and the purpose is to replace the "diagnostical view on the child" with a child perspective on the conditions for the child's endeavours (Hedegaard 1994 &1996, Wang 1996).

Sometimes such projects start out from frustrations of the staff in the institutions. This was the case in the nursery, where Andersen and Kampmann (1988) did their first study of child culture[11], and this was the case in Thorsager kindergarten in Jutland (Kilt et.al. 1995). The frustrations can, for instance, concern the physical space of the institution, the level of noise in the institutions, too much stress and fragmentation during the day, too much fighting and many children crying and so forth. Often these problems are considered as something the staff can't do anything about because of unchangeable conditions. However, in the above institutions, the staff began to think of it as related to their use of the space and to their organisation of the everyday life of the children. Starting from this point they tried experimentally to do things in another way, and to observe how the children reacted. They became interested in what kind of change the children liked, what kind of change made them more happy, active, involved etc.
In other cases, the development projects have been inspired by research results (Andersen & Mehlbye), or initiated by the Children's Council or by the Ministry of Social Affairs[12].

Questionnaires and qualitative interviews
Only a few researchers have used interviews without integrating this method with

[10] For instance Klit et.al.1995, Graversen et. al. 1996, Madsen 1996, Sørensen 1996, and Holch & Olsen 1996.
[11] The story of the pedagogic development in this nursery can be read on www.studenterraadetsvuggestue.subnet.dk
[12] See for instance Bayer 1995, Fisker 1996a & b, Gundelach 1996,Graversen et.al eds. 1996, Madsen 1996

observations, and likewise the questionnaire is only used very rarely as a method of listening to children, and then only for older children. However, Andersen (2000) has used questionnaires for children aged 7- 15 asking them about school and leisure time, and Broström (2001) has used qualitative interviews asking the children a very few questions about their expectations concerning pre-school classes, and again a year later about their experiences of pre-school class. Broström used the children's pedagogues and teachers as interviewers, as he anticipated that the children would be more comfortable being interviewed by someone they knew. Finally, Warming (2002) has used qualitative interviews asking children aged 6-15 about their situation and experiences in relation to their parent's divorce and about the supervision of their parents regarding "divorced parentship". These interviews were quite extensive and lasted from half an hour to two hours. This study found that, in some cases, it was suitable either to play a little while talking, or to go for a walk and talk while walking. This experience corresponds to the experiences of social workers who work in the field of children and young people.

In some municipalities, questionnaires are used to test the well-being of the children in school. Typically, the questionnaire is followed up by brief individual interviews carried out by the teachers.

Whereas questionnaires and interviews are only very rarely used by researchers as a single method to listen to young children, qualitative interviews, and talks with the young children are often used in combination with participant observation, essay writing, or more empowerment oriented methods, however the interview is never used for children of less than three[13]. The motivation for the combination of participant observation and qualitative interviews typically is that the observations can help the interviewer to ask relevant and concrete questions, whilst the interviews can qualify the interpretation of the observations. Some of the interviews are carried out as individual interviews, others are carried out as group or friend interviews. The motivation for group interviews and friend interviews is an attempt to provide more space for the child's perspective and to make the situation more comfortable for the child (Sigsgaard 1993, Hviid 1999). Furthermore, these considerations can be followed by letting the children choose the place for the interview (Sigsgaard 1993), or by letting the child herself choose the friend for the friend interview (Hviid 1999).

In addition to interviews and pure participant observation, Kragh-Müller use methods inspired by play-therapy as a way of including the children's emotions and helping children to articulate thoughts which they are hardly unable to verbalise, in the interviews and observations (Kragh-Müller 2000). Nielsen is more inspired by the field of anthropology. She uses reflection on fieldwork experiences (for instance reflection on her failures, amazement and bewilderment, emotions in different situations) and she relates these to identification with different people (adults or children) and difficulties of adopting what Mandel (1991) has called the "least-adult-role". It is not pure observation, but reflexive participant observation which has the particular goal of trying to figure out how life must be for the children in a concrete setting, and how one can successfully invite the children to talk about it (Warming

[13] Thus, qualitative interviews combined with participant observation are used for instance by Larsen & Sigsgaard (1981), Sigsgaard (1993), Andersen, Gitz-Johansen & Kampmann (2002) and in combination with other methods by Kragh-Müller (1997), Hviid (1999), Nielsen (2001) and Sigsgaard (2002).

2002a & b). During her stay in a day-care institution, she took photos of the children's everyday life, and these photos were used as a starting point for some of her conversations with the children. However, more often it is the children who start the conversation, as they know that she is interested in learning about children's lives and viewpoints, a subject about which they have a lot to say (Nielsen 2001).

Rasmussen & Smidt (2001) have used essay writing in combination with retrospective interviews. They asked 46 young people to write essays about their memories of their life in kindergarten, and afterwards they interviewed some of them either in groups or individually on basis of the essays. Furthermore, they invited the young people to visit their old kindergarten together with the researchers, and talk about the memories at the place in question.

Children as co-researchers

Some researchers have involved the children as co-researchers, however these have only been children of school age. One way to do this is to let children interview each other Hviid (1999) and Raymond & Larsen (2002). The epistemological considerations behind this method are that children because of their "inside-knowledge" might be able ask more relevant questions than adults. Another method is to invite the children to become reporters giving them a tape recorder. Hviid used this approach in her research project about the life of six to ten years old children in school and after school day care. The children who welcomed the invitation were instructed in the use of the tape recorder, and then they were encouraged to walk around in the after school recreation centre wherever they wanted, outdoors as well as indoors, and at places which meant something to them. They could tell about where they were, what was going on, and what this place meant to them. Some of the children chose to go on their own, others went in twos, and some in larger groups. Some children did all the reporting on their own; others interviewed some of the other children. The children were allowed to delete passages of their reports, however this possibility was little used (Hviid 2000).

A third method employed to involve children as co-researchers is to ask them to take photographs, and afterwards to make interviews using the photos as a starting point[14]. Staunæs (2000) and Rasmussen (1999) point out that the photos in addition to functioning as a pedagogical tool in the interviews, can also in themselves be regarded as representations of the children's views, and that the photo as a separate representation of the child's view might tell stories that can not so easily be told in linguistic terms. This method has been used with children from five years and up.

Finally, there is the method of involving the children as co-researchers - or in these cases maybe rather consultants - used in a pedagogic development project concerning children's participation in decision making in the municipality of Ballerup (Kristiansen (1991), Bayer (1995), Hare & Bayer 1996), and concerning the architecture of day-care institutions and schools (Nielsen 1993).
In the "Children's participation in decision making" project four children (aged 13-14 years) were engaged in a children's patrol, who visited some of the nurseries and kindergartens in Ballerup with the purpose of advising the pedagogical staff about how they - seen from a child perspective - could do better. The idea was that

[14] See Staunæs (1998 & 2000), Rasmussen & Smidt (2002) and Raymond & Larsen (2000)

children might critically recognise practices that the adults take for given, however the children's patrol shows that their consulting competence is also related to their memories of own experiences of being a child in a nursery or in a kindergarten (Kristiansen 1991).
In the project concerning architecture, the architect talked with the children about their wishes and the children are asked to make drawings of their dreams and fantasies about outdoor environment and interior decoration (Nielsen 1993).

Children as fellow citizens
Not just researchers and pedagogues, but also some politicians have tried to listen to children and to give children's point view a chance to be heard. Thus in 1994, the Minister of Social Affairs invited all Danish children to send her letters and tell about their life in words and pictures. 3,300 children responded, some individually, some in twos, and sometimes a whole day-care institution wrote together. 404 of the responses came from children aged 0-6 years. The entire material was handed over to the Children's Council (which consists of adults), and 250 of the letters (or parts of the letters) were selected in preparation for publication. Thus these selected contributions were published in a book as well as in large posters for a travelling exhibition (Heering ed. 1996).

As mentioned above, the Children's Council is made up of adults, however, they have established a phone line, where children can record their opinion on whatever issue they want. In addition, they have established eight advisory groups consisting of children, a total of 140 children, who are asked to reflect and respond on selected issues. One of these groups is made up of children from a kindergarten, the other groups consist of children of school age. The adults in the participating kindergarten have tried different methods to promote the children's reflections on the given issues, for instance by the use of short role play sessions as well as by use of group discussions (Backe 1996).

Key themes
The key themes of the research and development projects which listen to young children can be summarised as self-management, child-adult relationships, friendship, quality of life, school, architecture and outdoor environment. These themes will be developed below.

Self-management
Children's self-management, in the sense of children's own attempts to manage their lives and to develop competencies has been a key theme in many of the research projects as well as development projects[15]. These initiatives have pointed out how children are active in creating their own lives, and how they through their activities acquire competencies and create social relationships. The focus of the studies has been on how the physical environment as well as different pedagogical practices constrain and support the endeavours of the children. The structured pedagogic has been criticised seriously from this perspective. Thus it has been pointed out that the

[15] For instance in Andersen & Kampmann (1989 & 1996), Kragh-Müller ed. (1994) Ahlmann (1996 &1998b), Kinch-Jensen 1996, and Holch & Olsen (1996), but also in many other studies and development projects.

ambitions of the adults concerning the arrangement of activities, education and socialisation in practice often constrain children's self-management, and disturb the absorption in play and social relationships, and furthermore place stress on both the adults and children.

