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# Pre-school centre characteristics: An analysis of centre manager interviews

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# Pre-school centre characteristics: An analysis of centre manager interviews

## **Abstract**

This longitudinal study assesses the attainment and development of children followed between the ages of 3 and 7 years. Over 700 children were recruited to the study during 1998 and 1999 from 80 pre-school centres. Both qualitative and quantitative methods (including multilevel modelling) are used to explore the effects of pre-school experience on children's cognitive attainment and social/behavioural development at entry to school and any continuing effects on such outcomes up to 7 years of age. In addition to the effects of preschool experience, the study investigates the contribution to children's development of individual and family characteristics such as gender, family size, parental education and employment. This overview describes the research design and discusses a variety of research issues (methodological and practical) in investigating the impact of pre-school provision on children's developmental progress. A parallel study is being carried out in England (EPPE).

## **Keywords**

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## **Disciplines**

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# Effective Pre-school Provision Northern Ireland (EPPNI) Project

## Pre-school Centre Characteristics

An Analysis of  
Centre Manager Interviews

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## OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

This longitudinal study assesses the attainment and development of children followed between the ages of 3 and 8 years. Over 700 children were recruited to the study during 1998 and 1999 from 80 pre-school centres in Northern Ireland. Both qualitative and quantitative methods (including multilevel modelling) are used to explore the effects of pre-school experience on children's cognitive attainment and social/behavioural development at entry to school and any continuing effects on such outcomes up to 8 years of age. In addition to the effects of pre-school experience, the study investigates the contribution to children's development of individual and family characteristics such as gender, family size, parental education and employment. This overview describes the research design and discusses a variety of research issues (methodological and practical) in investigating the impact of pre-school provision on children's developmental progress. A parallel study is being carried out in England (EPPE).

### PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF EARLY EDUCATION IN THE UK

There has been little large-scale, systematic research on the effects of early childhood education in the UK. The 'Start Right' Enquiry (Ball 1994; Sylva 1994) reviewed the evidence of British research and concluded that small-scale studies suggested a positive impact but that large-scale research was inconclusive. The Start Right enquiry recommended more rigorous longitudinal studies with baseline measures so that the 'value added' to children's development by pre-school education could be established.

Research evidence elsewhere on the effects of different kinds of pre-school environment on children's development (Melhuish et al. 1990; Melhuish 1993; Sylva & Wiltshire 1993; Schweinhart & Weikart 1997; Borge & Melhuish 1995; National Institute of Child Health Development 1997) suggests positive outcomes. Some researchers have examined the impact of particular characteristics, e.g. gender and attendance on children's adjustment to nursery classes (Davies & Brember 1992), or adopted cross-sectional designs to explore the impact of different types of pre-school provision (Davies & Brember 1997). Feinstein, Robertson & Symons (1998) attempted to evaluate the effects of pre-schooling on children's subsequent progress but birth cohort designs may not be appropriate for the study of the influence of pre-school education. The absence of data on children's attainments at entry to pre-school means that neither the British Cohort Study (1970) nor the National Child Development Study (1958) can be used to explore the effects of pre-school education on children's progress. These studies are also limited by the time lapse and many changes in the nature of pre-school provision which have occurred. Before the beginning of the EPPNI and EPPE projects no research using multilevel models (Goldstein 1987) had been used to investigate the impact of both type of provision and individual centre effects. Thus little research in the UK has explored whether some forms of provision have greater benefits than others.

In the UK there is a long tradition of variation in pre-school provision both between types (e.g. playgroup, local authority or private nursery or nursery classes) and in different parts of the country reflecting different levels of funding and geographical conditions (i.e. urban/rural and local access to centres). A series of reports (House of Commons Select Committee 1989; DES Rumbold Report 1990; Ball 1994) have questioned whether Britain's pre-school education is as effective as it might be and have urged better co-ordination of services and research into the impact of different forms of provision (Siraj-Blatchford 1995). The EPPNI and EPPE projects are thus the first large-

scale studies in the UK on the effects of different kinds of pre-school provision relating experience in particular centres and type of centre to child development.

## **OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS**

The EPPNI and EPPE projects investigate three issues that have important implications for policy and practice:

- the effects on children of different types of pre-school provision,
- the 'structural' (e.g. adult-child ratios) and 'process' characteristics (e.g. interaction styles) of more effective pre-school centres, and
- the interaction between child and family characteristics and the kind of pre-school provision a child experiences.

The research design was chosen to enable investigation of the progress and development of individual children (including the impact of personal, socio-economic and family characteristics), and the effect of individual pre-school centres on children's outcomes at entry to school, through to the end of Key Stage 1. The growing field of school effectiveness research has developed an appropriate methodology for the separation of intake and school influences on children's progress using so called 'value added' multilevel models (Goldstein 1987 & 1995). As yet, however, such techniques have not been applied to the pre-school sector, although recent examples of value added research for younger ages at the primary level have been provided by Tymms et al. 1997; Sammons & Smees 1998; Jesson et al. 1997; Strand 1997; and Yang & Goldstein 1997. These have examined the relationship between baseline assessment at reception to infant school through to age 7.

### **The 8 aims of the EPPNI Project**

- To produce a detailed description of the 'career paths' of a large sample of children and their families between entry into pre-school education and the first four years of primary school.
- To compare and contrast the developmental progress of 800+ children from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds who have differing pre-school experiences.
- To separate out the effects of pre-school experience from the effects of education in the first three years of primary school.
- To establish whether some forms of pre-school experience are more effective than others in promoting children's cognitive and social/emotional development during the pre-school years (ages 3-4) and the first four primary years (4-8 years).
- To discover the individual characteristics (structural and process) of pre-school education in centres found to be most effective.
- To investigate differences in the progress of different groups of children, e.g. children from disadvantaged backgrounds and both genders.

- To investigate the medium-term effects of pre-school education on educational performance at age 8 in a way which will allow the possibility of longitudinal follow-up at later ages to establish long-term effects, if any.
- To relate the use of pre-school provision to parental labour market participation.

### **The sample: centres and children**

In order to maximise the likelihood of identifying the effects of various types of provision, the EPPNI sample was stratified by type of centre and geographical location. The centres were chosen to include a selection of nursery classes and schools, playgroups, private day nurseries, reception classes and reception groups. Thus examples of all major types of pre-school centre in Northern Ireland were included in the study.

Over 700 children were recruited from 80 pre-school centres from all Education & Library Boards in Northern Ireland. Children and their families were selected randomly in each centre to participate in the EPPNI Project. All parents gave written permission for their children to participate. In order to examine the impact of no pre-school provision, an additional sample of 150 children with no pre-school experience were recruited from the year 1 classes which EPPNI children entered.

The progress and development of pre-school children in the EPPNI sample is being followed over four years until the end of year 3 of primary school. Details about length of sessions and number of sessions normally attended per week have been collected to enable the amount of pre-school education experienced to be quantified for each child in the sample. Two complicating factors are that a substantial proportion of children have moved from one form of pre-school provision to another (e.g. from playgroup to nursery class) and some will attend more than one centre in a week. Careful records are necessary in order to examine issues of stability and continuity, and to document the range of pre-school experiences to which individual children can be exposed.

### **Child assessments**

Around the third birthday, or up to a year later if the child entered pre-school provision after three, each child was assessed by a researcher on four cognitive tasks from BASII (Elliott et al 1996): verbal comprehension, naming vocabulary, knowledge of similarities seen in pictures, and block building. A profile of the child's social and behavioural adjustment was completed by the member of the pre-school staff who knew the child best. If the child changed pre-school before school entry, he or she was assessed again. At school entry, a similar cognitive battery was administered along with knowledge of the alphabet and rhyme/alliteration (literacy measures). The year 1 teacher completed the social behavioural profile.

Further assessments are made at the end of Year 2. In addition to standardised assessments of reading and mathematics, information on school progress, attendance and special needs will be collected. At age 7, children will also be invited to report themselves on their attitudes to school. The end of Key Stage 1 test results will be collected directly from the child's school.

## Measuring child/family characteristics known to have an impact on children's development

- 1) Information on individual 'child factors' such as gender, language, health and birth order was collected at parent interview.
- 2) Family factors were also investigated. Parent interviews provided detailed information about parent education, occupation and employment history, family structure and pre-school attendance. In addition, details about the child's day care history, parental attitudes and involvement in educational activities (e.g. reading to child, teaching nursery rhymes, television viewing etc) have been collected and analysed.

## Pre-school Characteristics and Processes

Regional researchers interviewed centre managers on: group size, child staff ratio, staff training, aims, policies, curriculum, parental involvement, etc. 'Process' characteristics such as the day-to-day functioning within settings (e.g. child-staff interaction, child-child interaction, and structuring of children's activities) were also studied. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) which has been recently adapted (Harms, Clifford & Cryer 1998) and the Caregiver Interaction Scale (Arnett 1989) were also administered. The ECERS includes the following sub-scales:

- Space and furnishings
- Personal care routines
- Language reasoning
- Activities
- Interaction
- Programme structure
- Parents and staffing

In addition four additional ECERS sub-scales (ECERS-E) describing educational provision in terms of: Language, Mathematics, Science and the Environment, and Diversity were also used in each pre-school centre.

