

What the Children & Young People of Bristol Think about their Out of School Provision

**A consultation with children to inform
Bristol City Council's
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – 2007**



Kate Hulm BA (Hons) – Early Years Consultant
Tel: 01275 854479
E-mail: kate@cornelsen.co.uk

Abstract

This consultation report captures children and young people's thoughts about their childcare provision in Bristol. The children and young people involved in the consultation used a variety of provision and were chosen at random from settings across the city. The main criterion was that the settings should be equally representative of the three different areas – North Bristol, South Bristol and Central & East Bristol.

The main method of investigating what children and young people thought about their out of school care was through a questionnaire. They were asked to respond to a rating scale, with statements linked to the outcomes in Every Child Matters, and answer two open questions. In addition some limited Learning Story observations were carried out in some of the settings, where time permitted.

The outcome of this consultation is that the majority of children and young people using services in Bristol, on the whole, enjoy and participate in their childcare provision. Those that do not are usually clear about stating a preference for being at home. It confirmed that they would often like more access to outside space and also identified that boys feel less well listened to than girls and are less likely to share problems that may arise during the school day, in their childcare setting. Finally, it has raised a line of enquiry about children's different experiences of their childcare provision according to age.

Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to undertake this consultation without the full cooperation of the practitioners, parents and, of course, the children and young people in the settings which were visited – grateful thanks to them all.

The photos in this report are from some of the after school clubs, holiday play schemes and childminders in Bristol who participated in the consultation and included with the kind permission of parents, children and practitioners.

The terms practitioner and setting are used throughout this document and refer to all adults who work with children and the different places in which they work.



Contents

The purpose of the consultation	5
How the children and young people told us what they think	6
Rating Scale Responses	9
Analysis of Rating Scale Responses	10
Open Questions	17
Learning Story Observations	22
Final Thoughts	24
References	27

The purpose of the consultation

The Early Years and Childcare Service of Bristol City Council has been consulting with parents, employers, childcare providers and other key partners to determine the demand, and map the supply, of childcare provision in the city. The council is assessing whether the appropriate kind of childcare is in the right location for parents, either working or training, who have children from 0 to 14 years old (17 years old for disabled young people).

As part of the assessment the city council has also commissioned this report, to capture the thoughts and feelings of children and young people in Bristol about their childcare provision. This consultation began in mid-September 2007 and was carried out over a two month period. Children and young people participating in the consultation used a variety of provision, including after-school clubs run by voluntary organisations and by schools, holiday play schemes, children's centres and childminders. As far as possible an equal number of settings were visited from the three different areas of the city (South Bristol, North Bristol and Central & East Bristol).



How the children told us what they think

Scope of the Consultation

The statutory guidance for local authorities to undertake Childcare Sufficiency Assessments stipulates that as children and young people are the main beneficiaries of childcare services they should be given an opportunity to express their views about both the positive aspects of their provision and their needs and concerns (DfES, 2007). Much research has shown that children and young people are competent and capable in expressing their opinions about matters which affect their lives and also in finding solutions where they identify problems (Clark et al, 2003; Lancaster & Broadbent, 2003; Milner & Carolin, 1999).

It was felt important to qualify the quantitative data within this report with children's own words in order to capture the positive aspects of their out of school care as well as their ideas for problem solving everyday issues. The children's and young people's comments demonstrates the more complex emotions that some of them expressed about their care away from home. It was also felt important that children were not 'required to participate' therefore they could choose whether or not to complete a questionnaire.

Methods used in the consultation

Three methods of gathering information were used to find out what children and young people think about their childcare provision:

- Rating scale response questionnaires;
- Open ended questions; and
- Learning Story observations.

The first method required children and young people to consider nine statements and respond using a Likart rating scale and tick box to identify their thoughts or feelings. The questionnaires were differentiated for younger children by using colouring-in shapes. They were also adapted to make them relevant for children using childminder's for their out of school care.

The second method asked children and young people to respond with their own ideas to two open ended questions, also included in the questionnaire. They were asked to consider what they liked

best about their setting, and one thing they would change to make it better. Any child could ask an adult to listen to their ideas and write them on the questionnaire.

The third method; ‘Learning Story’ (LS) observations, was used in only some of the settings, due to time limitations. The LS framework uses the concepts of Belonging, Well-being, Exploration, Communication and Contribution and can be applied individually or to a group of children (Carr, 2001). These observations are not an in-depth analysis but provide more of a general overview of children’s satisfaction and happiness at the end of this report. Most typically children were observed in their inside environment as this is where it was easier for children to undertake the questionnaire. To support this consultation, simple data was gathered in relation to the participating children’s age, gender, ethnicity and ability status (see Table 1 & Table 2 below).