Child-adult relationship

The child-adult relationship seems to be a theme of growing interest. One issue is how can adults support the endeavours of children concerning self-management[16]. A second issue refers to power relations between children and adults. Thus Kragh-Müller (1994 a & b, 1997) focused on children's perspectives on talking to adults and children's conflicts in relations to adults. She points out that children are very often misunderstand, in relation to this. She criticises the "how-can-I-form-manage-and develop- the-child" attitude of adults, and recommends the adults to be more attentive to the importance of creating a good and trustful relationship with the child. Likewise Sigsgaard (2002) focused on 'telling off'. He asks, who is told most off, and how is this experienced by the children. He relates these issues to the pedagogic of the day-care institution and to the institutionalization of children.

There is an interest in child-adult relationships from a care and support perspective[17]. Here the key issue has been how the child's wishes and need for care and support is recognised and complied with by the teaching staff in the day-care institutions. In Sørensen (1996) the focus is upon how the staff can acknowledge and meet the children's ideas and interest in activities and learning, and in Jensen & Schou (1996), Damm (1996) and Rasmussen (1996) the focus is upon understanding children with different kinds of special needs.

Another area of interest has been the emotional dimension of the child-adult relationships. When studying children's quality of life in the day care institution and what are central life themes for the children, Nielsen (2001) found that some children miss their parents and significant others, especially their mothers. This can be a barrier to the children's engagement in the life in the day-care institution. This is confirmed by Rasmussen & Smidt's reports of young people about their time in day-care institutions (Rasmussen & Smidt 2001). Warming focuses on the child-adult relationship in relation to the parent's divorce. In this study she asked the children about their relation to both of the parents and about the divorce. She focused on their experience of being listening to by the authorities when they supervise and make decisions about whether the child should be together with the mother or the father, and about whether and how often the child should visit the other parent (Warming 2002).

Friendship

Children's friendships often seem to become a key theme as a consequence of listening to what is important for children, even when this is not the subject of the research. This was the case in the Basun-project (Dencik 1999) as well as in other research projects[18]. Realising the importance of children's friendships, Nielsen (2001), among others, focused on the different meanings of friendship as well as on

[16] See Kragh-Müller ed. 1994, Ahlmann 1998a and Sigsgaard et.al.1998

[17] Examples of this are Diderichsen (1991), Rosengren et.al 1996 and Jørgensen & Thyssen (1999)

[18] For instance Hviid (1999), Nielsen (2001), Rasmussen & Smidt (2002) and Raymond & Larsen (2002)

possibilities and constraints on (different types of) children's friendship in the day-care institution. Likewise, Andersen & Kampmann (1989 & 1996), Jørgensen & Thyssen (1999), Ottosen & Bengtsson (2002), Raymond & Larsen (2002) and Thyssen & Hansen (2002) also discuss possibilities and constraints for initiation and development of friendship in the day-care institutions.

Quality of life
The implicit or explicit aim of most of the studies trying to listen to young children has been to explore the quality of life or what "the good life for a child " is about. In both Sigsgaard's and Nielsen's studies, children's perceptions of "the good life" are the main research issue (Sigsgaard 1993, Nielsen 2001[19]). These studies deal with children's lives in day-care institutions and schools. Thus arenas such as family life, local community and cyberspace seem to some degree to have been overlooked from this perspective. Though children's quality of life in all these areas is touched upon by Rasmussen & Smidt (2002), it is not the focus of their study. Likewise, children's quality of life in the family and in day-care institutions and school is a side issue in Kragh-Müller's study (Kragh-Müller 1997).

School
Young children's perspectives on school have been explored in several ways. One way has been to investigate children's understanding of school or to focus on particular topics. Young children's perspectives on school emerged from a study of "out of school" issues by Hviid (1999). The same issue, was touched on by Rasmussen & Smidt (2002) as part of studying children's culture. In contrast, other studies have focused on particular issues. This is the case in Raymond & Larsen's study and Kragh-Müller and Sommers study of children's perception of the extension of the daily school hours and of the integration of play and learning (Sommer & Kragh-Müller 2002, Raymond & Larsen 2002). The difference between children's expectations about joining a pre-school class and their subsequent experiences has been another focus of research (Broström 2001). In Andersen et.al (2002) the school is studied from the perspective of ethnicity. They find that 'ethnicised' or 'racialised' attitudes and differentiation are not very common, however they do see signs of inter-ethnic hierarchies developing.

Architecture and outdoor environment
Young children's views on architecture in the sense of how should schools and day-care institutions be built or re-built, 'what are the children's wishes for the organising of the rooms and for the outdoor environment?' have been key issues in the work of the architect Aase Eriksen (Nielsen 1993). In addition, Andersen & Kampmann's (1989, 1996) and Ahlmann's (1996, 1998b) study the architecture – both indoor and outdoor - as important in relation to children's self-management including their becoming absorbed in play and their development of competencies (Jensen 1994). In Rasmussen & Smidt (2001), the physical environment - indoor and outdoor - is discussed concentrating on use and power relations. Thus in this study too, the places which are forbidden for children, and the limitations on the children's free movement became an issue.

Finally, in some pedagogical development projects the architecture has also been a

[19] In Warming 2002b this study about children's perception of life quality is reported in English.

key issue either in co-operation with researchers or architects, or as in Thorsager Kindergarten as a consequence of the pedagogical staff's frustrations about too much noise and too many children crying and fighting. Here the issue of architecture was treated as a question of the social definition, use, and furnishing of the given rooms and buildings (Kilt et.al 1995).

Inclusive practice
Only a minority of these studies of listening to young children has an explicit goal to include children with special needs or children from different ethnic backgrounds and culture. Thus in most of the studies it is not reported whether the study includes these children or not, however this is not the case concerning the latest literature.

One exception is Ottosen & Bengtssons study, in which the social integration of children with special needs is investigated (Ottosen & Bengtsson 2002), however their methodology is not really a child perspective as their focus is upon the fulfilment of government-formulated pedagogical goals. Other exceptions are related to development of/reflection on the pedagogic praxis[20]. In these cases the listening to children is based on observations.

In Kragh-Müller's studies of children's perception of talking-out and children's conflicts in relation to adults, she includes so-called maladjusted children with behavioural difficulties. This is part of her motivation for using methods inspired by play therapy. She anticipates that these children are not used to being listened to in the sense of understood, and thus such issues as talking-out and conflicts may be very hard to talk about for these children (Kragh-Müller 1994c & 1997). Nielsen's (2001) study of young children's perceptions of the quality of life and their possibilities of having a good life in the day-care institution includes children who are identified by the staff as having a "frail personality" or as being maladjusted. It is a key issue in this study to compare these children's perception of the quality of life as well as their possibilities of having a good life in the day-care institution with the other children's perceptions and possibilities.

In Gulløv & Bundgaard's (2001) study, the focus is upon the social wellbeing of the children in two day-care institutions. Children from other ethnic backgrounds than Danish are the focus of this study. However, children from a Danish background are also included. In Andersen et.al (2002), which involved children aged 5-12 years, and in Staunæs (1998) , which involved children aged 11-14, ethnicity was the focus, and the inclusion of children from different ethnic backgrounds is central to their methodology.

Impact
Studies of children's self-management seem to have had considerable influence on the development of the pedagogical practice, and especially the development projects in the Danish day-care institutions. However, the interest in children's self-management and democratisation of adult-child relations is also connected to a general change in the images of children and childhood. Furthermore studies on the importance of the relationships with other children, for instance the Basun-project seems to have had an impact on the pedagogical practice and thinking. The most

[20] Reported in Jensen & Schou 1996 and Rasmussen 1996

important inspiration from these studies on listening to children appears to be the Methodological Hedegaards guidelines for observing pedagogical praxis from a child perspective.

Few development projects explicitly draw their inspiration from specific research projects on listening to children. However when reading about what they have done one can't help thinking about Andersen & Kampmann's research projects (1989, 1996), Diderichensen's research project (1991), Ahlmann's research projects (1996, 1998a & b) and Bayer's development project (Bayer 1995). This is the case, for example, when reading the report about the development projects in 15 day-care institutions in the municipality Svendborg (Madsen ed. 1996). Thus several institutions from this municipality report that the children now participate in decision-making about where, when, and together with whom they eat, with whom they will play together etc., and the reports use the word self-management. Another institution reports that they try to break with the "structured pedagogic" and to move away from stereotyped pedagogical adult roles in favour of committed adults displaying their own personalities. Likewise, the nursery "Byparken" reports that they tried to change their roles as adults from being regulating, directing, instructing and correcting the children towards being disposal, supportive, confirming, inspiring and supervising (Graversen et.al. eds.1996). Also in a report about a development project in "Thorsager Kindergarten" the inspiration from research into children's self-management as well as the relationship between architecture and children's self-management seems clear. Here they report a change in the arrangement of the institution and in the attitude of the adults from "area of forbidden" towards "area of allowed to" (Kilt et.al. 1995).