## Case Studies

In addition to the quantitative data collected about children, their families and their pre-school centres, detailed qualitative data will be collected using case studies. The case studies were chosen retrospectively to include examples of the main types of pre-school provision in Northern Ireland. This will add the fine-grained detail to how processes within centres articulate, establish and maintain good practice.

The methodology of the EPPNI project is thus mixed. These detailed case studies will use a variety of methods of data gathering, including documentary analysis, interviews and observations and the results will help to illuminate the characteristics of more successful pre-school centres and assist in generating guidance on good practice. Particular attention will be paid to parent involvement, teaching and learning processes, child-adult interaction and social factors in learning. Inevitably there are difficulties associated with the retrospective study of process characteristics of centres and it will be important to examine field notes and pre-school centre histories to establish the extent of change during the study period.

## **ANALYTIC STRATEGY**

The EPPNI research was designed to enable the linking of three sets of data: information about children's attainment and development (at different points in time), information about children's personal, social and family characteristics (e.g. age, gender, SES etc), and information about pre-school experience (type of centre and its characteristics).

Longitudinal research is essential to enable the impact of child characteristics (personal, social and family) to be disentangled from any influence related to the characteristics of pre-school centre attended. Given the disparate nature of children's pre-school experience it is vital to ensure that the influences of age at assessment, amount and length of pre-school experience and pre-school attendance record are accounted for when estimating the effects of pre-school education. This information is also important in its own right to provide a detailed description of the range of pre-school provision experienced by different children and any differences in the patterns of provision used by specific groups of children/parents and their relationship to parents' labour market participation. Predictor variables for attainment at entry to primary school will include prior attainment (verbal and non-verbal sub scales), social/emotional profiles, and child characteristics (personal, social and family).

The extent to which it is possible to explain (statistically) the variation in children's scores on the various measures assessed at entry to primary school will provide evidence about whether particular forms of pre-school provision have greater benefits in promoting development by the end of the pre-school period. Analyses will test out the impact of measures of pre-school process characteristics, such as the scores on various ECERS scales and pre-school centre structural characteristics such as ratios. This will provide evidence as to which measures are associated with better cognitive and social/behavioural outcomes in children.

### **Identifying continuing effects of pre-school centres at age 8**

Cross-classified multilevel models have been used to examine the long term effects of primary schools on later secondary performance (Goldstein & Sammons 1997). In the EPPNI research it is planned to use such models to explore the possible mid-term effects of pre-school provision on later progress and attainment at primary school at age 8. The use of cross classified methods explicitly acknowledges that children's educational experiences are complex and that over time different institutions may influence cognitive and social/behavioural development for better or worse. This will allow the relative strength of any continuing effects of pre-school attendance to be ascertained, in comparison with the primary school influence.

### **The Linked Study in England 1997-2003**

The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project is a linked project and is under the directorship of Professor Kathy Sylva, Professor Edward Melhuish, Professor Pam Sammons, and Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford. The study explores the characteristics of different kinds of early years provision and examines children's development in pre-school, and influences on their later adjustment and progress at primary school up to age 7 years. It will help to identify the aspects of pre-school

provision which have a positive impact on children's attainment, progress, and development, and so provide guidance on good practice. The research involves 141 pre-school centres randomly selected throughout 5 regions of England. The study investigates all main types of pre-school provision attended by 3 to 4 year olds in England: playgroups, private day nurseries, nursery classes, nursery schools, local authority nurseries and combined centres. The data from England and Northern Ireland offer opportunities for potentially useful comparisons.

## **Summary**

The EPPNI project studies the complicated effects of amount and type of pre-school provision experienced by children and their personal, social and family characteristics on subsequent progress and development. Assessment of both cognitive and social/behavioural outcomes are made. The relationships between pre-school characteristics and children's development can be explored. The results of these analyses and the findings from the qualitative case studies of selected centres can inform both policy and practice. Comparisons with the English study (EPPE) can further illuminate the interpretation of results.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reports on interviews conducted with managers of the EPPNI pre-school centres which took place between September 1998 and July 1999. In total, 80 centre managers in five local areas of Northern Ireland (five Education and Library Boards) were interviewed. The breakdown of types of pre-school centres and areas are shown in the table below.

### Number of centres by ELB

	Belfast	West	North-east	South-east	South	Total
<b>PG</b>	3	3	3	3	3	<b>15</b>
<b>PDN</b>	5	4	4	4	2	<b>19</b>
<b>NC</b>	2	1	1	1	2	<b>7</b>
<b>NS</b>	1	2	2	2	2	<b>9</b>
<b>RC</b>	2	3	1	1	2	<b>9</b>
<b>RG</b>	2	2	6	5	6	<b>21</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>80</b>

PG= Playgroup

PDN= Private Day Nursery

NC= Nursery Class

NS= Nursery School

RC= Reception Class

RG= Reception Group

The interview was designed to provide information concerning a variety of different characteristics and areas in each of the pre-school settings.

The interview schedule explored the following areas:- **general information** i.e. age of centre, opening times, major objectives etc., **parental involvement** i.e. opportunities for parent/staff contact, written materials provided to parents, parent education etc., **the staff** i.e. conditions and benefits, qualifications, turnover etc., **the children** i.e. numbers, provision for special education needs etc. **perceptions of quality in child care and education**, and **organisational practices** i.e. planning and record-keeping etc.

This paper is divided into four sections. Section One describes the characteristics of the centres, distribution of children and the facilities available for the staff. Section Two deals with staffing levels, recruitment, turnover and working conditions. It also looks at staff benefits, training and development. Manager/senior persons qualifications are considered in regard to observational profiles (See technical paper one). Section three is concerned with quality, curriculum planning, assessment, and special needs. The final section looks at parental access and interaction with the centres.

Overall a good range of facilities were offered by all types of pre-school provision involved in the project. All centres met and improved on the minimum statutory staff/child ratios. Staffing within the sector as a whole was fairly stable with most children experiencing a fair degree of continuity in care and education.

Training opportunities for staff working in all types of pre-school setting were of a high standard. However, no clear pattern emerged regarding contracts and other staff benefits. Overall full-time

staff working in the statutory education sector have access to better staff development opportunities than all other groups of staff.

As expected the senior person working with children in the statutory sector held a teaching qualification whilst in the private sector the highest qualification held in the majority of centres was a NNEB/NVQ Level 3. The most commonly held childcare qualification amongst other pre-school staff was NVQ Level 3.

The majority of centres held regular staff meetings with the statutory sector being more likely to fund attendance. Widespread use was made of the Pre-School Curriculum Guidelines and NIPPA guidelines. When considering issues of quality, managers agreed about what were the most important objectives and characteristics of their centres, with the development of a positive self-concept coming out on top. Almost all centres conducted regular assessments in a wide variety of developmental areas and employed a system for identifying special needs.

Parents were surprisingly allowed to visit their centres on a daily basis more often in the educational sector than the private sector. The most commonly reported areas of parental help were fund raising and maintaining the physical environment.



## Introduction

The Effective Pre-school Provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI) project seeks to explore the relationship between children's developmental and cognitive progress and the characteristics of different school settings. Descriptions of the characteristics of the six types of pre-schools within the study (nursery classes, nursery schools, reception classes, reception groups, playgroups, and private day nurseries) have been derived from the following sources:

- a) **Observational Profiles**
- b) **Case Studies**
- c) **Semi-structured interviews with centre managers.**

a) The Observational Profiles

The profiles for different pre-school types measured by the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales [ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford & Cryer 1998) and ECERS-E (Sylva et al 1998)] are described in a separate report. These scales explore 'process' characteristics such as the day-to-day functioning within settings (e.g. child-staff interaction, child-child interaction, and structuring of children's activities) as well as educational provision in terms of language, mathematics, science and the environment and diversity.

b) Case Studies

In addition to the range of quantitative data collected about pre-school centres, detailed in-depth qualitative research is being carried out in four selected centres to represent the main types of pre-school provision in Northern Ireland.

c) Semi-structured interviews with centre managers.

This paper reports on interviews conducted during the period of the EPPNI research (1998-2003) with the managers of 80 pre-school centres. This interview was designed to provide information likely to help differentiate effectiveness in pre-school settings by contextualising information from the other sources described above.

Each interview was conducted face-to-face by a trained regional Research Officer who was familiar with the setting, having made numerous visits to assess EPPNI children. The interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and were always arranged well in advance to prevent disruption during the course of the interview. In recognition of the fact that some questions needed a longer response time (i.e. what is good quality child-care) a selection of questions were left with the centre manager in the form of a questionnaire to be returned at a later date.

The interview schedule explored the following areas:- **general information** i.e. age of centre, opening times, major objectives etc., **parental involvement** i.e. opportunities for parent/staff contact, written materials provided to parents, parent education etc., **the staff** i.e. conditions and benefits, qualifications, turnover etc., **the children** i.e. numbers, provision for special education needs etc. **perceptions of quality in child care and education**, and **organisational practices** i.e. planning and record-keeping etc.

This paper is divided into four sections. Section One describes the characteristics of the centres, distribution of children and the facilities available for the staff. Section Two deals with staffing levels, recruitment, turnover and working conditions. It also looks at staff benefits, training and development. Manager/senior persons qualifications are considered in regard to observational profiles (See technical paper one). Section three is concerned with quality, curriculum planning,

assessment, and special needs. The final section looks at parental access and interaction with the centres.