Children involved in the consultation process

All children attending sessions on the day that the setting was visited were considered to have participated in the consultation. However, completing a questionnaire was optional and no child was required to do one.

Total number of children	Number of children from minority ethnic groups	Number of dual language children	Number of children with a disability or learning need
337	68	7	15

Table 1- Figures to show reach of consultation

Total number of children who completed questionnaires	Number of 4, 5 & 6 year olds	Number of 7 & 8 year olds	Number of 9+ year olds	Number of girls	Number of boys
156	44	54	58	92	64

Table 2 – Total number of children who completed questionnaires – age and gender separation

Children in the older age group were typically nine or ten; there were three eleven year olds, two twelve year olds and one teenager. The majority of children in the younger age group were five or six, with three children who were four years old.

Limitations of the consultation

Any research undertaken must always be subject to scrutiny for imperfections that can be both unavoidable and unintentional. The limitations of this consultation are listed here:

- Age and ability range for consultation was limited to children attending the setting on the day of the visit;
- Specific views of all children were not captured due to optional attribute of questionnaires;
- Learning Story observations not undertaken in all the settings due to time constraints;
- Some children’s limited experience of their out of school care (4 and some 5 year olds may only have started in September 2007);
- Influence of peers and adults on some children’s answers to questionnaires; and
- Children’s desire to please adults by responding ‘correctly’.

It is hoped that, despite these limitations, this report captures the essence of children’s feelings and thoughts about their care away from home.



Rating Scale Responses

The children and young people were told that Bristol City Council wanted to find out what they thought about their after school club or holiday play scheme. Children were encouraged to complete the questionnaire individually, with support from an adult if needed, and informed that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers; only what they felt represented their opinions. They were asked to identify, from a five point agreement rating scale, their feelings and thoughts about nine statements. It seemed pertinent to relate these statements to the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes; the government's national strategy to maximise opportunities for all children and young people (DfES, 2005). It was also felt crucial to make the questionnaire relevant to children and young people by taking into consideration research that has identified what children think is important. This includes friendships, food and drink and what children like to do (The Children's Society, 2006).

EVERY CHILD MATTERS OUTCOMES	Staying Safe	Being Healthy	Enjoying & Achieving	Making a Positive Contribution	Economic Well Being
Nine statements on questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel safe at my club or group - The building and grounds are good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I can go outside if I want to - If I have had a bad day at school I can talk to someone - The food and snacks are good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have friends at my club or group - There is usually lots to do that interests me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I enjoy going to my club or group - The grown ups listen to me 	<p>Children who are recipients of services where they achieve other outcomes are more likely to fulfill their potential and achieve this outcome.</p> <p>Working parents as role models for many children.</p>

Table 3 – Questionnaire links with Every Child Matters outcomes

Analysis of Rating Scale Responses

The total number of completed questionnaires was 156 with approximately two fifths to three fifths difference between boys (64) and girls (92) respectively. The total number of children and young people in the settings visited was 337, of whom 157 were girls and 180 were boys. This shows that proportionally more girls chose to respond to the questionnaire thus making it important to differentiate the responses by gender. All of the rating scale statement responses have been analysed according to gender.

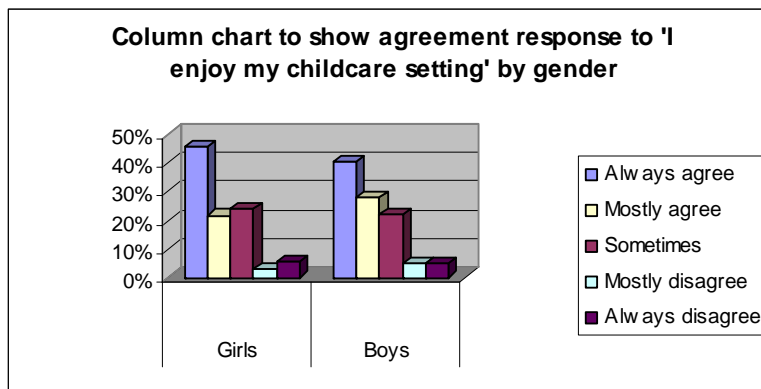
Once the data from the gender separation was collated, further questions arose about the possible difference in responses according to age; three age ranges were identified - 4, 5, & 6 years, 7 & 8 years and 9 years and over. Fewer children in the youngest age range completed questionnaires (28%), compared to most in the oldest age group (37%). The 7 & 8 year olds fell between these two groups (35%). Five of the rating scale statements have been analysed in relation to age, chosen to reflect four of the outcomes from Every Child Matters:

- I enjoy my club or group (Positive contribution);
- There is usually lots to do that interests me (Enjoying & achieving);
- I feel safe (Staying safe);
- The grown ups listen to me (Positive contribution); and
- I can go outside when I want to (Being healthy).