Research projects on listening to children appear to only have had minimal impact on broader development projects about the quality of day-care. Thus a new, ongoing, development project initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Association of Municipalities and the trade union of the pedagogues almost ignores knowledge about children's views on good child care institutions[21]. In an earlier development project concerning the quality of day-care (likewise initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Association of Municipalities and including four municipalities) they refer to Siggaard's project about "what is a good life for a six year old child" (Sigsgaard 1993), pointing to: 1) children's differentiation between nice adults and not so nice adults. Nice adults don't talk to, but rather with children, and the children don't have to ask for so much. 2) Children regard rules as constraining, and they appreciate flexible rules and consideration of individual wishes and needs. 3) Children need accepting and understanding adults (Andersen & Mehlbye 1997).

Guidelines

It is uncommon in Denmark to end research reports or development reports with exact guidelines for practitioners or training material, however there are some exceptions to this rule[22]. Kragh-Müller (ed.)(1994), Hedegaard 1994 and Samuelsson & Lindahl (2002) focus on understanding children's perspectives and

[21] The first phase of this project has been reported in *KID: Kvalitetsudvikling I Dagtilbud,* afrapportering fra 1. fase af KID-projektet, Socialministeriet 2001

[22] For instance Ahlmann (1998a), Jørgensen & Thyssen (1999), Ottosen & Bengtsson 2002 and Sigsgaard 2002

guidelines on listening to children.

Hedegaard (1994) promotes observation as a way to listen to and understand young children. She recommends formulating a clear and focused purpose for the observations, and then to do 2 or 3 observations lasting 10 - 15 minutes, where what is seen and heard is written down without evaluations, interpretations and conclusions. Afterwards she suggests carrying out a text analysis on basis of the following issues:
1) intentions, 2) troubles/conflicts, seen from the child's point of view,
3) characterisation of the interaction, and 4) capacities of the child, including new insights about motives, intentions or wishes of the child.

Ahlmann (1998a) and Samuelsson & Lindahl (2002) recommend videotaping of interactions between children and pedagogues as a way to develop pedagogue's ability to listen to and understand children. Ahlmann recommends that the video clips be analysed from the following perspectives: 1) which role is the pedagogue taking on (does the role imply the appreciation or not of the child)? 2) which image of the child is at work? and 3) is what is going on primarily the pedagogue's "project", the child's project or a common project? Similarly, Samuelsson & Lindahl in their book as well as on CD-ROM give examples of how video sequences can be analysed from a child's perspective.

In Kragh-Müller (ed.)(1994) the importance of a receptive and respectful attitude to the children is emphasised, including recognition of conflict of interests between the adult and the child. Furthermore, observation of the child's play is recommended as a method of listening to children with limited verbal skills. Similarly, Sigsgaard (2002) recommends a shift in pedagogic practices from judgement towards respect and appreciation.

Jørgensen & Thyssen's project is about care in the nursery with special attention to children starting in nursery. Jørgensen & Thyssen point out that the staff must be very attentive to these children, and that they must secure the involvement of the new child in activities while the parents are still in the nursery. They also point out that it is very important that the children have the feeling of being welcomed. Furthermore, they point to three aspects which should be considered by the pedagogues: 1) The child's need for emotional contact and time together with adults 2) The child's need for doing something - the child should have the possibility to manage on her own as well as to be motivated 3) The child's community is important, and the pedagogues must support the development of co-operative activities and friendship.

Ottosen & Bengtsson (2002) based on their study on the social integration of children with special needs warn that too much self-management is not appropriate regarding these children, as they seems to need the assistance and help of the adults to be integrated in activities with the other children. They also point out that it is important to comply with these children's need for stillness and for respite from being together with other children.

Many research reports end with a summary which includes pointers for further

political and pedagogical reflection[23]. Andersen & Kampmann (1989) point to the ambivalent character of pedagogical work. For example on the one hand it is seen as appropriate for pedagogues to be at the child's disposal, to familiarise themselves with the child and to act from this familiarisation. On the other hand, this carries the risk that children will not have sufficient input from adults (Andersen & Kampmann 1989). Diderichsen points to the engagement of adults as central for the children's wellbeing as well as for their engagement in learning about the world and developing social relations. She reflects that stress and lack of mental energy might result in children having insufficient care (Diderichsen 1991). In addition, Raymond & Larsen (2002) point out that children are ambivalent about the extension of school hours. On the one hand, children appreciate that this makes it possible to have more breaks and they like the integration of some play elements in the teaching. On the other hand, they are sorry that they don't have so much time for "free play" any longer. Furthermore, some of them - especially the boys - have difficulties concentrating for so many hours, and they get very tired. Finally, Raymond and Larsen state that out of school environments are more likely to encourage play and friendship – both very important from a child's perspective – than school (Raymond & Larsen 2002).

A further way to give some kind of guidelines is to provide examples of "best practice". This has been done in Larsen & Sigsgaard (1981), Sigsgaard et.al (1998) and in Sigsgaard (2002). Sigsgaard et.al. report about how different day-care institutions try to listen to children pointing to three important aspects: 1) involvement and intimacy, 2) trust and 3) reflection on the pedagogical practice.

Conclusion

Danish day-care and schools are in comparison with other European countries, not very 'institution-like'. This is, among other things, due to the impact of research and pedagogical development projects on listening to children. During the nineties, the approach of children's self-management and the relevance of children's points of view became quite powerful, and still is. However, this approach has never had official status.

Numerous methods have been used to listen to children, including participant observation, videotaping, role play about feelings, questionnaires, qualitative interviews, play-therapy inspired methods, taking photos and inviting children to be co-researchers by giving them a camera or a tape recorder. In most studies a combination of different methods is used. This it not just for triangulation, but to create different perspectives and to listen more effectively.

Key themes of these studies have been self-management, child-adult relationships especially in relation to care and power, the importance and conditions for friendship, quality of life, school, architecture and outdoor environment.

Only in few projects, has there been special attention given to including children with special needs and involving children from different ethnic backgrounds. In most of the projects involving listening to children, children with special needs and from different ethnic backgrounds are not an issue at all, however this might be in the

[23] For instance Andersen & Kampmann 1989, Diderichsen 1991, Sigsgaard 1993, Nielsen 2001 and Raymond & Larsen 2002

process of change.

In Denmark, there has been a rather intensive interplay between research and development projects. Research projects have inspired pedagogical development projects, and researchers have supervised and studied these projects. This is particularly the case with the self-management and care approach, and the broader approach of the relevance of children's point of views. This has had an impact on pedagogues, politicians and parents' way of thinking about their relationships with their children, and to some extent has influenced practice. This has not been in the form of the straight forward implementation of strict recommendations or training material. Instead, research on listening to young children has stimulated discussion and reflection - and in some cases has led to development projects.

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Appendix D

Listening to Young children: Netherlands Review

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Introduction

In Dutch day-care centres the emphasis is on playing together and undertaking group activities. From the age of three years there is a tendency to prepare the children for learning activities. The rules and activities become more structured and group activities are organised. They are sometimes even compulsory. This tendency is extended in the Primary schools. Until the eighties there were separate schools for small children (4-6 year) as well as different training schools for teachers for this age group. This changed and the former pre school teachers complained that children weren't allowed to be 'proper children' any more. The result is that children in this age group are being seen as 'regular school children'. Most of the developmental activities are focused on learning. For example parents visiting primary schools to make a choice for their 4-years-olds are told that gymnastics are in fact preparations for mathematics, building blocks are good for developing sentences etc etc. So we see scheduled activities and a goal-oriented organization of children's lives. This also includes out-of-school activities. These are being organized at school or at special centres from 3pm till 6.30pm. They provide for free play but increasingly for scheduled activities like lessons in sport, music etc. One example of this is the Committee for 'Day Arrangements' which was established in 2000 to make recommendations for a 'policy of free time for young children'. This committee is criticized for putting the interests of working parents above the interests of children, because they encourage day care for children, no matter what the conditions are. Currently, there is even an advertising campaign on television in which children have no time for free play because they are obliged to attend their 'playing' club.

Target groups and themes

An important concern of policymakers in the Netherlands is currently focused on the participation of ethnic minorities in pre school care in order to 'make up the differences' and reduce their deprived situation. This is despite the fact that research proves that preschool doesn't have that effect. Research and the development of methods for children's participation and listening to children also focus on children in disadvantaged situations as a target group. The concern of researchers and methodologists is not so much 'ordinary' children in 'ordinary' settings.

The theme of self management and participation affects mainly children of 12 year and older. Again the main goal is to optimize learning conditions or to become better citizens. Self management and participation are not very often being justified because of children's rights.
The theme of well being is seen as relevant mainly for disadvantaged children and ethnic minorities. The methods and research however are more about adult-child relationships than child-child relationships.

However there is a growing awareness that people -including children- are in fact consumers of education and care and have a right to formulate their needs. This is seen in the growing 'conference movement' as well as in the tendency for work to be

more demand-oriented, as family group conferences and listening-projects prove. This has two implications. The first is educating suppliers of care and education in order to listen to children in an open and unprejudiced way. Interviewing children and asking them how to solve problems or to improve their circumstances results in a switch that suppliers need to make in their orientation and attitude. They tend to adapt their supply to the needs of the children. Children become full participants on a more equal basis (van Beek, Delfos, Meerdink, Renders). The second implication is that clients become 'citizens' and make decisions within their own family and network (Prakken). The result is that providers change from 'dictators' to facilitators and that formal care is much less needed than informal care provided by families and networks around children.