**SECTION ONE**  
**Centre Characteristics**

1.1 Age, opening hours and fees

Centre managers were asked about how long their centres had been established, their opening hours and any charges levied to parents (if appropriate). This information is shown in Table 1.

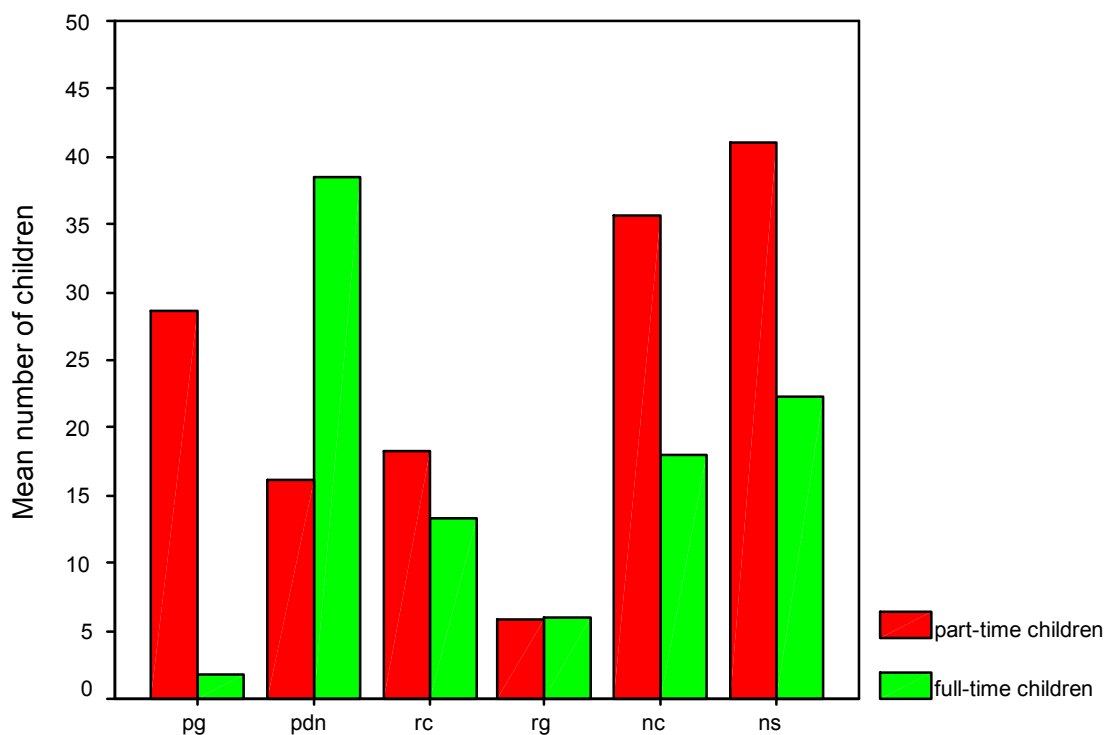
**Table 1- Centre age, opening hours and fees (by pre-school type)**

	<b>PG</b>	<b>PDN</b>	<b>RC</b>	<b>RG</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>NS</b>
<b>N</b>	15	19	9	21	7	9
<b>Mean age of centre (mths)</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>Response</b>	15/15	19/19	8/9	20/21	7/7	9/9
<b>Mean opening hrs per day</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>Response</b>	15/15	19/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9
<b>Mean parental fee per session</b>	<b>£5.40</b>	<b>£17.00</b>	<b>£0.22</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£1.14</b>	<b>£0.89</b>
<b>Response</b>	15/15	18/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9

Private day nurseries were usually the most recently established centres in the study, while reception groups had usually been established for the longest. This may however reflect the age of the primary school rather than the reception groups per se. The nominal fee charged by the nurseries (classes and schools) and reception class is to cover any snacks that are provided by the centre.

## 1.2 Number and age of children

The average number of children per centre is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1- Average Number of Children (by pre-school type)**

In four out of six types of provision (nursery schools and classes, reception class and playgroups) there were more part-time children (attending either morning or afternoon sessions) than full-timers. Children attending full-time were in the majority in private day nurseries.

Only private day nurseries were used significantly by the under-threes. The majority of children who attended playgroups were aged 3-4 years (64.1%) whilst most 4-5 year olds in the study attended either reception classes (61.9%) or groups (87.4%). Children attending on a full time basis used private day nurseries more than any other type of centre (68.6%) and playgroups the least (5.7%).

Table 2 illustrates the age profile for children in the project attending different types of provision.

**Table 2- Distribution of children's age (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Part time</b>	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	<b>57.9%</b>	<b>48.7%</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	<b>64.7%</b>
Under 1yr	0.4%	2.1%				
1yr-2yr	0.7%	5.7%				
2yr-3yrs	5.5%	7.2%			4.2%	
3yr-4yrs	63.4%	9.5%	17.5%	8.5%	49.1%	47.8%
4yr-5yrs	24.3%	5.1%	40.4%	40.2%	13.1%	16.9%
<b>Full time</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>70.4%</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	<b>51.3%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>
Under 1yr	1.3%	14.1%				
1yr-2yrs	0.9%	13.9%				
2-3yrs	1.1%	14.5%				
3yr-4yrs	0.7%	16.6%	29.1%	5.2%	19.2%	14.1%
4yr-5yrs	1.7%	11.3%	31.0%	46.1%	14.4%	21.2%

### 1.3 Staff/Building Facilities

Managers were asked whether they provided certain facilities for their staff. Overall 65.8% of centres provided a separate staff lounge, 93.7% had an adult toilet, 78.5% provided separate storage space for staff belongings, and 78.5% provided a separate room where staff meetings could take place. The provision of each facility differed by pre-school type with the exception of storage for staff belongings and a separate room for staff meetings.

Staff lounge	$\chi^2(5) = 29.56, p < .001$
Adult toilet	$\chi^2(5) = 15.06, p < .05$
Storage for belongings	$\chi^2(5) = 5.80, p > .05$
Room for meetings	$\chi^2(5) = 8.99, p > .05$

**Table 3- Staff/Building facilities (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Storage for belongings	60.0%	88.9%	77.8%	85.7%	85.7%	66.7%
Adult toilet	73.3%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	85.7%	100.0%
Staff lounge	13.3%	83.3%	100.0%	81.0%	71.4%	44.4%
Room for meetings	60.0%	66.7%	100.0%	90.5%	85.7%	77.8%

Managers were also asked if they provided a parent room (a room where parents can have space to discuss issues between themselves), and if so, its availability. Only 23.1% of managers reported a room being available on a daily basis. 14.1% reported that a room was available less often than once a week and 62.8% of centres did not provide a room at all. Provision of a parent room differed significantly across pre-school type ( $H(5)=11.83, p<.05$ ). One playgroup did not answer this question.

## **SUMMARY**

The majority of children attending pre-school full-time were in private day nurseries. Only private day nurseries were used significantly by under threes. The majority of children attending on a part-time basis were in playgroups. The majority of 3-4 year olds were in nursery classes/schools whilst most 4-5 year olds were in reception groups.

Overall a good range of facilities in the physical environment in which the staff work were reported by all types of pre-schools setting. Whilst less playgroups offer these facilities it may be that many playgroups are not purpose built and therefore must work within the limitations of their setting.

## SECTION TWO

### Staff

#### 2.1 Staffing Levels

##### Statutory Minimum Levels

The minimum staffing level across the different types of pre-school provision in the EPPNI sample was not uniform. In the education sector, that is nursery classes/schools and reception classes/groups the minimum requirement is a ratio of 1 adult to 13 children as set out in 'Investing in Early Learning' (1998) by the Department of Education. Inspections are conducted by the Education and Training Inspectorate and are similar to school inspections. Inspectors of reception classes and groups would occur at the same time as that of a primary school. Playgroups and private day nurseries are required to have a ratio of 1 adult to every 8 children. Inspections of these centres are undertaken by Early Years Departments in the Social Services.

#### 2.2 Centre Staff: Child Ratios

Managers were asked how many employees worked in the centre and it was therefore possible to calculate staffing levels from the reports on the number of staff and children. For all the settings the figures may not necessarily reflect the number of children and adults in the centre at any one point in time and thus provide only a very limited guide to the actual ratios experienced by children in the centres. Figure 2 shows the mean number of staff by pre-school type. These figures however show the total number of employees and not only those working with children (i.e. reception classes/groups).