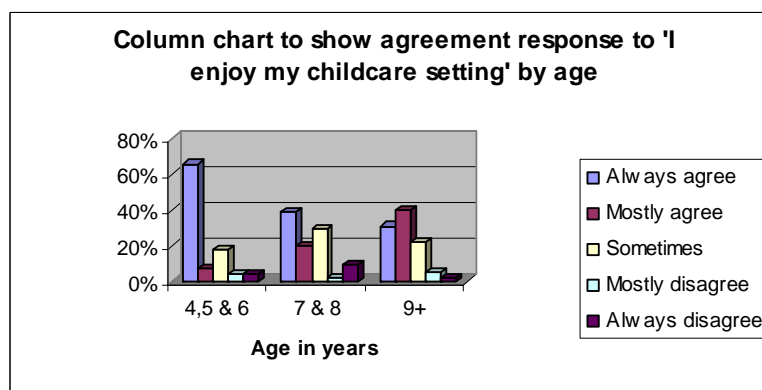
Out of the total number of children completing questionnaires, 6% identified themselves as disabled. However, it is possible that some of these children may not have been included in the collective total from the practitioners. None of these children thought that their disability prevented them from participating in activities in their childcare setting. It was not possible to determine the exact number of children and young people from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language, as many of them found the question confusing. It was therefore decided to gather this information only as a collective total from the practitioners in each setting.

Statement 1 – I enjoy going to my club, group or childminder

The gender response to this statement was similar with 46% of girls and 41% of boys always agreeing that they enjoyed attending their setting. Combined percentage results for always or mostly agreeing was closer, with 68% of girls and 69% of boys falling into that category. A slightly higher percentage of boys always or mostly disagreed with the statement, 10% compared with 8% of girls. Many of the children and young people, who thought this, quantified their response by stating a preference for being at home.



The bar chart below shows the agreement response by age. Over 65% of the children in the younger age range say they enjoy attending their setting. This percentage then drops by age range with 39% of the middle group and 31% of the oldest age group definitely agreeing with the statement. The combined total for always or mostly agreeing, show that the middle age group are in less agreement than the older and younger children. Only 59% of seven and eight year olds fall into these two categories, which suggests that 41% of this age group sometimes, rarely or never enjoy their out of school care.