Review
This section provides details about key texts which have informed current policy and practice in the Netherlands in relation to listening to children. Some studies have involved mixed age groups with older children. However, the range of projects indicate important themes in debates about children's participation of all ages, including young children. The texts are described under the following headings: methods, key themes, inclusive practice, impact of the research, guidelines about listening and conclusion.

1. Are you listening to me? Communicating with children from four to twelve years old) M. Delfos, SWP Amsterdam, 2000

Methods
- Conducting open questions-and-answer sessions with children
- Open questions-and-answer sessions to interview children

Key themes
- The development of children aged four to twelve
- Talking with children regarding professional help, method of questioning and education.
- Conversation techniques
- Conversing according to age
- Language of children
- Interviewing techniques with children
- Listening to children

Inclusive practice
The purpose of the book is to provide interviewing techniques which can be adapted for children between four and twelve years old with or without special needs and from different ethnic backgrounds.

Impact
Models for listening to children are described for use in the fields of family justice, youth counselling and education.

Guidelines
The book sets out a number of conditions for establishing good communication with young children, illustrated in the following table:

1. Put yourself on the same (eye) level as the child.
2. Look at the child when you're talking to it.
3. Alternate having eye-contact or not with the child while you're talking to it.
4. Put the child at ease.
5. Listen to what the child is saying.
6. Show the child with examples that what it says has effect.
7. Tell the child that it should tell you what it thinks or wants, because you have no way of knowing if it does not tell you.
8. Try to combine playing with talking.
9. Observe that you are breaking off the conversation and will continue it later when you notice that the child starts to withdraw.
10. When you have had a difficult conversation make sure that the child has a chance to compose itself again.

(M. Delfos, 2001: 78)

Conclusion
This book is not about asking if children have an opinion or information at their disposal, but on what kind of way we can talk to children to find out about their opinions and to seek information.

2. Missen we iets? Uit huis geplaatste kinderen over hun levensvragen (Are we missing something? Children in residential care and questions about their lives), F. van Beek, SWP Amsterdam, 2000

Methods
Interviewing children between 4 and 12 years old who live in a residential institution.
The interviewers, who are careworkers, have been trained in interviewing children.
The subject of each interview is about their lives.

Key themes
- questions about the lives of children
- conversations between the careworker and the children
- children's homes
- interviewing children
- residential institution

Inclusive practice
The only background characteristics to be examined are the ages of the children and their stay in a residential institution. However, children from different ethnic

backgrounds and culture are included in the sample. For instance, the book contains an example of a Turkish boy, Yilmaz (pg.18).

Impact
The ten residential institutions involved have trained pastoral workers, foster-parents and care workers to train other care workers in their own institutions in listening to young people.

Guidelines
The quality of a conversation can be influenced by taboos, feelings of powerlessness, ignorance and other barriers. The quality of the interview and, subsequently, the value of the information will decrease when interviewers bring their own concerns to the interview. Automatically the presentation of a question will be less open, the amount of suggestive and closed questions increase and follow up questions on the same topic decrease.
It has been proved that when interviewers are conscious of their own 'obstacles' and they practice interview skills the quality of the interviews increase.

Conclusion
Children are not only able to talk about their lives, but want to talk about it themselves.
It is very important to children to find a person who is interested in what they have to tell and who wants to listen to them.
The stories of the children who have been interviewed give starting points for the improvement of the care at many different levels, including what support can be given.

3. Werken is nepspelen, Over de schoolbeleving van jonge kinderen (Working is like playing pretend games: the school experiences of young children), Drs. M.W.P. Renders, WESP, September 1997

Methods
- Individual interviews with children at a primary school.
- The interviews are taped and fully typed.
- Observations

Key themes
- The position of the child in society.
- The position of the child in the learning relationship.
- The position of the child in the school.
- Experiences of children.
- Experiences of the area.
- Friendships, fights and school.
- Interviews with young children.

Inclusive practice
The research focuses on 16 children from two different groups of two different primary schools, including children from ethnic minority families or from a low social background.

Impact
This study has formed the basis for the development of training material for WESP called 'listening to pupils'. Children requested to continue to be interviewed. The schools have gained much information which they did not know before.

Guidelines
It is important to start each interview with a good introduction by telling the children the purpose of the interview and why he or she wanted to interview them.
It is very important especially when interviewing young children to 'follow' the children. By 'following' the interviewer lets the children's topics lead the interview rather than holding on too much to a fixed interview schedule. The children will then be more likely to tell something without being questioned .
It is very important that the interviewer shows that he or she is interested in what the child wants to tell and that the interviewer will conduct the interview in an informal way.

It is wise to hold an interview at a school in a fixed, neutral and large place, so as not to be disturbed to much, as this will affect the interview.
The research also shows what type of questions children are more likely to give a good and extensive answer to. These questions include:
- mostly open questions
- mostly questions which are asking for an explanation by the children
- about exciting subjects and subjects the children know very well
- about personal subjects for the child and the interviewer
(Renders, 1997:.40)

Conclusion
The research asked "What are the important aspects of school experiences for young children?" The research firstly, wanted to establish whether young children can be interviewed? The conclusion is that young children can be interviewed provided that certain conditions are met. These conditions are:
- a clear introduction
- a neutral and silent place to hold the interview
- to be in keeping with the level of language development of the child
- to establish a safe point of contact
Secondly, the research aimed to take young children's views seriously and to learn from what they have to say about their school experiences. The researcher became aware that the children were very eager to talk about their school experiences and wanted to be heard.
It is important to ask children about their school experiences because it increases their commitment to school matters and leads to more participation. They also learn

to take more responsibility.

4. Een meester is een leermeester Jonge kinderen over de kwaliteit van het basisonderwijs, (A master is a theoretical master: young children on the quality of primary education), J. Meerdink & M. Hameetman, WESP, Voorhout mei 2000

Methods
- In-depth interviews
- Individual interviews
- Group interviews
-The interviewers are the teachers at the school and have been trained to give interviews.
- Each interview has been taped, fully typed and checked.

Key themes
- the classroom
- teachers at the school
- classmates
- the school building
- teaching methods
- support
- meaning and experiences
- quality criteria

Inclusive practice
80% of the population of the children who have been interviewed at their school are members of an ethnic minority. Some of the children are children with special needs. The school has a policy of keeping these children in mainstream provision as long as possible.

Impact
This research has highlighted the scope for further study into *quality criteria* informed by children's perspectives.
The inspection of education has taken into their standard programme the following question: "Do you ask the children for feedback?"
All this encourages schools to involve children in their policy on quality in the school.
The University of Utrecht has started research into children's perspectives on quality.
One of the schools was shocked by the fact that children experience working by themselves as negative while it was assumed it was a positive arrangement. This has led the school to ask their pupils about this way of working.
These results form the basis of the experiential centre for work demanded orientation in education.

Guidelines
It is very important to train the interviewers in order to obtain as much information as possible from the children.

Conclusion
Children are capable of giving their opinion about many school matters. This can be formulated into *quality criteria* which are very helpful in changing teaching methods.
Asking children about school matters will improve their participation and commitment.

5. Klein maar dapper. Filosoferen met jongere kinderen, (Small but brave: philosophy with young children), Heesen B., Damon BV 1996, Best

Methods:
"*To philosophise as a method in education is a combination of thinking together and providing more room to think individually.*" (pg.10)
Thinking together about a certain topic helps the main elements of the topic to become clearer.
This book describes the use of open questions with children. The definition of an open question in this book is: "*It is a question in which the way of getting the answer is not yet clear.*" (pg.11).

This book covers 26 stories about many themes, for example, "small and tall people". The purpose of these stories is to invite children to discuss in detail about a certain topic (theme). Each story describes some questions which an adult can ask a child (individual conversation) or a group of children. These questions are an invitation to start to philosophise.

Key themes
- philosophy
- education
- open questions
- conversations with children
- stories to start conversations with children

Impact
The University of Amsterdam has formed a centre for philosophy with children.
A website of philosophy with children has been well used.
The book has inspired many schools in the Netherlands to promote philosophical debate.

Guidelines
This approach to philosophy with children begins by telling a story and using this to stimulate questions. These question are open questions so there is not only one answer to each question. These questions will stimulate the children to think about certain topics, for instance, why is it very difficult to make a choice about something?

Conclusion
Intellectual conversations between children and adults are very possible as long as these are based on open questions and adults and children consider themselves as equal partners.

6. Van tribune naar speelveld. (From stand to playground) Vraaggericht werken in de praktijk, Eigen-krachtconferentie legt regie hulpverlening bij de familie (A method of Family Group Conferences), J.Prakken,

Methods
This chapter of the book describes a method which is called 'Family Group Conferences' . The method is based on a model which has been developed in New Zealand during the eighties, originating from Maori culture. This method has been developed with the national support of the foundation 'Óp Kleine Schaal' and WESP.
The conference is a gathering of family members and all the people who are involved in the conflict, for example, children, parents, other family members and other important persons from the immediate environment. Instead of letting professionals take care of the conflict, people who are involved in the conflict have to solve the problem themselves with the assistance of a coordinator. This method is based on a system in which people are held responsible for their own problems.