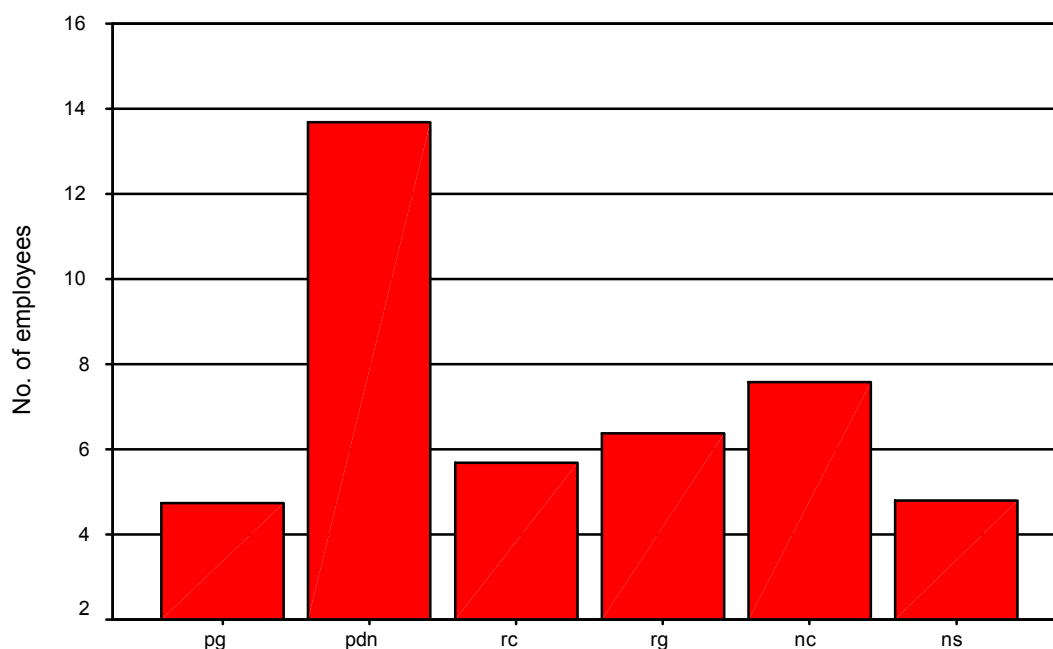


Figure 2- Mean number of employees per centre (by pre-school type)

Therefore, over a period of time, independent observations on usual staffing levels were also made in centres by research officers to obtain a more accurate figure. In these time-point observations,

the number of children in the centre, the number of paid staff, and also the number of voluntary staff directly involved with the children were observed. Voluntary staff were only included in the staffing levels if they attended the centre on a regular basis over a substantial period of time sufficient to serve as 'unpaid workers' rather than casual visitors. These time point observations are shown in Figure 3.

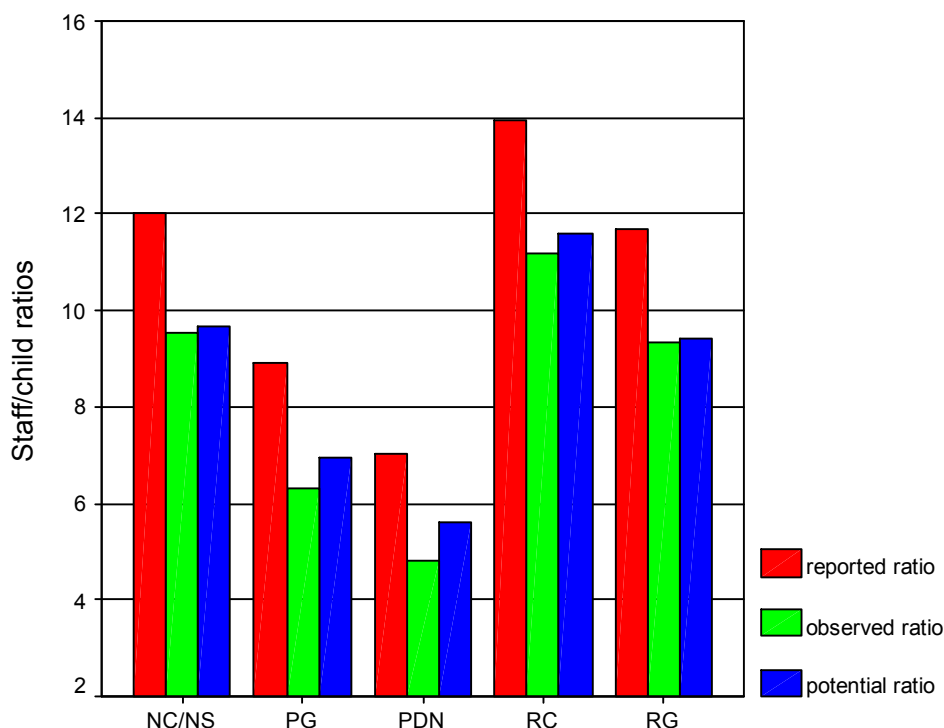


Figure 3- Mean number of staff to children (by pre-school type)

Figure 3 shows the staff: child ratio as reported by the centre managers, the ratios observed by the research officers when visiting each centre and the potential ratio if all child care staff and children are present. Whilst all centres met the required staff: child ratio, analysis of the ratio data found clear differences between the pre-school settings. The ratios calculated from reported number of staff and children differed by pre-school type ( $H(4)=39.46, p<.001$ ), as were both the observed ( $H(4)=32.53, p<.001$ ) and potential ratios ( $H(4)=26.35, p<.001$ ).

### Ratios and quality characteristics

We examined the relationship between the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales [ECERS-E (Sylva et al.,1998) and ECERS-E (Harms et al., 1998)]. There was little evidence of associations between centre ratios and quality characteristics as measured by ECERS-R. There is also little evidence of an association between centre ratios and educational focus as measured by ECERS-E.

It should be noted that the observational data was collected at a different point in time to the manager interviews. However in practice these figures suggest that all centres offered ratios which were notably lower than the requirements for their sector. Figure 3 shows that on average providers were able to meet and improve on statutory requirements



### 2.3 Other Staff

35.4% of centres said that some kind of external professional staff had direct contact with the children. This figure did not vary across type of provision ( $\chi^2(5)=10.83, p>.05$ ). Table 4 lists the specific forms of the external staff used. Examples of external staff include educational psychologist, speech therapist, health visitor and teacher for children with learning difficulties. These staff should not be confused with volunteers or unpaid staff.

**Table 4- External professional staff**

Top half	Bottom half
Specialised teacher 12.7%	Psychology related roles 3.8%
Language related staff 7.6%	Therapists 2.5%
Peripatetic support 5.1%	Specialised instructor 2.5%
Other 5.1%	Health related roles 1.3%
	Reading specialist 1.3%

### 2.4 Unpaid Help

Most centres in each type of provision benefited from some kind of unpaid help. Overall 69.6% of managers reported that unpaid workers (volunteers, students, parents or other) helped out in their centre, and this was stable across type ( $\chi^2(5)=8.51, p>.05$ ). Although the incidence of unpaid help was substantial it is not clear whether or not it is related directly to work with the children. Specifically 7.6% benefited from parents, 13.9% from volunteers, 59.5% from students and 6.3% from other helpers. Nursery classes and schools received the most help from students. The incidence of volunteers differed across pre-school type ( $\chi^2(5)=13.01, p<.05$ ) whilst the other types of unpaid help remained stable across the different provisions.

**Table 5- Incidence of unpaid help (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
volunteers	40.0%	5.6%	22.2%	9.5%		
Parents	13.3%		11.1%	9.5%	14.3%	
Students	53.3%	66.7%	66.7%	47.6%	57.1%	77.8%
other	6.7%	5.6%	22.2%	4.8%		

Parents  $\chi^2(5) = 3.64, p>.05$

Students  $\chi^2(5) = 3.31, p>.05$

Other  $\chi^2(5) = 5.02, p>.05$

## 2.6 Staff Recruitment

Children develop best in environments in which they have the opportunities to develop trusting relationships (Q.C.A. 2000). Therefore stability of care is important for children's development. This is likely to be particularly important for children acquiring basic communication and social skills. Young children's communications are often idiosyncratic and familiar caregivers will decode the idiosyncrasies appropriately, whereas unfamiliar caregivers are more likely to misunderstand or not comprehend at all, with the consequence that the child receives poor responsiveness (Melhuish 1991). Poor responsiveness in care-giving environments is associated with poorer language development (Melhuish, Lloyd Mooney & Martin 1990). It is therefore important for children to have stable relationships with their carer. Over time carers get to know the child and can provide a level of care and education that is best suited to the child's individual needs. The interview schedule explored the turnover of staff with a view to describing how stable staffing appeared across the range of providers. The questions were asked in relation to those who worked directly with children.

Managers were asked about several potential problem areas in recruiting staff. Figure 4 indicates the percent of managers who said they had a problem of some kind in each area for both qualified staff and 'others' who work with children.

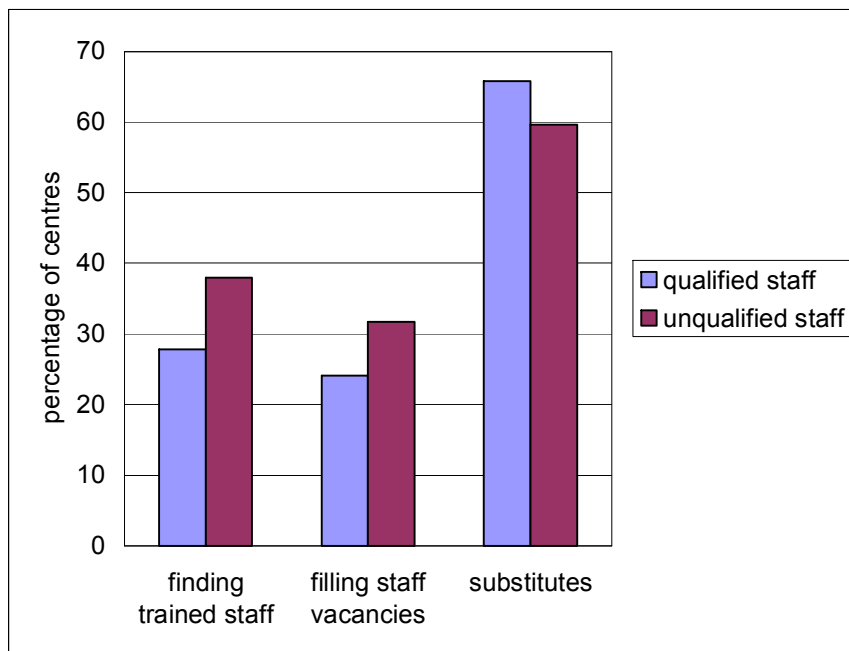


Figure 4- Problems in staff recruitment

Most of the recruiting problems explored remained stable across pre-school provision.