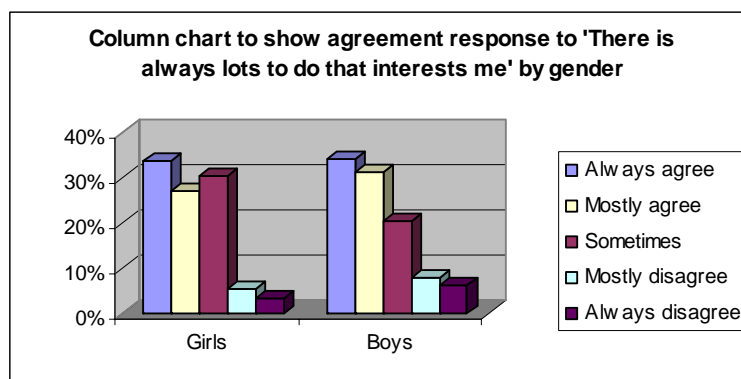


Statement 2 – I have friends at my club or group

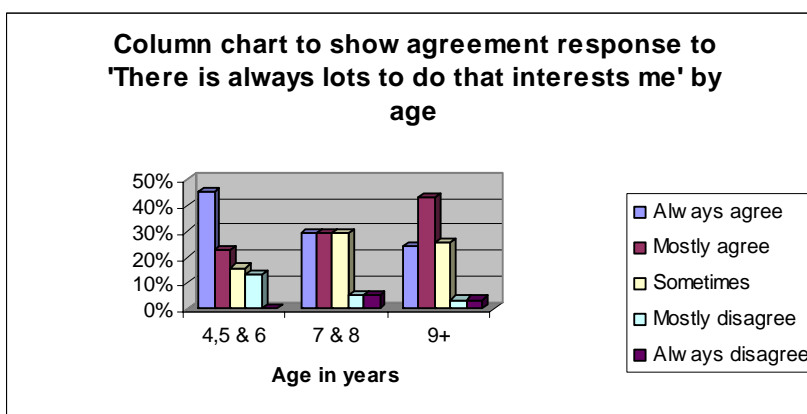
There was a 16% difference between the boys and girl's responses to always agreeing that they had friends at their after school club, holiday play scheme or childminders, with the boys in more agreement (63%). The overall picture was positive with 76% of girls and 85% of boys always or mostly agreeing that they had friends. In the open questions some children reiterated this fact by stating that they what they liked most about their childcare provision was being with their friends. Overall, 16% of the children and young people believed that they sometimes had friends, with girls showing a higher percentage than boys. Just 4% of girls and 5% of boys disagreed with the statement, either mostly or always. When asked, children often said none of their friends from school attended the childcare provision.

Statement 3 – There is always lots to do that interests me

Overall more boys than girls, 65% compared with 61%; feel that there are enough interesting activities at their club or group. Over a quarter of all the girls (30%) and one fifth of the boys (20%) state that this is true for them only some of the time. While 8% of the girls and 14% of the boys do not feel that there are enough activities that interest them.



When statement 3 is analysed according to age it shows that a higher percentage of the youngest age group always agree that there is something interesting for them to do (45%). However, when combining the figures for always agree and mostly agree the percentages are very close for the youngest and oldest groups; 68% and 67% respectively. The seven and eight year olds agree less than the other two age groups, with 30% of them sometimes believing this and 12% mostly or always disagreeing.



Statement 4 – I feel safe at my club or group

Nearly 90% of all children feel safe at their club, group or childminders most or all of the time, with boys feeling slightly safer than girls overall. The remainder typically feel safe some of the time and children quantified this by saying that sometimes they did not feel safe if they fell over or hurt themselves.

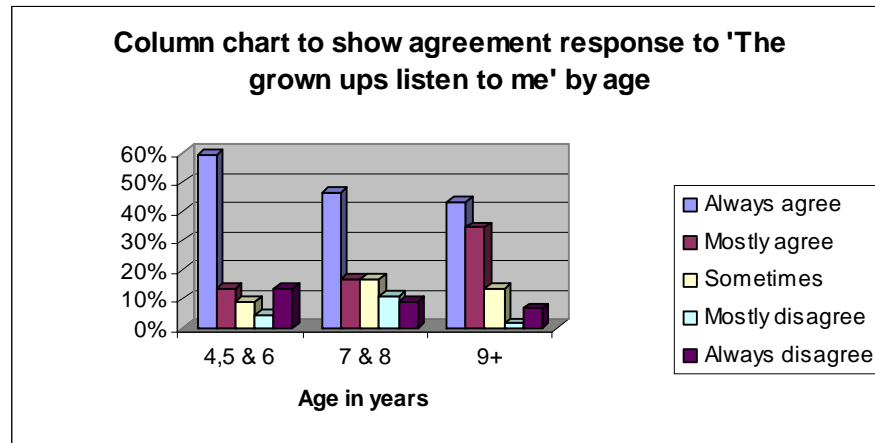
Children in the oldest age group feel safest (96%), with the other two age groups having identical totals for always and mostly agreeing (84%). However, only 54% of the seven and eight year olds always agreed, compared with 73% of the younger age group. Just 2% of all children did not feel safe, one child stated that he felt less safe outside than inside, another that she did not feel safe if her friends did not play with her and a third child said that she had had problems in the playground. In actual numbers, 4 children out of 156 said they did not feel safe in their childcare provision.

Statement 5 – The grown ups listen to me

Marginally more girls (72%) than boys (70%) believe that grown ups always or usually listen to them. The difference becomes more noticeable when considering complete disagreement with the statement as 14% of the boys, compared with 7% of girls, do not think the grown ups listen to them well.