Key themes
- family
- conference
- social work
- children
- care workers
- problems concerning a family
- upbringing or education

Inclusive practice
This method involves families and their children and is not restricted to a certain age of child involved. The purpose of each conference is to solve a particular matter or problem concerning the family in which the role of the child and family is central. As long as a child is capable of understanding the matter or problem and can have their own opinion about it the child can be involved. In my view a child from the age of 5 or 6 is capable of doing this.
This method can be used for all kind of family matters and is therefore not restricted to a certain background of the family. It can also be sensitive to cultural matters.

Impact
Currently, ten community care institutions and two residential care institutions are working with this method.
Family Group Conferences have been nominated for an award which would increase the implementation of this method. The University of Amsterdam has founded a separate foundation for the research of the effects of this method.

Guidelines
The underlying assumption is that families focus on solving problems themselves instead of a different party like social workers.
" It is important that parents, children, family and other important people in the immediate environment have the room to formulate the questions of support and the strategy to solve the matter themselves." (pg.42)

Conclusion
It appears in practice that a lot of people, especially care workers, do have difficulties with the approach. In the article they call this fact a 'shifting of paradigm' because of the idea that the client (in this case the family) do have the autonomy to solve the problem and are held responsible for their own problems. The result of all this, which is mentioned in the article, is that the power of the social work system is attacked because by taking responsibility you automatically take the power. Many people do not believe that a client can make their own plan that will help to solve the matter or problem and at the same time is safe for the children.

7. The articles:

- **25 jaar Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs door VEGON**
- **De vijf werkvormen door VEGON**
- **Het kind als norm door VEGON**
- **Onderwijsvernieuwingsbewegingen Uitgangspunten van het E.G.O. door L. Gommer**
- **Vergelijking van Piramide met andere educatieve concepten door Citogroep**

This group of articles describe the method of the so called, Ervaringsgericht onderwijs (education directed at the experiences of children) developed by Professor F. Laevers. This method is used by some schools in the Netherlands. One of the pilots of this method has concentrated on young children, between 4 and 6 years, in the first two years of primary school in the Dutch educational system.

Method
This method was developed about 27 years ago by a Belgian, Professor Laevers.
This educational practice is based on three pillars:
1. 'Free initiative' of children.
2. A dialogue directed at the experiences of children.
3. Enrichment of the environment

The class should be organised in order to allow each child to use their initiative. No activities will be forced on the children and each child will be free to choose the activity he or she likes to do, provided that the chosen activity is of a certain quality, ie. designed so that development will take place. If the teacher thinks that no development will take place he or she should intervene in the activity by entering into dialogue about the children's experiences. A child is free to choose as long as there is no chaos in the classroom. Free initiative is not the same as anarchy.

By entering into a dialogue with the children (by using words and gestures) the teacher will be able to help the children to develop and to cope with their problems.
Each child should be able to find in the classroom everything which serves their needs and their development. Therefore it is very important to pay attention to the selection of materials. The classroom should be divided in corners which will have their own purpose and atmosphere.

This educational practice takes the child as the focus. By looking at and listening to the child the quality of the environment of the child will be improved.

Key themes

- children
- the development of children
- educational practice
- classroom
- dialogue
- the needs of children
- initiative
- creative processes
- enrichment of environment

Inclusive practice

In the middle of the eighties this method was widened to include children of different ethnic backgrounds, but this practice has not been designed for a particular group of children.
In terms of children with special needs, the approach has been developed for primary schools but there is no mention of it only being appropriate for mainstream provision.

Impact

A catholic pedagogical centre intends to work in a hundred schools. VEGON has developed training material for schools who want to implement this educational practice. This method has developed into one of the biggest movements for alternative forms of education in the Netherlands (and Flanders).

Guidelines

Each primary school and their teachers who want to implement this method should be trained, motivated and willing to implement it. The VEGON has developed training materials for primary schools and their teachers. This method involves five different ways of working in the classroom :

1. The circle in which the children have the opportunity to tell their experiences and thoughts to each other and to the teacher.
2. The forum is a moment at which more classes or the whole school gather to exchange experiences with each other.
3. ‘Contract work’ when each individual child formerly undertakes a package of

activities for a certain period of time.

4. Ateliers when children will have a choice from a range of different activities which emphasise the practical and active.
5. Free choice when children can choose from a range of activities which are based on their needs.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the first article is that commitment to this method leads to people who will take care of themselves, others, the environment and the world.
The final goal of this method is emancipation which is defined as human beings who are free of problems or who can cope with their problems in the right way.

8. Hoe gaat het met jou? Kijken naar het welbevinden van kinderen, (How are you doing? Looking at the wellfare of children) M.Balledux & J.Hoex, NIZW Utrecht/ VOG-Klein Kapitaal, 2001

Methods

This book looks at a method of observation for improving the quality of care in day care centres. The approach consist of the following material:
- a questionnaire and check list for practitioners (referred to as ' host parents')
- a questionnaire for the parents
- a questionnaire for the children
- ideas to improve the quality of care

The check lists form the basis of the observation. They are based on two key questions:

1. Are you doing the right things?
2. Do you do the things you are doing right?

Practitioners are encouraged to look more closely at children's lives in day care in order to answer these questions.

Key themes

- day care centre
- methods of observing
- questionnaire
- host parents
- parents
- well-being of the children
- basic needs of the children

Impact

Since this book was published in 2001, many institutions and day care centres in the Netherlands have taken up this method. One result is that more day care centres, host parents and parents are asking the children in their care more about their feelings about day care. This has lead to the improvement of the quality of the care and provision which is more adjusted to the wishes and needs of the children.
This method has also helped practitioners to explore what the term 'well being'

means in the context of a day care centre. As a result, they are much more able to discuss these issues with parents.

Guidelines

The book aims to give parents and practitioners an answer to the question, are you doing well in caring for your children. The children themselves are seen as important tools in answering this question. When the children are doing well and able to be themselves, parents and practitioners are seen as doing well. So it is important to look at the behaviour of the children.

The checklists are designed for different age groups.

Practitioners and parents are advised to familiarise themselves with the term well-being.

Conclusion

When parents and practitioners work together to observe the children in their care by using the questionnaires and lists, they will be able to improve the quality of the day care centre. It is also important that they are willing to adjust their own approach in order to create a good and healthy environment for day care.

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Appendix E

Overview of EYDCP Childcare Audits and Consultations with Children

Susan McQuail and Alison Clark

Introduction

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have been required to conduct annual audits since their formation in 1998. This includes the requirement to gather children and young people's preferences for childcare and other support services. This paper reviews consultations with young children undertaken by EYDCPs, and is divided into the following sections:

Section One: Background data
Section Two: Review of a sample of EYDCP Audits 2001-2002

Section One: Background Data

1.1 The Audit Guidance

The Audit Guidance (1998-1999) requests EYDCPs to set out the steps taken to establish children and young people's preferences for childcare and other support services. The guidance refers to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Attention is drawn to the importance of including the views of children from ethnic minority groups and those with disabilities in the EYDCP plan. The guidance stresses how the audit should reflect the key issues for children. Techniques suggested include using open questions, focus groups, and creative and expressive tools.

The guidance advices EYDCPs to inform children about the findings of any consultation and about the impact the children's views have had on the EYDCP plan. Consultation is presented as a long-term process and suggests limited action to begin with. The issue of potential differences between parents and children's views is raised.

From 1999-2001 this guidance remained unchanged. The Audit Guidance for 2001-2002 includes 'Section G' which requests information on the preferences of children and young people, and recommends the use of the publication 'Partners in Planning' by Save the Children to carry it out. (Fajerman 2000).

1.2 DfES Publications

The DfES (Formerly DfEE) produces various series of publications for EYDCPs. In Good practice for Partnerships:

No 2. Developing and supporting high quality sustainable childcare (1999) there is a case study on involving children. It describes the work of one Partnership which established a task group which conducted workshops to explore ways and means of consulting children and young people where participants then formulate their own action plan for involving children based on consultation within their setting. This information is then fed into the Plan (Birmingham).

No. 3. Conducting Childcare Audits 1999 Under the section canvassing unmet demand there are three case studies:

- questionnaires for older children to use with other children and to help younger children to complete (South Gloucestershire)
- use of a school to contact ethnic minority students(Stockport)
- considering training childcare workers to get feedback from children in their care on an ongoing basis as part of their role, believing this will be more effective than one-off surveys (Portsmouth)

No. 7. Communication and consultation strategies (2000) This included two case studies of consulting children.

- Focus groups at adventure playgrounds and playschemes as a way of piloting consultation methods with children (Lambeth)

- Use of blank postcards for children to express their views of childcare. They were amalgamated in a creative project (West Berkshire).

1.3 Partners in Excellence Awards

The Daycare Trust were commissioned by the DfES in 2000 to conduct an annual exercise where Partnerships can nominate themselves for an award for different areas of achievement. Listening to parents and children was one of the award categories in 2000.