Only finding "other" staff substitutes differed significantly ( $\chi^2(15)=27.12, p<.05$ ) and is presented by pre-school type in Table 6. These are untrained staff that the pre-school can call upon to cover permanent (untrained) staff who may be away on sick leave or out of work for other reasons. The difficulties of finding "cover" staff in the school setting has long been recognised and the provision of dedicated agencies who provide substitute cover at short notice is underdeveloped for pre-school providers.

**Table 6- Finding “other” staff substitutes (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Not a problem	60.0%	22.2%	55.6%	57.1%	28.6%	
Minor problem	20.0%	33.3%	22.2%	28.6%	57.1%	33.3%
Problem not major	13.3%	27.8%	22.2%	14.3%	14.3%	66.7%
Major problem	6.7%	16.7%				

Finding qualified substitutes  $\chi^2(15) = 17.07, p > .05$   
 Filling qualified vacancies  $\chi^2(15) = 23.10, p > .05$   
 Finding qualified staff  $\chi^2(15) = 16.73, p > .05$   
 Filling other vacancies  $\chi^2(15) = 16.41, p > .05$   
 Finding other staff  $\chi^2(15) = 16.77, p > .05$

**2.7 Staff Turnover**

Managers were asked if they experienced problems retaining staff. Overall the majority (91.1%) felt that this was ‘not a problem’ for qualified staff. This did however differ across pre-schools for qualified staff (H (4)=14.46,  $p < .05$ ). Table 7 shows that only playgroups and private day nurseries reported any difficulty in this area. However none of the sample considered retaining qualified staff a ‘major problem’. 87.3% also reported this was ‘not a problem’ for other staff who work with children and this was stable across the different provisions (H (4)=7.37,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 7- Problems retaining qualified staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Not a problem	93.3%	66.7%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Minor problem		33.3%				
Problems but not major	6.7%					
Major problem						

Across the sample, managers reported that 79 permanent staff had left in the previous 12 months. Most of the centres (84.8%) reported having none or only one permanent member of staff leave in the year prior to the interview. This would suggest that staffing across providers is generally stable. However the number of staff leaving differed significantly across pre-school type (H (4)=28.38,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 8- Staff left in last 12 months (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
None	66.7%	16.7%	77.8%	90.5%	85.7%	77.8%
One	20.0%	33.3%	22.2%	9.5%		22.2%
Two	6.7%	27.8%			14.3%	
Three	6.7%	11.1%				
Four		11.1%				

It can be argued that in any institution it is likely that one or two employees will leave over a period of a year. Employees move on for a variety of reasons e.g. promotion or domestic changes. Grouping together 0, 1 and 2 number of ‘movers’ gives some indication of stability, whilst 3 or more ‘movers’ could indicate providers who are experiencing unstable staffing. From this analysis it would appear that only playgroups and private day nurseries experience unstable staffing with 6.7% and 22.2% respectively losing 3 or more members of staff in the previous 12 months.

These figures should be viewed with some caution, being mindful of the total number of permanent staff employed in a centre. To lose one member of staff in a centre that has only three employees could be seen as a greater loss than to lose four staff from a centre that has over twenty employees.

## 2.8 Reasons for staff turnover

Centre managers were also asked why they thought the staff in question had left the centres. Table 9 shows the frequency of reasons given by managers; clearly the most frequent reason was ‘voluntarily’.

**Table 9- Reasons for staff leaving**

Top half	Bottom half
Voluntarily (18)	Sickness (5)
Other (13)	Moved away (5)
Redundant (low enrolment) (7)	Pregnant (4)
	Dismissed (3)
	Don’t know (3)

The first three items in Table 9 were analysed by pre-school type as was the dismissed category and were found to differ significantly across provision. ‘voluntarily’ ( $H(4)=20.84, p<.001$ ), ‘other reasons’ ( $H(4)=25.74, p<.001$ ), ‘low enrolment’ ( $H(4)=25.41, p<.001$ ), and ‘dismissed’ ( $H(4)=12.08, p<.05$ ). Only one form of provision (private day nurseries) reported having dismissed staff for inadequate performance.

## 2.9 Staff Working Conditions

### Written Contracts and Job Descriptions

In a sector which is moving towards greater regulation and the application of agreed standards, having staff who are clear about their roles and responsibilities is important. The questions about written contracts and job descriptions aimed to explore the extent to which centre managers communicated their expectations to the staff. The centre managers were asked if they provided their full-time, part-time, qualified and 'other' staff with written contracts. 74.0% full-time and 42.9% part-time qualified staff were provided with contracts. For 'other' staff who work with children 59.2% full-time and 44.0% part-time were provided with contracts. However no clear pattern emerged regarding this type of benefit. Qualified part-time and 'other' part-time remained stable by pre-school type ( $\chi^2(10)=17.73$ ,  $p>.05$  and  $\chi^2(10)=15.45$ ,  $p>.05$ ), whilst qualified full-time and 'other' full-time varied significantly among the centres ( $\chi^2(10)=17.73$ ,  $p<.05$  and  $\chi^2(10)=25.61$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 10- Written Contracts (by pre-school type)**

Written contracts	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Qual FT	53.3%	64.7 %	66.7%	80.0%	100%	100%
Qual PT	26.7%	47.1%	44.4%	65.0%	14.3%	33.3%
Other FT	33.3%	93.8%	33.3%	50.0%	57.1%	88.9%
Other PT	33.3%	68.8%	44.4%	50.0%		37.5%

Similarly managers were asked if they provided their staff with written job descriptions. Again no clear pattern emerged. 76.3% full-time and 42.9% part-time qualified staff did receive written job descriptions and this was stable across pre-school provision ( $\chi^2(10)=18.09$ ,  $p>.05$  and  $\chi^2(10)=12.69$ ,  $p>.05$ ). For untrained staff 57.1% of full-time and 42.9% part-time were also provided with this benefit. This differed significantly by pre-school type for untrained full-time staff ( $\chi^2(10)=24.50$ ,  $p<.05$ ) but was stable for untrained part-time staff across pre-school type ( $\chi^2(10)=15.51$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 11- Job Descriptions for staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Qual FT	60.0%	62.5%	66.7%	90.0%	100.0%	88.9%
Qual PT	40.0%	47.1%	44.4%	55.0%	42.9%	11.1%
Other FT	33.3%	88.2%	33.3%	40.0%	71.4%	88.9%
Other PT	40.0%	64.7%	44.4%	40.0%		44.4%

Nursery classes were more likely to consider this question not applicable to the recruitment of part-time 'other' staff (85.7%). This may suggest that nursery classes employ very few that would fall into this category.

## Benefits

The interview schedule assessed the provision of several areas of benefit for full-time, part-time, qualified and untrained staff (see Figures 5 and 6). No clear pattern emerged regarding a variety of benefits when analysed by pre-school type.

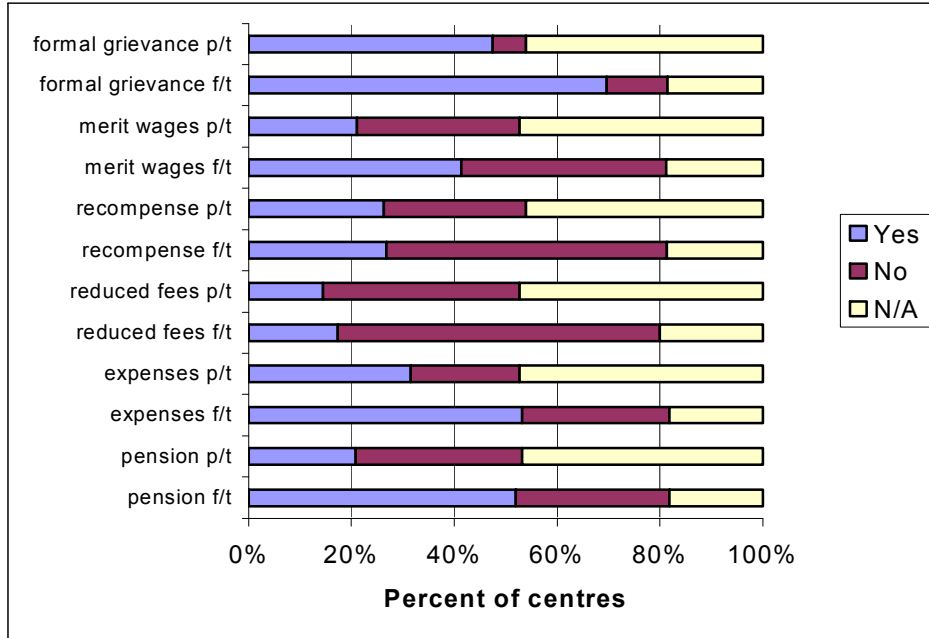


Figure 5- Benefits for full-time and part-time staff (Qualified)