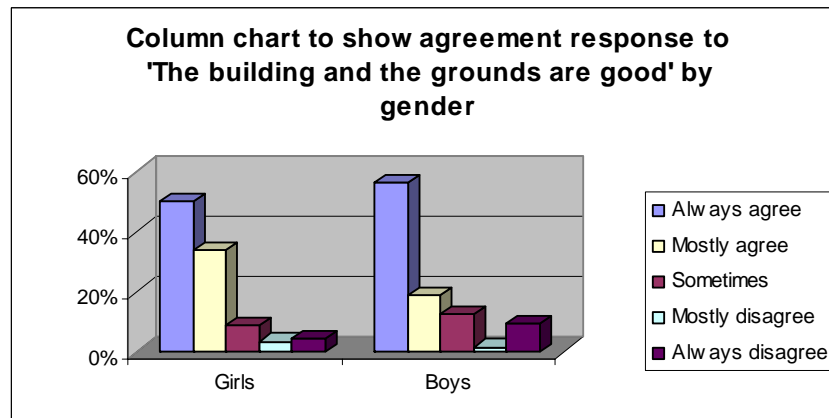
The data for the different age groups suggests that the older children believe they are listened to the most (77%) and the youngest age group the next most (73%), either always or mostly agreeing. The seven and eight year olds show less agreement, with a combined total of 63%. However, 14% of the youngest children always disagreed with the statement, which was higher

than both the middle (9%) and oldest (7%) age groups. The combined totals of always and mostly disagreeing presented a slightly different finding, showing that the middle age group had a slightly higher percentage (20%) than the youngest (19%). The oldest age group had a combined total of 16% for mostly and always disagreeing.



Statement 6 – The building and grounds are good

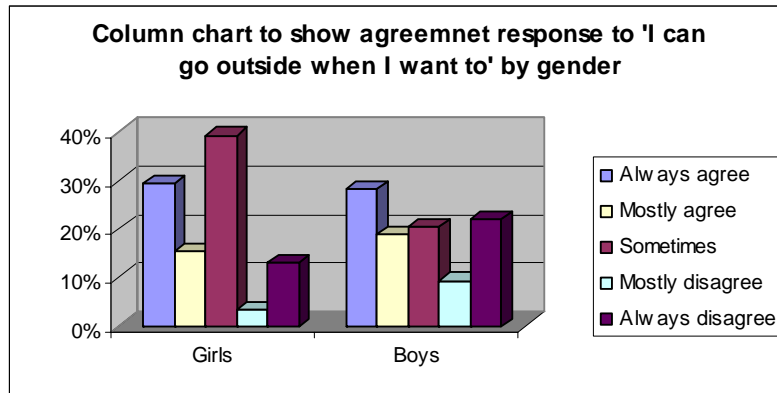
Overall more boys thought that the buildings and grounds were good, 56% always agreed, compared with 50% of the girls. However, the combined percentage response of always agree and mostly agree show that more girls than boys thought this was true, 84% compared with 75%.



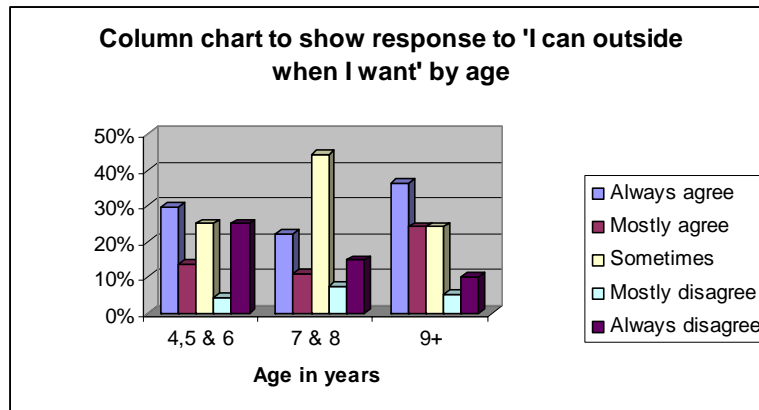
More boys than girls always disagreed that the building and grounds were good and boys also had a higher agreement level with sometimes (13%).

Statement 7 – I can go outside if I want to

The column chart below demonstrates the similarities and differences between girls and boys agreement response to statement seven.



Nearly a quarter of the boys definitely disagreed that they could go outside when they wanted, compared with approximately one seventh of the girls. Nearly double the number of girls thought they could out sometimes when they wanted. The agreement responses for always and mostly agreeing are more similar.



When comparing response by age groups, it is the children in the middle group who feel they fare most badly, 66% of these children believe that they sometimes, rarely or never can go out when they want. Older children are more likely to always or mostly agree (60%) than either of the other age groups, while a quarter of the youngest children always disagree.