2000 – Listening to parents and children for which the criteria were:

- strategic approach
- evidence of understanding of the needs of parents and children
- innovation
- recognition that initiatives should be ongoing
- use of feedback from parents and children
- inclusion of hard to reach groups
- evidence of results achieved

Shortlisted nominations were: Islington, Manchester, Stockton on Tees and Worcestershire

The winners were:

Islington –Young children's participation programme (see Table 2 for details) Save the Children were commissioned to carry out a six month programme which involved a two day training course and follow up support for practitioners in early years centres. A consultation and participation project was also carried out with after school centres by Islington Play Council and Save the Children.

Worcestershire – Kids' question time Children from after school clubs were invited to ask questions of a panel from health, education and social services. Topics raised included: financial constraints, available activities, links with other clubs,and choosing playleaders. Action resulting from the panel includes: setting up of local childcare forums to share good practice and resources, visits between clubs, more funding to extend facilities.
Article 31 Children's Consultancy scheme Children 8-12 trained as consultants by PLAY.TRAIN, visited clubs and presented findings at a conference.

2001 – Category: Engaging Families
The winners were Bedfordshire for a conference 'Giving children their Say' for 8-16 year olds. The conference was about giving children and young people a voice, not just for the lifetime of the project but on an ongoing basis. An action plan was drawn up as a result of the discussions. Initiatives arising from the project include a disability strategy for children with additional needs; a childminding network; middles school cafes and ongoing evaluation and consultation.
Shortlisted nominations were: Bath & North East Somerset, Bedfordshire, Leeds, Newcastle on Tyne.

2002 – Keeping parents and children at the centre
This coming year the award will recognize work with parents and children either collectively or separately. Partnerships are invited to show how children's views have been identified, listened to and acted upon.

1.4 Previous evidence of EYDCP consultations

Table 1. EYDCP surveys and consulting young children 1999-2001

Year	**1998-1999**		**1999-2000**		**2000-2001**	
EYDCPs represented in survey out of total 150	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
	140	93	130	86	95	63
% consulted children		71		94		84
% consulted parents	No data			98		92
Methods for consulting children						
Through out of school clubs	No data			50		42
Face to face interviews	No data			39		31
Using arts & games format	No data			51		22
Focus groups	No data			36		22
Postal questionnaires	No data			30		18
Schools incl. School councils	No data			12		18
Events e.g. conferences, festivals	No data			No data		18
Children consulting children	No data			No data		8
Through childcare providers	No data			No data		7
Through development workers	No data			No data		5

Source: The Daycare Trust

It appears from these statistics gathered by the Daycare Trust that the percentage of EYDCPs consulting children in the audits rose from 71% of respondents in 1999 to 94% in 2000 but fell again to 84% in 2001. What isn't clear from these figures is the number of childcare audits which have included consulting pre-school children.

Section Two: Survey of EYDCPs Consultations with Children 2001-2002

2.1 Data sources

This review has made use of two data sources for this analysis of EYDCPs 2001-2002.

Study A. A large sample (89/121) of the childcare audits for 2001-2002 have been examined. This number refers to those audits received by the DfES by mid-July 2002. Only a third (27: 33%)[24] made mention of activities relating to consulting with or listening to children.

Study B. Information from a separate survey of EYDCPs conducted by TCRU for the Investors in Children Initiative (DfES) has also been incorporated into this review. Study B contacted all EYDCPs in April 2002 by email to enquire about consultations with children. Copies of available reports were also requested. Seventy six partnerships responded, 53 of whom reported consultations with children, 34 of which involved activity from April 2001. The purpose and focus of these consultations varied (Mooney and Blackburn, 2002: 12). Most of these consultations were used to inform EYDCP Childcare Audits. However consultations were also carried out for the Children's Fund or
for Leisure and Play Services within a local authority.

Information from these two data sources have been combined to provide a detailed picture of current practice in EYDCPs regarding children's consultation. The sample is based on 50 Partnerships (out of 150): 27 from Study A and 23 from Study B, on consulting with children since April 2001. Information from previous years has been included where this illustrates progression and continuity in consultation activities (see Table 2)

2.2 Analysis of EYDCP consultations with children

The following text analyses the information according to the age of the children consulted, the settings in which consultation took place, the methods used, the assistance used by the EYDCP for the work, the key findings and any impact or outcomes from the work which is stated as having influenced the plan.

Purpose

Describing the purpose of consulting children, 10 partnerships simply referred to the requirement of the Childcare Audit Guidance that data should be collected on the "preferences of children". A further 10 provided no information under this heading. Four partnerships said that it was for the Children's Fund and three others for specific occasions – whether there should be "another children's conference"; National Childcare Week and an "Article 31 children's consulting project". Two partnerships were concerned about methods of consulting children and one examined what children thought about their lives. The remainder mentioned specific interests: adventure playgrounds, clubs, children's play and youth services and play areas; preferences of the disabled; the 9-14 age group and who provides care.

[24] This was the material available in the DfES files on the two days of visit. It may not therefore be complete

Sample Size

Twelve authorities reported sample sizes of over 200 children, two of these over 1000. Seven samples were between 100 and 200, and seven more between 50 and 100. Five were under 50. Eighteen partnerships gave no information about size of sample. Only two authorities indicated the size of the population from which the sample was drawn (Enfield, Lincolnshire).

Age Group

A very wide variety of age groups was considered by the 38 Partnerships answering this question: there were only six cases where two authorities chose exactly the same age range as another. The most frequently chosen starting ages were children of four and five years of age (five cases each). Some specifics:

- 16 partnerships may have considered under 5s (for example, some said 0-16), but only five singled out young children mainly 2-5 but in one case 0-7 for special attention as groups;

- Eight partnerships considered young people over 14 (one specified a range of 13-19);

- 23 of the partnerships considered age groups spanning at least six years; ten of these considered age groups of ten years or more;

- six partnerships concentrated on small age bands (four years or fewer);

- two authorities chose different age groups from those considered in earlier years, perhaps as part of a rolling programme to consider different age groups over time.

Setting

21 partnerships did not answer this question. Answers were in a number of cases determined by the method used for a survey: those using large-scale questionnaires referred to libraries, shopping centres and so on. Other answers were determined by the age group chosen for study or the focus of the enquiry. Formal setting included primary and secondary schools, early years settings, and schools for children with disabilities. Out of school clubs and a youth project were also mentioned.

Methods of Consultation

Several partnerships used more than one method, so the total recorded is more than 50. By far the commonest method was the use of questionnaires (22), followed by group discussion (10), sometimes described as in “small” groups, and interview (9). Other methods cited were art (5), games (3), drama and a conference (2 each). There was one entry for each of photos, observation recorded, a newsletter, an online survey and video games.

The methods used specifically for younger children were: small group discussions; questionnaires with pictures; observation; tape recorder, photos; drawings; circle time; arts & games; techniques such as wish trees and graffiti boards and other picture activity; talking to children while they played. Islington's children's participation project was unique. When younger children were part of a group including older children, questionnaires, interviews, taking part in a conference and video diaries were the methods used.

Agency

Most partnerships either provided no answer or named the EYDCP itself – in three cases the Children's Information Service. In three cases local groups concerned with childcare or play were cited. Save the Children was mentioned in three cases, Daycare Trust and Children's Society and training by the National Early Years Network once, and three partnerships referred to private consultants and one to a local university.

Key Findings

Analysis of key findings makes more sense for individual surveys than by aggregating results from disparate methods of enquiry, sample size, and age groups. Only one EYDCP recorded specific findings for under-5s – playing with friends often liked best; they enjoy activities involving adults and want more space to run around (Kingston upon Hull). Recurring themes include the importance of good relationships with staff; enthusiasm for out-of-school provision, but less at ages over 11; and the expressed wish to participate in decisions about provision. Ten partnerships did not include this information, or noted that results had not yet been collated.

Impact: Follow-on Activity

Only 14 partnerships reported on follow-up activity. Two of these referred to specific provision (mid-school cafes, clubs, a walking project, and bike maintenance). Three partnerships (Islington, Manchester and Newcastle) describe systematic plans for building consultation with children into decision-making processes. One partnership is preparing a website to bring together children's ideas; another (Oldham) is preparing a Children's Quality Checklist for out of school clubs. The remainder refer in more general terms to improved means of consultation for the future.

Conclusions and recommendations

From this brief review of the most recent audits, consultations varied in terms of sample size, the ages of children and young people consulted, and methodology. There is a need to establish and follow good practice in consultation. The following pointers emerge from this review:

- A clear locally agreed and owned purpose for the consultation (beyond the expectation of the childcare audit) will help to focus the consultation exercise and give clarity to the findings.
- Information about the size and diversity of the population from which any sample is drawn will enable comments to be made on the representativeness of the sample. For instance, how far does the childcare population include specified groups such as children with special needs or children from different ethnic minority groups. If only small numbers are selected, it is important to give the reason.
- The methods described are various and multi-faceted. Some of the methods for older children such as taking photographs, child to child interviews, and the use of the creative arts could be adapted for children under five. It would be helpful for practitioners if those writing up the consultation evaluated the methods used to guide future practice. Study B gives an example of Norfolk EYDCP evaluating consultation techniques (Mooney and Blackburn 2002).
- EYDCPs should consider using the auspices of a specialist agency with experience of listening to young children to plan and carry out the consultation. One example of this approach is demonstrated by Islington EYDCP which worked with Save the Children on young children's involvement and participation (Partners in Excellence awards 2000).

