

Leeds Sufficiency Report: - Children's Consultation Workshops Report



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1. Introduction

As part of the Leeds sufficiency report we wanted to gather the views of children and young people regarding childcare. The project was undertaken by Leeds Early Years Service to meet the Local Authority's duty under section 11 of the Childcare Act (2006) to assess the sufficiency of childcare. Childcare in this project refers to the registered childcare providers that took part in the project (childminders, pre schools, full day care, out of school clubs and playschemes).

It is widely known that children often find themselves in a position where they have to attend childcare. Quite often the childcare is chosen for the child, and this is often dependent on location and affordability rather than the child's choice. Previous research has shown that a proportion of children spend long periods of time in childcare over many years. With children spending such extensive periods of time within childcare it is therefore very important that the provision is right from the child's perspective. The following report aims to show the key findings from our consultations with children and young people.



"Friends playing outside"

2. Method

Throughout July and August 2009 eight childcare settings undertook workshops that explored children's experiences of childcare and what children would like to see within settings in the future. In total 94 children took part aged from birth to 11 years old from a range of childcare providers. The consultation was carried out with small groups of children which encouraged and enabled them to openly express their views. The consultations were mainly carried out by existing staff within the provision, except for one out of school club who requested support from the project leads. Using staff from within the setting provided security and familiarity for the children. It was felt that this was very important given the young age of the children and also the time constraints of the project. The consultation used the following three methods:

General discussion: - general chat to find out what children's interests are, what they like doing, and what they might like to do. This discussion will provide a

general picture of the children's experiences of childcare, e.g. how long they have been attending and what are their favourite activities.

My perfect nursery: - This was a visioning exercise where the children were asked to imagine it is in the future and they are in their ideal childcare setting. They were then asked to draw a picture of what it would look like. The facilitator/s then discussed the pictures with the children to get a greater understanding of the meaning and what their ideal childcare is.

My perfect people: - As previous exercise what would the perfect childcare worker look like, what would they be like, what qualities would they have.

All discussions were noted down for analysis and the pulling out of themes.

One of the settings involved in the project adapted the consultation to meet their individual needs, and focused the discussions around their new nursery that is currently under construction. Their consultation explored whether the children like staff wearing uniforms, and the type of colours and textures that children favoured.

3. Findings

3.1 What children identified as important



"I want my world at
nursery"

Behavioural and social issues (including a sense of belonging and security) are important to children. The consultation responses indicate that behaviour of other children is vital to children participating and enjoying childcare. It was identified that children don't like/are unhappy in childcare if the behaviour of other children "is not good". Having room/space to play without fear of bullying was highlighted by several of the children. The children also discussed noise and too much noise as being a factor that they didn't like and upset them.

The social element of childcare was very important to children of all ages being able to play with their friends and be a part of a group. Having a significant person / keyworker were also very important to children. The majority of children that participated were able to identify the qualities that they felt were important to them when considering their keyperson. They discussed the person as being able to have fun and to understand and engage with children.

Children identified that they wanted the person to be “kind and play with us”, “good at making things”, “funny and you laugh a lot and play with us”. Children also identified that having male carers was very important; several children wanted to have a man in their nursery.

Having a selection of activities to play with and being able to choose was identified by several of the children. Also children were very clear when identifying their favourite things, and having the opportunity to take part in their favourite activity was crucial to their security and enjoyment. Children said that they like to be busy and active; they enjoy having plenty of activities to participate in. The most popular activities included arts and crafts, computer games, outside play, baking, cars and trains. The older children specifically identified that a rich and varied range of activities was very important as they didn't like being bored.



Outdoor play and being able to access this type of play was identified by the majority of children as an element that was very important to them. A few children expressed a dislike of some outdoor activities/sports, so being able to offer a choice of access to outdoor activities is very important to children.

The setting that consulted on uniforms found that children preferred staff to dress in a range of colours rather than the same, and bright colours and soft materials were their preferred choice.

Food and drink was an element that the children commented on extensively. Food was definitely a topical issue for the children, and they all identified the food and drink that they enjoyed and didn't like., This is an area where further consultation could be undertaken.

A proportion of children identified that if they were given the choice they would choose to stay at home with their parents, “I would like to stay at home with my mum and dad and my sister. I like to help mum bake buns”.

3.2 Favourite things in childcare

Children within the settings said these were their favourite things about the settings, several children identified the same things and this varied depending on the age of the child:-

Art & painting & drawing

Playing football

I love singing / Listening to music

I absolutely adore reading

I like riding my bike

I like playing catch

I like to go to the park on the big swings, but I don't like the little swings.

I like helping mummy and baking buns and cakes

I like the rain and would still want to be outside playing in the rain

Writing stories

I like the train tracks and the trains

My favourite is the cars

Digging – I like digging holes

I like the big balls I can bounce it and put it in the net

I like play dough best it's soft and smells nice

I like the computer and Dora the Explorer – I have to collect the bracelets

I like playing with my friends

I like playing with the dolls house

I like playing outside running with my friends

I like because I have lots of friends there and its fun

I like the ladybird numbers

Lots to do

Being kept busy

Lots of choices

Snowballs

I like playing in the movement area with the big ball, and with the water and making cakes in the dough.