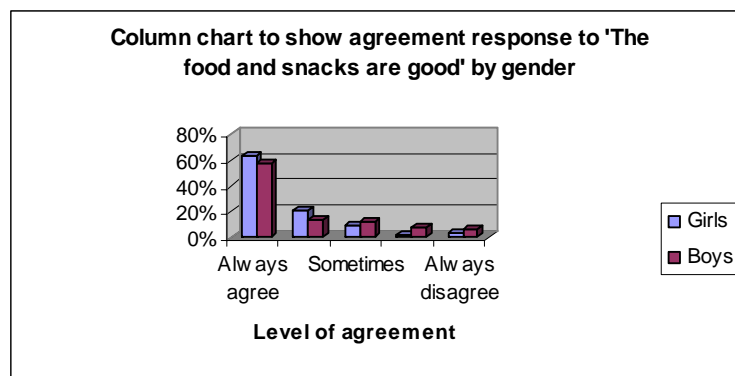
Statement 8 – I can talk to someone if I've had a bad day at school

More than half of all the children (60%) always or mostly agreed that they could talk to someone in their setting, with only a 2%

difference between girls and boys. Some children said that they could talk to their friends and wanted to know if their response was limited to adults. It was agreed that it could be anyone in the setting. Some children said that they did not have bad days at school and therefore would always disagree with the statement. However, they often commented that this might reflect badly on the adults in their childcare setting and did not want this to be the case. One quarter of the boys, compared with 17% of the girls, always or mostly disagreed with the statement. Girls were more likely to say they did not have bad days at school.

Statement 9 – The food and snacks are good

Overall the majority of all children think that the food and snacks in their childcare provision are mostly or always good. Just 5% of the girls mostly or always disagree and a higher percentage of boys (14%) think the food or snacks could be better. In some of the settings children brought in a packed lunch or tea from home.



Final Question

The last question, asked after the monitoring form was completed, endeavoured to identify whether children and young people felt they were consulted regularly in their different settings. Not all of the children answered this question so the total number of answers is less than 156. This question has not been analysed in relation to either age or gender due to limitations on time but could be researched in the future. The children circled their response or wrote their own idea, which is shown in the table below.

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't know
61	14	50	1	1

Table 3 – Final question response about regular consultation

Open Questions

The open questions gave the children the opportunity to say one thing they really enjoyed about their childcare provision and also to think of something they might change, that would make their out of school care better. Not all of the children completed this section and again this data has not been analysed by gender or age.

Some key themes were identified from both questions from the children's responses, as well as some additional themes. The table below shows the number of children having similar and individual ideas about what they particularly liked about their out of school provision.

Key themes	Number of Children
Food/Snacks	14
TV, Games consoles	8
Having friends	24
Kind, helpful adults	10
Playing outside	12
Activities available	59
It is fun	12
Additional themes	Number of Children
Special events	4
Being with brother	1
Pets in setting	1
Doing homework	1
Chilling out	1
Total	137

Table 4 – Positive attributes of settings identified by children

It is quite significant that more than one third of all the children who chose to respond identified the activities available to them as the thing they liked best about their setting. The next most common theme was having friends, followed by what children thought about the food available to them. Having fun, although slightly ambiguous, was identified as important by 9% of the children as were their opportunities to play outside. Supportive and kind practitioners were also an important theme and quite often children combined the idea of friends and helpful staff.

It is also important to acknowledge that some children are not so happy in their setting. One child wrote that the best thing about being in her setting was going home and 2 children only filled in

what they would change, presumably because they could not think of one good thing! However, most children could identify positive feelings about their provision. Here are some of their comments:

'I like playing football';

'I can go outside if I want to';

'Having toys in the playground';



'There is always something to build';

'Making dens';

'You can play with what you want';

'You get to do lots of cooking';

'I like that you can do anything you like in the Art Attack book because we have all the stuff';

'Loads of toys to play with';

'That there is lots of activities to choose from';

'You get treated well';

'There is always something that I like and interests me';

'Halloween parties';

'Having biscuits';

'Eating toast';

'Eating my snack and being with my friends';



'I really like lunchtime - you get to eat loads of food';

'That my friends are here';

'I have lots of friend here - to look after me';

'Play scheme is brilliant because if you feel bad or down a little, you always can count on the staff or your friends to cheer you up';

'Seeing my friends from other schools';

'That everybody is happy and has a friend';

'I really like the TV room';

'All of the helpers are really nice';

'It is good because the staff are nice to us all!';

'The staff are always kind and helpful'; and

'EVERYTHING!'.



The children were also able to comment about things that they would like to change in order to make their childcare provision better. Again some key themes as well as additional themes were evident in their responses, identified in the table below.