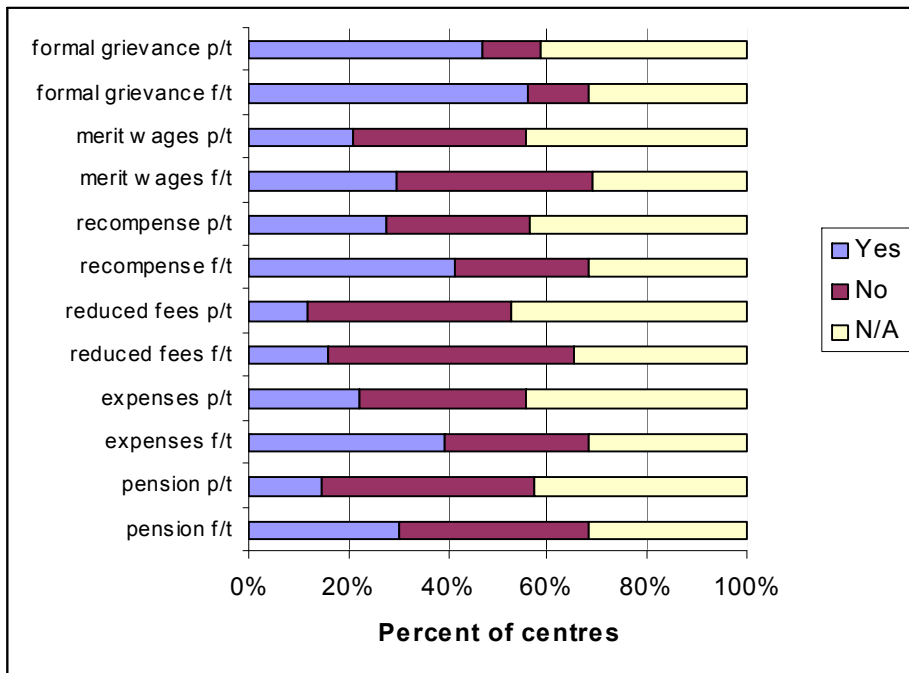


Figure 6- Benefits for full-time and part-time Staff (Untrained)

If working in pre-school settings is to be viewed as a career, then providing a pension structure could provide a strong incentive to employees. Little more than half (51.9%) of providers offered a pension plan for full-time qualified staff, whilst for untrained staff only 30.3% were offered this benefit. This differed significantly across pre-schools for both groups ( $\chi^2(10)=58.97$ ,  $p<.001$  and  $\chi^2(10)=54.91$ ,  $p<.001$  respectively). 100% of nursery classes and schools provided a pension plan for their full-time qualified staff compared with only 6.7% of playgroups. No private day nurseries offered any of their staff a private pension plan.

One perceived benefit of working in an early years setting is that employees may be entitled to reduced childcare for their own children. In a sector, which recruits mostly women, this can be a very attractive perk and a recruitment incentive. Overall however only 17.3% offered this benefit to full-time qualified staff. This differed by pre-school type ( $\chi^2(10)=28.02$ ,  $p<.01$ ), with mainly private day nurseries (38.9%) followed by playgroups (20.0%) doing so. Other categories of staff were similarly offered this incentive which also differed across pre-school provision (part-time qualified,  $\chi^2(10)=18.64$ ,  $p<.05$ , full-time untrained,  $\chi^2(10)=31.69$ ,  $p<.05$ , and part-time trained  $\chi^2(10)=27.09$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This however is to be expected as child places in reception classes and groups, and nursery classes and schools are usually Government funded. It is expected that the numbers of funded places offered will increase with the pre-school expansion scheme (Investing in Early Pre-school Education, 1998) (See Appendix A.1, A.2, A.3, & A.4 for full results of benefits)

## 2.10 Training

Managers were asked if their centre provided any form of in-service training for staff: 83.7% overall said that they did. This differed significantly across pre-school type, ( $\chi^2(5)=12.22$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table12- Centres that provide in-service training (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Yes	60.0%	88.9%	88.9%	85.7%	100.0%	88.9%
No	40.0%	11.1%	11.1%	14.3%		11.1%
Response	15/15	19/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9

Centres were further questioned about the nature of training they provide. Managers referred to both the area of training and the agency of delivery. First Aid was the most commonly mentioned area of training provided. As shown in Tables 13 and 14, a total of 11 content areas of training and 13 modes of delivery were identified from the data.

**Table13- Content areas of training**

Highest ranked items	Middle ranked items	Lowest ranked items
First Aid 12.7%	Health & Safety 6.3%	Reading course 1.3%
Other curriculum areas 11.4%	Special Needs training 5.1%	Numeracy course 1.3%
On the job training 10.1%	Child abuse protection 5.1%	Issues in Early Yrs Ed. 1.3%

**Table 14- Delivery of training**

Highest ranked items	Middle ranked items	Lowest ranked items
Organised by ELB 40.5%	Certified qualification 8.9%	Non specific inset day 1.3%
Any other 20.3%	Specific inset day 5.1%	Non specific external day 1.3%
Provided by NIPPA 11.4%	Provided by Soc. Services 2.5%	EEL programme 1.3%
	CASS programme 2.5%	BAECE programme 1.3%
		Early Yrs Education 1.3%
		DELTA programme 1.3%

(See Appendix B for chi-square results)

### Payment for training

Overall, 70.9% of managers said that they provided payment for full-time qualified staff to go on training courses; 11.4% did not, and the remaining 17.7% thought the question was 'not applicable'. For part-time qualified staff 29.1% of centres provided paid training, 25.3% did not, and 45.6% thought the question was 'not applicable'. The provision of paid training did not vary across pre-school type for both full-time qualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=18.11$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and part-time qualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=8.84$ ,  $p>.05$ ), as detailed in Table 15.

**Table15- Paid training for qualified staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Full Time</b>						
Yes	53.3%	55.6%	66.7 %	81.0%	100.0%	88.9%
No	13.3%	11.1%		19.0%		11.1%
N/A	33.4%	33.3%	33.3%			
<b>Part time</b>						
Yes	26.7%	22.2%	33.3%	47.6%	14.3%	11.1%
No	26.7%	27.8%	11.1%	28.6%	28.6%	22.2%
N/A	46.6%	50.0%	55.6%	23.8%	57.1%	66.7%

For unqualified staff, 53.2% of centres said that they provided paid training for their full-time employees; 38.5% did not, and 16.5% found the question to be 'not applicable'. 30.4% of managers said that they provided payment for part-time unqualified staff to go on training courses; 26.6% did not, and the remaining 43.0% thought the question was 'not applicable'. The provision of paid training differed by pre-school type for full-time unqualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=24.14$ ,  $p<.05$ ) but did not vary significantly for part-time unqualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=11.55$ ,  $p>.05$ ), as shown in Table 16.



**Table 16- Paid training for unqualified staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Full Time</b>						
Yes	33.3%	66.7%	33.3 %	38.1%	85.7%	88.9%
No	20.0%	27.8%		23.8%		
N/A	46.7%	5.6%	66.7%	38.1%	14.3%	11.1%
<b>Part time</b>						
Yes	20.0%	50.0%	22.2%	38.1%		22.2%
No	33.3%	22.2%	22.2%	28.6%	14.3%	33.3%
N/A	46.7%	27.8%	55.6%	33.3%	85.7%	44.5%

## 2.11 Books for staff training

Attending courses can be both expensive and time consuming for any pre-school. However there are other methods by which staff can be supported in their professional development. Books and other materials can be a source of ideas for enhancing practice. Over 80 per cent of managers (87.5%) said they had books or other materials available for staff training. This response differed significantly by pre-school type however, ( $\chi^2(5)=12.22$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and as shown in Table 17, playgroups were least likely to have such materials available to support staff in this area.

**Table 17- Provision of books for staff training (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Yes</b>	66.7%	94.4%	100.0%	85.7%	100.0%	88.9%
<b>No</b>	33.3%	5.6%		14.3%		11.1%
<b>Response</b>	15/15	19/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9

## 2.12 Staff Development

### (a) Appraisal

Staff appraisal is becoming increasingly common in the workplace, being seen as an important element of staff development. The managers were asked whether staff were regularly appraised.

Overall 67.1% of centres use appraisals on their full-time trained staff and 35.4% on their part-time trained staff. The system of appraisal differs across pre-school type for full-time trained staff ( $H(5)=21.510$ ,  $p<.05$ ) but is stable for part-time trained staff ( $H(5)=6.45$ ,  $p>.05$ ).

Overall 41.8% of centres use appraisals for their full-time untrained staff and 27.8% on their part-time untrained staff. When compared across pre-school type both full time ( $H(5)=23.90$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and part-time ( $H(5)=12.35$ ,  $p<.05$ ) untrained staff differed significantly. Table 18 below shows the break down of staff appraisal by pre-school type.