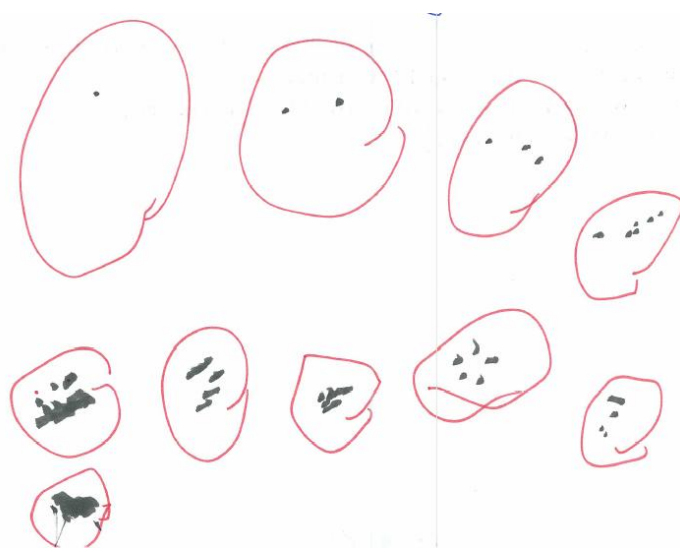
Playing goodies and baddies with other boys at playgroup its fun when we chase and fall on the floor

I like my Barbie and all her dresses but we don't have any at playgroup

I like to play superman with but we don't have any masks at playgroup; I have one at home and a dressing up set

I like to play in the kitchen

I like going to the café and the mini beast hunt.



"I like ladybird numbers."

3.3 Things that children don't like about childcare

The children identified the following things as the aspects of childcare that they don't like:

I don't like it when it is too noisy

I don't like boys it would be nice to have more girls, boys are boring they don't like putting makeup on.

I don't like mushrooms but I love tuna sandwiches.

I don't like maths

I don't like dancing because it makes my tummy feel funny

I don't like it when I get smacked (by other children)

It's not nice when there are lots of children and it's busy

I don't like he bite me

3.4 The things that are important about the people that look after them What makes a good play leader

I want a man that can read about dinosaurs, my man dances good

Would say nice things

Give lots of hugs

She would play with me lots

Have red hair

She would be tall

Sing songs to us

Build Towers

Be kind

Her name is Sophie she is a lady and has an orange face and blue arms and legs

I would like a man and a lady

Good with kids

Good ideas of what they are going to do

Playful

Good at making things

Mad (but not too mad)

Have fun

Free spirits

Lots of time

Treat children with respect

Learn things kids know

Know good games

Listening skills

Interacting with children

A giggle

They are fun and play games with us and they are kind. They are really nice to you and when you are upset they cheer you up.

They are fun and draw pictures

Adults to look after us

I want an ice cream lady to sell ice cream



"I want a man that can read about dinosaurs, my man dances good."

4. What children would like to see in the future if they had a choice

The consultation aimed to collect children's ideas on how to improve childcare provision in the future. In general terms the younger children found it difficult to articulate how childcare could be improved, but they were very able to discuss and identify the resources and activities that they would like to see in the future. Children were asked to consider, given a choice what would they like to see in their setting in the future. The children came up with an extensive list of activities and elements that were important to them. Below is a selection of what children requested

I would like a new telly and some new toys in the play room, no belly's.
Masks and dressing up clothes
We could go to the park there are two climbing frames, a little one for babies and a big one for me.
I like power rangers and transformers and spiderman why can't we buy some for nursery.
Blue walls for boys
Lots of toys and bikes
Pink walls
Want pets like dogs and rabbits
Cars and trains
I want my world at nursery
I would like colourful bricks
I would like a cow
I would like a racing car a real one for outside with proper wheels.
I would like a guitar
Games
More crafts
Equipped kitchen for cooking activities
Adventure playground
Interactive white board
Free rein by ofsted to do scary activities
More sports equipment
Offer free places for boys so has someone to play with
More girls at school club there are too many boys
A nursery made of sweets, so that I can pull the sweets off and eat them
Computer and Dora the explorer games
A tree with a swing on so I can play outside all day.
Lots of friends
I would like a piano because they make a bash and bong



"I would like a racing car
a real one for outside
with proper wheels."

4.1 Themes

Throughout the consultation there were several generic themes that children identified as areas that they would like to see developed in the future.

As previously stated children commented extensively on food and drink; it was a very topical issue for the children. It is recommended that children are supported further to enable their involvement in discussions relating to the choice and range of food that is provided within settings, as this was clearly an important issue for children. The social aspect of childcare was important to children having friends and belonging / being part of a group, and having a sense of feeling safe and secure. Without this in place children are prevented from participating. It is recommended that settings are supported to develop their policies and practices within this area and that positive behaviour training for staff is promoted.

Outdoor play and risky play was very important to children. It was a topic that was important to most of the children regardless of age. The subject was discussed across the age groups. It is recommended that further training and guidance is provided to enable settings to continue to develop this area of provision.

Music and having access to musical instruments was a theme that was repeated by several of the children. It is recommended that further consultation is undertaken to examine whether this area of provision needs investment and further development.

It became apparent throughout the project that children are able and very capable at identifying the toys and resources that they would like to have within their setting. It is recommended that children are supported further to enable them to be actively involved in the choice of new resources. This could be actively encouraged by ensuring that the scoring system for all funding bids incorporates an element that takes account of the consultation with children.

The final major theme that was identified was regarding IT equipment and software. Access to computers and software was very important to children, and numerous children identified this type of equipment as something they would like in the future. During the consultation it was identified that although children were very enthusiastic about the use of IT, at times staff felt that they didn't have the skills and knowledge required to develop children's skills within this area. It is therefore recommended that further consultation is undertaken with staff to assess whether this is an isolated issue or a common perception and feeling amongst Early Years staff.



"I would like me at my perfect nursery."