Key Themes	Number of children	Additional Themes	Number of children
Nothing to change	49	Shorter days	1
Go outside more	14	Not go	2
More resources	14	Being told off	2
More activities	16	Topical	2
Different food or drink	10	Concerning family	3
Building related	8	TV or gaming	3
Concerning friends	5	Choice related	3
		Help related	1
		Behaviour related	3
Don't know/not sure	4	Total number of responses	140

Table 5 – Key themes for change

It is again quite a significant finding that a majority of children would choose not to change anything in their setting. The most important areas for change were resource and activity related and following that for children to freely access the outside. The next most frequent response related to food and drink. Some of the children's comments about changes that would improve their childcare experience are written below:

'Help people if they fall over';

'For my sister to talk to me more';

'Put the slide back together';

'If you want to go outside you can - even if it's raining';

'I would ask if we could play on the grass in the front';

'Put more tadpoles in the fish tank';

'Put a clock in here';



'A computer to go on';

'Sometimes they do the same things and I would like to do different things';

'I would let them (the children) do what they want';

'I would make play time longer';

'Go swimming in the holiday';

'I think we could change the amount of cooking. I love cooking and it's always worth doing it to get whatever you are cooking';

'More toys to play with. Raise money';

'New pens because some of them don't work';

'Better games for older children';

'Behaviour of some people, by telling their parents';

'The food is not healthy- have things like sandwiches';

'I would prefer chocolate spread on my toast. Buy some chocolate spread';

'Put the whole place Christmassy!';

'No more swearing because sometimes they (other children) swear';

'Change the colour of the walls and change the curtains';

'Put some lights outside';

'To improve the toilets and make them cleaner and colourful, I would do this by having a competition'; and

'Fix the boards in the ceiling that are falling down';

And finally on behalf of all the children who would not change a thing:

'Nothing, it is all too good to change!';



Learning Story Observations

One of the most important considerations in relation to the observations was the many different environments that children and young people accessed through their childcare provision. This included school halls and playgrounds, dedicated rooms in schools, specific or purpose built buildings, community and church halls or rooms and childminder's homes. Another important factor to consider was the resources available to children. Some children had access to comfy chairs, televisions and dedicated rooms for art and craft, while others had school chairs and tables and fewer resources in general. The third issue for consideration was the composition of the group of children accessing the childcare. Some provision was dedicated to a particular school, whilst other settings had children from two or three different schools accessing their care.

Learning Story observations were carried out in 7 of the 16 settings visited. These are not intended to provide an in-depth, analytical study of individual children or groups; rather they provide a general overview of the well-being and happiness of the children attending the setting on the day of the visit.

Belonging

Typically, the majority of children in all settings were engaged in purposeful and focused activities. They showed an interest in what they were doing and were often able to relate the activities to previous experiences or their family life. In some settings there appeared to be free access to equipment, whilst in others there appeared to be more direction from practitioners. Most children appeared to cope well in their surroundings whether noisy or quiet and typically there were positive interactions between children and staff. Some settings instigated a very short and informal group time for sharing important information, which also supported the children's sense of belonging.

Well being

Children appeared to be very secure and feel safe in nearly all of the settings visited and understood the need for some rules. In one setting, keeping safe was an area that the practitioners felt needed discussing with the children and young people during the

visit. Many of the children appeared to have good relationships with the majority of practitioners. Typically, the majority of children appeared relaxed and happy in their setting and were having fun and being playful; the children who were not, often communicated that they wanted to go home. On the whole children listened well when practitioners needed to give direction and were able to do what was required. Older children were observed helping younger children, and perhaps there is less of an age barrier to friendship in childcare provision than in school. Children also helped and supported children with disabilities, for instance packing up a sandwich box together.

Exploration

Where practitioner ratios allowed, children usually had access to both indoor and outside environments where this was available. As identified previously, settings differed in allowing free access to all equipment and resources. This perhaps was again linked to the environment; freedom of choice appeared limited by the space available to the setting. On the whole children were good at solving their problems. They asked each other for help, they tested different ideas out and knew to ask adults for help.

Communication

The majority of the children were very good communicators and had lots to say both about their childcare provision and other things that interested them. There was lots of smiling and laughing in all of the settings and also some clear messages given when children did not like something. Very occasionally some of the children had to be reminded to use words and not push or take things from other children.

Contribution

Children on the whole were very responsive, both to each other and to adults. Their main concern about this consultation was that their childcare provision might close. They were reassured that this was not the case. Children were observed being helpful with putting things away, helping themselves or others to snacks or drinks and with displays. Children typically co-operated well with each other and adults and knew where to find things for themselves and other people. Some settings had a reward system (star charts or similar) to help children take responsibility and make positive contributions.