**Table 18- Staff appraisal (by pre-school type) for trained and untrained employees**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>F/Trained staff</b>						
Yes	33.3%	50%	66.7%	85.7%	100.0%	100.0%
No	33.3%	16.7%		14.3%		
N/A	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%			
<b>P/T trained staff</b>						
Yes	26.7%	44.4%	33.3%	42.9%	28.6%	22.2%
No	26.7%	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	14.3%	11.1%
N/A	46.7%	44.4%	55.6%	23.8%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>F/T untrained staff</b>						
Yes	26.7%	83.3%	11.1%	19.0%	57.1%	55.6%
No	26.7%	11.1%	22.2%	47.6%	28.6%	33.3%
N/A	46.7%	5.6%	66.7%	33.3%	14.3%	11.1%
<b>P/T untrained staff</b>						
Yes	20.0%	61.1%	11.1%	19.0%		33.3%
No	33.3%	11.1%	33.3%	52.4%	14.3%	22.2%
N/A	46.7%	27.8%	55.6%	28.6%	85.7%	44.4%

## 2.13 Qualifications

### Managers

Childcare qualifications have traditionally been something of a ‘hotch-potch’. The past lack of national framework has meant that institutions of further education, higher education and national awarding bodies have offered a complex range of awards. The distinction between care and education qualifications has compounded differences. Whilst it could be argued that diversity can be beneficial, the lack of comparability across the qualifications has led to difficulties in establishing national qualification standards. The ongoing qualification equivalencies service by CCEA and initiatives by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA 1999) have provided a framework for nationally accredited qualifications in early years education which is a welcome development. We asked centre managers about their highest childcare/education qualification. However many only provided information on the senior person working directly with the children. Therefore the results provided refer to the senior person who could also include the manager of the centre.

**Table 19- Senior person/managers’ highest childcare qualification**

Highest frequency qualification	Middle frequency qualification	Lowest frequency qualification
Teaching qualification 45.9%	NIPPA qualification 4.1%	BTEC 2.7%
NNEB/NVQ Level 3 32.4%	Montessori qualification 2.7%	No qualifications 1.4%
BA (Hons) 8.1%	BSc (Hons) 2.7%	

Information regarding highest childcare qualification was available for 74 (97.3%) senior person/managers. Table 19 above reveals that the most frequently held childcare qualification was a teaching qualification. This category includes B.Ed., Cert.Ed., and PGCE. Only a small percentage (1.4%) of managers had no qualifications.

**Table 20- Senior person/managers' highest childcare qualification (by pre-school type).**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
NNEB/NVQ	64.3%	66.7%		20.0%		11.1%
Teaching qual.	7.1%		88.9%	60.0%	88.7%	77.8%
NIPPA	14.3%	6.7%				
Montessori	7.1%	6.7%				
BTEC		13.3%				
BA (Hons)		6.7%	11.1%	15.0%	14.3%	
BSc (Hons)			5.0%			11.1%
None	7.1%					

78.4% of the senior person/managers' held either a teaching qualification or NNEB/NVQ Level 3. As expected there was a significant difference between type of centre and manager qualification in that more statutory centres had a senior person/manager with teaching qualifications while the voluntary sector had more senior persons'/managers' with NNEB/NVQ Level 3 ( $\chi^2(35)=65.97$ ,  $p=.001$ ).

This area was explored in more depth by examining the relationship between the senior person/managers' highest childcare qualification and the quality environment profiles (ECERS-E and ECERS-R). Figure 7 below shows the mean ECERS-E and ECERS-R scores grouped according to managers' highest childcare/education qualification of either NNEB/NVQ Level 3 or a teaching qualification.

A six-point scale was used in further statistical analyses of the distribution of childcare qualifications and training in the EPPE project. This was adapted from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 1999). For the purposes of comparisons with the EPPE project this study has followed suit. A summary of the six-point scale is shown in Table 21 below (for a full breakdown see Appendix C). Note that Level 1 cannot apply to childcare qualifications as it requires constant supervision by a supervisor.

**Table 21- Childcare qualification six-point rating scale**

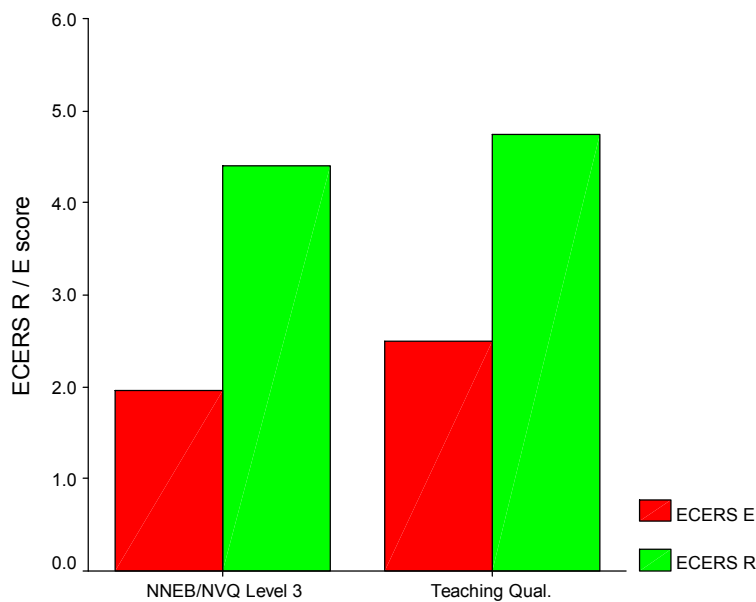
Level	Description	Example
Level 0	Unqualified	
Level 1	(No childcare qual equivalent)	
Level 2	Childcare certificates	NVQ Level 2, BTEC
Level 3	Childcare diplomas	NNEB, NVQ Level 3
Level 4	Childcare advanced diplomas	BA (Hons), BSc (Hons)
Level 5	Professional teaching qual	B.Ed, PGCE

Due to the small number of level 4 qualified managers, levels 3 and 4 were combined in this study

**Table 22- Senior person/manager's highest childcare qualifications (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Unqualified	7.0%					
Level 2		13.3%				
Level 3/4	86.0%	86.7%	11.1%	40.0%	14.3%	22.2%
Level 5	7.0%		88.9%	60.0%	85.7%	77.8%
<b>n</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>

Only 1 centre of the 80 pre-schools had a senior person/manager with no qualifications (playgroup) and only 1 centre had a senior person/manager with a level 2 qualification (private day nursery). The rest of the centre managers had either a level 3/4 or level 5 qualification with the majority in each pre-school type having a level 5 qualification.



**Figure 7- ECERS-E and ECERS-R means by senior person/manager childcare qualification**

For ECERS-E there was a significant difference in the mean scores in that teaching qualifications scored higher than NNEB/NVQ Level 3;  $t(56) = -3.123, p = .003$ . However for ECERS-R the difference was not significant between the means scored by the two types of qualification;  $t(56) = -1.713, p = .092$ .

Both the ECERS-E and ECERS-R were examined in more depth by examining the individual subscales of each by manager qualification (either teaching qualification or NNEB/NVQ Level 3).

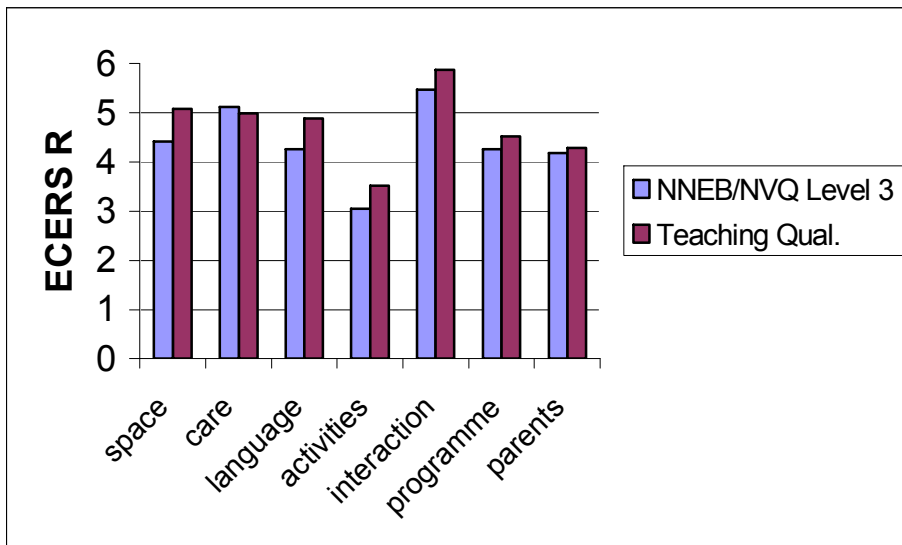


Figure 8- ECERS-R subscale scores

Teaching qualification scored higher on all subscales except personal care. However analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed only a significant difference between qualifications of the senior person/manager and three of the ECERS-R subscale scores- 'Space & furnishings' ( $F(1)=7.64$ ,  $p=.008$ ), 'Language & Reasoning' ( $F(1)=3.94$ ,  $p=.050$ ), and 'Activities' ( $F(1)=6.15$ ,  $p=.013$ ).