Table 2: Details of activities regarding consulting children by sample of 50 EYDCPs, 2001-2002

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Barnsley	Views about childcare (C/C) used or would like to use	250 distributed 100 returned	3-14 years	All EY settings, sec. schools, libraries, town centre, college & projects	Questionnaire (Qu.).		45% cared for by family/friends. All happy with C/C. 5-14 think environments should be more age appropriate. 65% like to play outside. Sport favourite activity for 5-14. Impact/follow up: More OOS provision , information for children New providers to consult children More/better outside provision Not actioned or timed
Bath & NE Somerset shortlisted for Partners in Excellence Award 2001	C/C audit	60+ in prim. & sec. schools	All school age	Schools including special needs school & OOS clubs	Interviews Photos		Results not collated

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Bedford-shire Partners in Excellence Award 2001 for Children's conference	C/C audit	1135 packs sent 345 replies	5-11	Schools with children with special needs	Qu. 2nd children's conference (90) workshops Newsletter for children	CIS manager	Less than half used childcare For less than half met their needs Wanted facilities locally and for inclusion Issues from conference transport, more drop-in centres, bullying Questioned experts Impact/follow up: Setting up of middle school cafes based on consultation Disability strategy for children with additional needs Ideas from children which different schools are to carry out e.g. school council Bedfordshire plan to hold a second children's conference
Bexley	C/C audit	151	under 11	libraries, brownies /guides, beavers	Qu.		Results not collated
Bolton	No info	15	4-12 year olds	2 OOS clubs	Interviews		Quality was when fully consulted + involved, safe environment + availability of equipment
Bracknell Forest	C/C audit - focused on what activities liked to do out of school	8 schools invited 1 primary 43 ch'ren 1 sec. 76 replies	10-11 11-13	Primary school Sec.' school	Qu.		11-13 = more facilities for older children, swimming trips etc. 10-11 = organised sports and art activities

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Bradford	Informal as part of support & dev'ment work	-	5-11 over 12s	-	-	-	Importance of relationships with other children & adults; range of activities. Adults not to shout, being outside and not under constant supervision; rules- no fighting & swearing. Over 12s do not want to be in supervised club Follow up: Intention to consult as part of District -wide play strategy in coming year
Cambridge-shire	-	-	-	-	-	-	Follow up: Not possible this year but intend to collate data from other surveys
Cheshire					Blank qu. children included with audit Report	Owl Consultin g	None recorded
Coventry	consulting for Children's Fund - not specifically about C/C	94 369	aged under 8 8-13	schools & play-centres.	<8 -Small group discussions; >8 quests. also completed by traveller children	-.	Safe play areas. Opportunities to be active, play outside. Want to be involved in planning/organisation. Concerned about bullying and harassment.
Cumbria	C/C audit - focused on activities	35	3-14	C/C settings	Small group discussions	Hempsall Consult-ancies	Activities/range of equipment the best things, but a quarter would like some changes such as equipment improved and changed more often. Friends are most important factor. Children need support when favourite staff leave setting.

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Devon	Consulting on interests, play areas and clubs	613 replies- 68 with special needs 56 <8 s	0-16	variety of locations , including shopping centres, fun-days and schools	Qu. handed out at super-markets and fun day <8s qu. with pictures	Devon Play Association & EYDCP	194 (44% of all children surveyed) had attended a holiday playscheme Sport art/craft, trips outings games/activities + friends most popular Recommendations: creative activities that cater to all abilities/interests; encourage staff to introduce non-competitive physical activities as well as sport. Consider viable location for trips
Ealing		16	2-5 5-8	Range of EY settings	Qu.	EYDCP	Only 5 quests. returned from 16 children 2-5 Answers to what you like doing best and least.
East Riding	C/C audit	Children in 5 c/c settings aged 3 months to 14 years			Group and individual inter-views + observation		No information
Enfield	C/C audit. Focused on OOS activities + views about them	192 (2/3 of those engaged in OOS activity)	11-12	Schools	Qu. sent to schools	Hempsall Consult-ancies	Most popular OOS activity is sport because of interest + fun., but sport is also least favourite activity for some. Those not engaged in OOS activity mostly because not interested or don't have time.
Gateshead						EYDCP	Inclusion Charter with core of communication & consultation with children included with audit
South Gloucs.							List of things an unspecified number of children of unspecified age said at launch of Children's Information Service

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Halton	C/C audit. focused on activities and preferences	56	5-11	schools and OOS clubs	Qu.	EYDCP	Would like to do more outdoor games and play with friends. Those in holiday schemes would like more trips and bike riding.
LB. Havering	C/C	231 total 64 167	yr. 6 10-11 yr7 11-12,	2 primary & 1 sec. school	Qu.	Makro-test	Yr 6 like organised games/sport best. Yr 7 have preference for TV/video. Girls more likely to like drama + crafts. Yr 6 more interest in OOS clubs than yr 7 and girls more than boys.
Hereford-shire	C/C audit how children are consulted + involved in decisions	Feasibility study - Small numbers of children		4 c/c settings	Consultation with children was 'superficial'		Happy and offered few suggestions for change. Impact/follow on: Children listened to + their views taken into account and acted upon.
Hertford-shire						Meggs, Costoya Attfield	Noted that research with children undertaken in 99-2000 - they were keen on provision & wanted provision for homework. Impact/follow on: Consultants observe that as the children who have accessed OOS care for most of their school life reach sec. school the need for provision for older children may be growing

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Isles of Scilly	C/C audit to find out what activities young people want	117 total	5-11 & 11-16	primary & the one_ sec school	1 page qu. on current use 1 page qu. about 4 activities on offer		Took the four most popular activities from first survey and asked children if they would attend them Youth Officer consulting with year reps. In school to find out what resources they want in new toy and resource library. Impact/follow on: Three clubs set up as a result Bike & mechanical maintenance set up Walking initiative
Islington Partners in Excellence award 2000 Islington cont.	Young children's partic'ion programme		<5s	Council Early years Centres	6 month programme 2 day training course for centres; each designed a pilot project	Save the Children	Follow up: Feedback session for all those who took part Presentation of findings at conference In the centres – dev. of new outside play/garden area Decisions about menus provided in nursery settings Arrangements of nursery space Involvement of children in purchase of equipment and resources
	Consultation & participation project			After school centres	Each centre set up a particular project	Islington Play Council & Save the Children	As part of training for 10-12 play & youth workers in participation and consultation Impact/follow up: All centres to have a participation policy Recommendations. To make connections with previous work done by Save the children with EY Centres and Children's Parliament

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Kent	C/C audit - what Children do + would like to do out of school	Over 100	5-14		Focus groups - approx 10-12 with older children and 5-6 with younger children in schools		5-7: sporting activities and play at local park. Enjoyed OOS clubs. 8-11: Used leisure centres - many preferred organising own activities. Those attending OOS clubs liked them. Wanted more specialist clubs e.g. art clubs, football, etc. Both age groups commented on environment, particularly wanting to feel safe
Kingston upon Hull 2000 2001	C/C Audit	104 total 33 71	< 5 5-13 11-13	c/c settings in schools	Used tape recorder, photos + drawings talked to children while played Small discussion groups	CIS & Daycare Trust	<5: playing with friends often liked best. Enjoy activities involving adults. Want more space to run around. 5-11: enjoy range of activities + making own choice. Outdoor active play important for many. Important to be involved in planning, rules, etc. 11-14: want to be consulted; want specialist clubs not extension of school. Little to do after school.
	C/C audit preferences of children & Young People	40 replied / unknown number sent out	13-19		Interviews		local surveys such as Hull Youth Council and Young People's customer panel. Impact/follow up: 15 young people knew that libraries carried information about childcare and they used it

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
LB Kingston 2000 2002	No information	7 33	6-13 4-11	OOS clubs Child-minders	Discussions in small groups Completed qu.	EYDCP	Younger more positive than older children who were more critical. Would like more separation of younger/older age groups. Sport most popular. Nice staff, tasty food, freedom to choose activities and run around are important. Want greater autonomy, responsibility and to be trusted.
	What young disabled did & want to do in their spare time	71 qu. returned out of unknown number sent out	11-17	2 schools poss. For disabled	Qu.	EYDCP	Young people with moderate learning disabilities do take part in wide range of actives. Would like to do more but prevented by cost and lack of access to helper
Lambeth 2000 2000 2002	3consults 1.Play needs /wants 2.Adventure Play-grounds 3.C'ren's Fund	1. 731 total 2. 279 3. 225	School age	1.Peer consult-ation Article 31: children's consult-ancy scheme) 2. 7 adventure play-grounds	1.179 interviewed + 551 completed qu. 2.Qu. 3.Inter-views		1.Most prefer physical play. Computers/games most preferred indoor activity by 9+, especially boys. 1 in 5 did not like staff in the place they play. Wanted more or better equipment + changes to environment. 2.Improvement in sports facilities, outside play structures, building design + cleanliness should be made. Want more indoor equipment. 3.Lack of child-centred OOS facilities Payphones in OOS clubs