Final Thoughts

Research often poses more questions than it answers and this consultation is no exception. The overall response to this consultation with children about their childcare provision has been positive. There is a general feeling that the majority of children who need childcare after school or in school holidays feel happy and well looked after and enjoy their experience.

It is positive that practically 70% of all children who access childcare enjoy their provision in Bristol. However, even allowing for the children who never or rarely enjoy it, this means that nearly a quarter of the children only sometimes enjoy their childcare provision. Slightly more disconcerting are the statistics by age, with nearly a third of the children who are seven and eight only sometimes enjoying their childcare provision. The limitations of this research meant that it was not practicable to find out the reasons why children chose sometimes as their response. It is possible that some of the suggestions children put forward would increase children's, and particularly this age group's, enjoyment of their setting.

Children's friends are important to them and it is encouraging that nearly 80% of all children feel that they have friends in their childcare setting. Children spoke a lot about friends during the consultation and discussed the fact that their friends did not always attend the setting on the same days, which may account for the 16% who chose sometimes. Children also recognised the opportunities for making new friends that their childcare setting provided.

The activities that are available for children in their childcare setting are significant, as evidenced by the majority of children citing them as what they liked best about their provision. Overall 63% of all children think that there is enough to do that interests them, which is more than half, however, this does mean that 37% (42% of seven and eight year olds) believe this sometimes, rarely or never. Thirty children (19%) put forward suggestions for improving the resources or activities in their setting, which rises to 28% if more access to the outside is included. It is possible that even more children will think there are enough interesting things to do, if their ideas are incorporated into how their setting is run.

A very high percentage, nearly 90%, of all children feel safe in their childcare settings in Bristol which is extremely positive. Older children feel safer than their younger peers, and boys feel safer than girls. It is crucial for children to feel safe and the issues that were raised during the consultation were discussed with the children. Practitioners were generally aware of the issues if they were discussed with them during the visit.

Children need to feel that their feelings, opinions and ideas are valued by practitioners in their childcare setting. Overall this is a positive finding with 71% of the children believing this to be true. However, boys tend to feel that they are listened to less well than girls, and younger children think they are less well listened to than their older peers. Some children cited this in their suggestions for change, putting forward ideas for being listened to better.

It was no surprise to find that many children did not think they could freely access the outside environment but quite significant that the seven and eight year olds feel the most disadvantaged in this respect. There are often constraints on practitioners due to ratios and environments but the children say themselves, that they do not mind going out in the rain!

As childcare practitioners are in loco-parentis at the end of the school day, they will often be the person a child needs to talk to if they have had a bad day at school. Children and young people also recognised that they could talk to their friends. More than half of all children do think that they can talk to someone in their childcare setting. However, more girls than boys believe this and girls were more likely to say that they did not have bad days at school if they disagreed. A quarter of the boys always or mostly disagree that they can talk to someone. This is not an area where children identified change, which means that practitioners might need to initiate discussion when the need arises.

On the whole the majority of children think that the food and snacks available to them are good. This was particularly evident in some settings in Bristol. The overall agreement for both groups was 80%, with more girls than boys believing this to be true. Children clearly recognised when they enjoyed the food and made sensible suggestions for improvements.

Consultation is an important part of providing services for children and should be an ongoing process to inform how practitioners deliver those services. Many of the settings appeared to provide opportunities for children to express their views quite regularly, which is very positive. However, some children in Bristol do not feel that their views are considered, which may mean that they are not asked or that if processes for consultation are in place they need to become more transparent and explicit for some children.

Some final thoughts from the children conclude this report:

"I like the leaders and the children"

"Have an option - instead of just a biscuit - like fruit"

"To make more friends"

"I really like the toys and all the activities"

"The people can cheer me up"

"Go outside more often. Behave well and hope for sun"

"It's always fun!"

References

Carr, M. (2001), *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings*; London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Clark, A., McQuail, S. & Moss, P. (2003) *Exploring the Field of Listening to and Consulting with Young Children*; Nottingham: DfES.

DfES (2007) *Childcare Sufficiency Assessment: Guidance for Local Authorities*; Nottingham: DfES

DfES (2005) *Every Child Matters*; [online] Available from <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/>

Lancaster, P. & Broadbent, V. (2003) *Listening to Young Children*; Maidenhead: Open University Press

Milner, P. & Carolin, B. (1999) *Time to Listen to Children: Personal and Professional Communication*; London & New York: Routledge

The Children's Society (2006) *The Good Childhood Inquiry*; [online] Available from <http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what+we+do/The+good+childhood+inquiry/themes/>