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Leeds shortlisted for Partners in Excellence Award 2001	C/C audit	498 total 437 in main survey only 10%	5-12 12+.	25 play schemes & 21 OOS clubs	Main survey and 2 small surveys Wide range of methods (11) e.g. dream + nightmare playworker; photos and drawings, graffiti walls and taped interviews	Children' s Society	75% want variety and choice - trips, craft, playing outside, drawing/painting + sports most popular. Girls enjoy creative activity, boys tend to enjoy playing out, sports and computer games more. Being with friends important, but relationships both among liked and disliked aspects (e.g. bullying, verbal abuse, bossiness). Want playful, caring, interested staff, who are culturally 'in tune' with the age group. Boys and girls identify more closely with same sex playworker. Physical environment, food and participation important, but not of most importance. Some differences between clubs and schemes.
Leicester-shire	'Dreaming 4 real' Project. How provision is used, preferences and barriers to access		7-11		Role play, artwork and writing		Issues relating to personal safety and relationships with adults, carers and peer groups. Report not available at time of writing. Impact/follow up: Website designed to bring together ideas of what children ideally want from Childcare setting.
Lincoln-shire	C/C audit - what children think about their lives	55 (40% 9-10 year olds)	4-13		Online survey		10% regularly attended OOS club. 50% wanted more clubs + activities after school.

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Manchester 2000 shortlisted for Partners in Excellence Award 2000 2001	Article 31 Children's consultancy Project	15 children trained as young consultants 60 children	7-11	3 OOS settings	Interviews with staff and children & observations	Save the children & EYDCP	Staff most important resource + wanted more adults in settings. Staff should be attentive, supportive, respect + care for children. They should reinforce appropriate behaviour. Staff stability important. More age appropriate activities; outdoor play space + choice of outdoor activities. Variety of activities and trips. Snacks/drinks important and state of toilets. Impact/follow up: Manchester Young People's Partnership/Understanding children's Needs set up. Children - made15 recommendations for improving out of school clubs -designed logo and strap for project. -spot checks on out of school clubs monitoring 15 recs.
	Ongoing process	12 more children trained					- awarded kitemarks to those who were successful - were trained in recruitment selection procedures for post of Forum and children's Rights Support worker -jobswapping with Manchester councillors - newsletter to all clubs For the future – expansion of forums to involve more clubs and children

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Newcastle 2000 Shortlisted for Partners in Excellence Award 2001	First conference to find out views on subjects affecting their lives	200 children	3-14	OOS clubs	Conference		Wanted another conference to explore following issues: cleaner environment; crime; safe places to play; way adults respond to children (e.g. do not listen, not taken seriously); their rights Impact/follow up: 1.report on first Children's conference 2000 – Conference 2.evaluation and planning for the future – in clubs Easter-Summer 2001 3. Planning for more events 4. Seeking commitment from LA to formalize the process for children to directly influence decision-making using feedback from the conference
	Whether children wanted another Children's conference		3-13	7 OOS club	Video diaries (no further details)		Impact/follow up: 1. Working with providers to use in KCN aiming high 2. Involvement in planning new services

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
North Tyneside	Children's Fund						Sports facilities appear most popular suggestions for Children's Fund (17%)
Nottingham City	What children like doing when not at school	No info. on sample size of whom 16% attending OOS clubs	4-16		Interviews with children at two childcare events		13-16 = being with friends, TV, reading, performing arts - sports less popular 9-12 = majority prefer sports, youth clubs and social groups 4-8 = playing with friends, toys, fantasy play, TV, computer, sports/physical play also popular. Differences between boys and girls e.g. 100% of boys aged 9-12 liked sports, but only 50% of girls.
Oldham	C/c audit to find out what children thought of provision using & what they wanted for future Link to Children's Fund consulting, On-track		8-12	16 c/c + OOS clubs	Range of creative activities Child to child interviews Prime Minister for a day; Collective Piece of stained glass; Questions devised by children; 'Space hopper race' for collecting ideas, talking about them and voting on what is best.	Early Years and Oldham Play Action Group	Clubs that cater for specific interest groups (e.g. dance, computers ,children volunteering) would seem popular. Choice important in activities, time + snacks. Participation seen as important too and adults who care + are interested. Younger children (8-11) developing interests once considered 'teenage territory. Impact/follow up Children's Quality Checklist for OOS clubs which features items about environment, activities, staff.

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Oxford- shire	C/C audit Budget of £3,500 from the childcare grant				Conference	EYDCP Save the Children involved	Resource Packs of relevant publications distributed to Family Centres Training events (NEYN) x 2 for providers to reflect on current practice, learn successful techniques for involving children and increasing participation Consultation by providers Impact/follow up: A seminar on consulting with Children to be run by Save the Children at EYDCP annual conference Children's Rights Checklist in Oxfordshire by Save the Children for everyone who provides a service for children launched February 2002
Plymouth	C/C audit	21 43	3-4 9-14	various places over the summer	Qu.	Jill Rodd University of Plymouth	Key findings ¼ of older children attended out of school care preferred going to friends, did not want childminders, not enough for them in Plymouth Follow up: Recommendation to consult more widely with increased sample, different venues, time of year and methods

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Poole	C/c audit what children knew about and liked doing	only in % no information about sample size	5-12	OOS	Postal qu.	Children's Information Service, Paula Foster, Research and Information Officer	9-12 years olds preferred computers and 5-9s preferred making things**.**
Rotherham	C/C audit	No info. 23 clubs 278 responses 223	2-4 7-12 12-14	out of school clubs	Circle time, arts & games Qu. administered in person: as part of PSE	a partner-ship officer not specified	Definite interest expressed in trying out new activities. Full results yet to be analysed
Salford	National c/c week Authority taking part in the Children and Young People's Unit on *Building a Strategy for Children and Young People.*	12 Children working as consult-ants 3 clubs	8-11	3 OOS clubs	Face to face interviews		Friends and staff important. Staff should be fair, fun + caring. Favourite activities computers, art/craft, drama and football. Impact/follow up: The EYDCP is working on a co-ordinated approach to consultation with other departments from the council.
Sandwell	C/C audit - children's preferences and needs	34	3-14 but most 5-11		Qu.		Most important is relationship with staff, range and quality of activities/equipment, having fun and friends. Difficult to say what they wanted to change. Seemed to be demand for specialist activities e.g. drama, sport, or art.

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
Sefton	Children's Fund - asked for views on environs, safety, health, play areas, etc.	Over 300 children	under 8's over 8's)	OOS clubs. OOS clubs	Focus groups and qu. Used techniques such as wish trees and graffiti boards		Relevant findings: want more choice + clubs offering sports, arts, music, DJ skills + dancing. Few places where could play safely. More centre-based facilities appropriate for ages + interests of children. Insufficient opportunities to put their view.
Shropshire	Consultation exercises for C/C audit + development of children's play + youth services	1. 258 262 2. 51 33 from one district	aged 0-7 8-14 10-11 11-18	Yr 6 children primary schools & sec. school children from district	1) Picture activity qu. Children visiting shopping centre 2) Asked to write wish list - activities they would like to have		1.Favourite activities: 0-7 = swimming, baking and block building. 8-14 = friends, sports, TV and music. Drama and craft less popular with this age group. 2. range of responses but skate park was most popular with 10-11, followed by cinema + indoor swimming pool. Skate park also most popular with older age group.
South Gloucs	No information	22 total 7; 8; 8	7-8 11-12 13-14	Not specified	Focus groups		What school age children would like to do before + after school , w/e + school hols if parents working.
Sunderland	C/c audit	6 with SEN 10 with SEN	4-11 7-18		No information		Responses listed to what children liked doing + what would like to do, but no analysis

EYDCP	Purpose	Sample	Age	Setting	Method	Agent	Key findings/ Impact & follow up activities
West Sussex	C/c audit	432 55 focus groups including children with special needs	4-14	both users + non-users of OOS clubs and	55 focus groups either at OOS club (users) or in school (non-users)	EYDCP	Views of OOS C/C. Environment important - safety, comfort, home-like setting. Food important for all age groups including having choice and involvement in preparation. Outdoor space and outdoor activities high priority. Variety of activities, but particularly multi-media. Shopping popular activity when not using OOS C/C - providing shopping outings may be additional way of meeting interests as is organisation of themed days.
Wigan	Looking at who provides care, preferences re c/c use	28 28	under 5 5-11		'play train' that pulls five carriages with images of various C/C provision	EYDCP	
Wokingham		84	11 - 14	schools and youth project	Qu.		What they do evenings; w/ends + school hols. Like to do. Barriers and suggestions for improving services. .
City of York	EYDCP strategy for improving services for 10-14 age group	1,796 (1,242 primary age + 554 sec. age)	10-14	15 primary and 2 sec. schools	Qu.		Relevant findings: most popular preferred activity was to meet friends with minimum supervision. Older children prefer unsupervised activities. OOS clubs need to offer young people choice and just to 'simply sit with friends'.

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