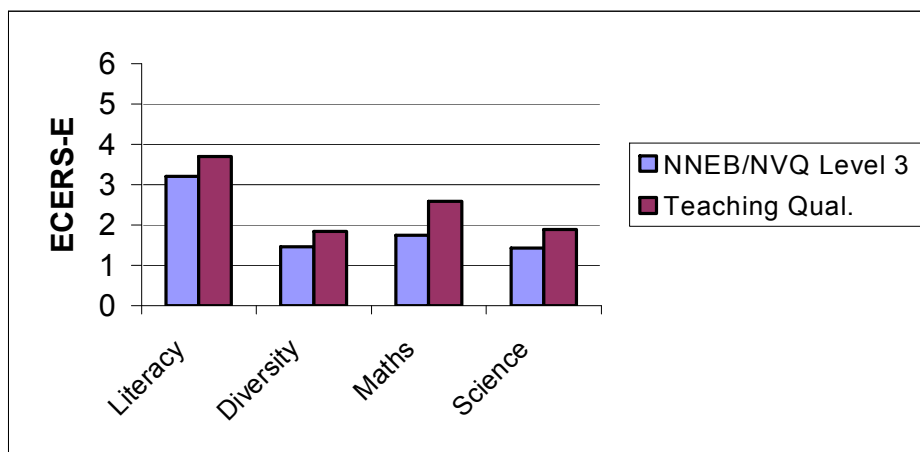


Figure 9- ECERS-E subscale scores

Teaching qualifications scored higher on all ECERS-E subscales. ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference between qualification of manager and all four subscale scores: 'Literacy' ( $F(1)=3.90$ ,  $p=.05$ ), 'Diversity' ( $F(1)=4.06$ ,  $p=.049$ ), 'Maths' ( $F(1)=5.59$ ,  $p=.022$ ), and 'Science' ( $F(1)=4.01$ ,  $p=.05$ ).

Staff

**Table 23- Staff childcare qualifications (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Unqualified	12.9%		7.1%	14.3%	6.2%	8.3%
Level 2	25.8%	25.3%	21.4%	14.3%	6.3%	
Level 3/4	58.1%	74.7%	57.2%	61.9%	75.0%	62.5%
Level 5	3.2%		14.3%	9.5%	12.5%	29.2%
n	31	91	14	21	16	24

In each type of pre-school centre the majority of staff held a Level2 qualification or above with the majority in each holding a Level 3 qualification.

As set out by the ‘Investing in Early Learning Pre-school Education in Northern Ireland’ (1998) document the minimum recommendation is for at least one member of staff in each setting to hold NVQ Level 3 or equivalent and for all other qualified staff to have NVQ Level 2 or equivalent. Table 24 shows the percentages of staff in each type of provision holding a minimum of NVQ Level 3 or above.

**Table 24- Staff with NVQ Level 3 and above**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Person 1	86.0%	93.3%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Person 2	66.7%	81.3%	57.1%	77.8%	83.3%	100.0%
Person 3	28.6%	93.3%	50.0%	50.0%	80.0%	100.0%

Of the 191 other staff for whom information was available childcare qualifications were ranked from highest order as seen in Table 25 below.

**Table 25- Staff's highest childcare qualification**

Highest frequency qualification	Middle frequency qualification	Lowest frequency qualification
NVQ Level 3 30.4%	BA (Hons) 4.2%	PGCE 1.6%
NNEB 26.7%	Cert. Ed. 2.6%	DASE 1.0%
NVQ Level 2 13.1%	BTEC 2.1%	Montessori 0.5%
NIPPA qual. 8.4%	City & Guilds 2.1%	
No qualification 5.2%	B. Ed. 2.1%	

As seen in Table 25 the most commonly held childcare qualification was the NVQ Level 3 childcare qualification. The second most common category was the NNEB (Nursery Nursing Education Board).

## SUMMARY

All centres met and improved on the minimum statutory staff/child ratios.

Staffing within the sector as a whole was fairly stable with most children experiencing a fair degree of continuity in care and education. Only playgroups and private day nurseries tended to experience higher rates of staff turnover than other providers. Only private day nurseries reported having dismissed staff for inadequate performance.

Only finding qualified and unqualified staff substitutes posed a problem for pre-school providers. However across the different settings this was only a major problem for a small percent age of managers.

Overall no clear pattern emerged regarding written contracts, job descriptions and benefits offered to staff working in the pre-school environments.

Training opportunities for staff working in all types of setting were of a high standard. Full-time qualified staff were more likely to be paid for training compared to with part-time and unqualified staff.

Overall full-time staff working in the statutory education sector had access to better staff development opportunities than all other groups of staff.

As expected the senior person working with children in the statutory sector held a teaching qualification whilst in the private sector the highest qualification held in the majority of centres was a NNEB/NVQ Level 3. The most commonly held childcare qualification amongst other pre-school staff was NVQ Level 3.

Where the senior person held a teaching qualification as opposed to a NNEB/NVQ Level 3 the mean scores on ECER-E were significantly higher. The same was found for ECERS-R however the difference was not significant for three of the subscales-‘Space & Furnishings’, ‘Language & Reasoning’ and ‘Activities’.

## SECTION THREE

### 3.0 Curriculum planning and assessments

#### 3.1 Formal Staff Meetings

Managers were asked if they provided the opportunity for staff to meet professionally to discuss their work. Overall 98.7% of centres said that they did have formal staff meetings and this did not vary across pre-school type ( $\chi^2(5)=4.32, p>.05$ ). When asked about the frequency of these meetings the most popular interval was monthly (34.2%). This was stable across pre-school type provision ( $\chi^2(30)=31.75, p>.05$ ).

When asked about the primary focus of these meetings, 91.1% of managers reported that individual children in their centres were discussed ( $\chi^2(5)=.98, p>.05$ ) as was childcare and educational practice (93.7%) ( $\chi^2(5)=13.54, p<.05$ ). However rather than once a month, individual children were discussed 'when needed' and again this did not differ by pre-school type ( $\chi^2(25)=32.13, p>.05$ ).

#### 3.2 Payment for staff meetings

Another consideration was whether staff were paid for attendance at these meetings. 48.1% of all full-time qualified and 24.1% of all part-time qualified staff were paid for attending staff meetings. This remained stable for all the settings ( $\chi^2(10)=12.6, p>.05$ , and  $\chi^2(10)=13.6, p>.05$  respectively). Regarding untrained staff, 29.1% of full-time and 16.5% part-time were paid for attending formal staff meetings. 44.3% of managers felt this question was not applicable to their centre. This may suggest that they do not employ this category of staff. Payment for part-time untrained staff remained stable by pre-school type ( $\chi^2(10)=14.0, p>.05$ ) but differed significantly for full-time untrained staff ( $\chi^2(10)=21.4, p<.05$ ). These figures are detailed in Table 26.



**Table 26- Payment for attendance at staff meetings (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>FT Qual</b>						
Yes	26.7%	35.3%	44.4%	65.0%	57.1%	77.8%
No	40.0%	29.4%	22.2%	35.0%	28.6%	22.2%
N/A	33.3%	35.3%	33.4%		14.3%	
<b>PT Qual</b>						
Yes	6.7%	23.5%	33.3%	40.0%	28.6%	11.1%
No	46.7%	23.5%	11.1%	35.0%	14.3%	22.2%
N/A	46.7%	52.9%	55.6%	25.0%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>FT other</b>						
Yes	20.0%	29.4%	22.2%	20.0%	42.9%	66.7%
No	33.3%	64.7%	11.1%	40.0%	28.6%	22.2%
N/A	46.7%	5.9%	66.7%	40.0%	28.6%	11.1%
<b>PT other</b>						
Yes	13.3%	17.6%	22.2%	25.0%		11.2%
No	40.0%	52.9%	11.1%	40.0%	14.3%	44.4%
N/A	46.7%	29.4%	66.7%	35.0%	85.7%	44.4%

For those managers who considered the question applicable to their centres, nursery classes, nursery schools and reception classes were most likely to fund attendance at staff meetings for full-time qualified staff. This could reflect the larger number of full-time staff employed in these types of provision and the perceived greater need for more formal methods of communication. Similarly nursery classes and schools were most likely to include full-time untrained staff.

In centres, which employ fewer staff, formal staff meetings may not be such regular events with more informal methods of communication perhaps being more common. Part-time staff as a whole were less likely to be funded for attendance at staff meetings compared with their full-time colleagues. Part-time staff, often amongst the lowest paid, may decide not to attend staff meetings if they have to do so in their own time.

### 3.4 Planning

#### a) Use of timetables and a curriculum

Managers were asked whether they kept a daily timetable, and the vast majority (94.9%) did. At least 94% of centres in each type of provision used a timetable with the exception of playgroups where 86.8% did, but this was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(5)=3.48$ ,  $p>.05$ ). The use of a curriculum was almost as widespread as a daily timetable (89.9%). However this did vary significantly across pre-school type ( $\chi^2(5)=13.07$ ,  $p>.05$ ) as shown below in Table 27.

**Table 27- Curriculum plans (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Yes</b>	66.7%	88.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	88.9%
<b>No</b>	33.3%	11.1%				11.1%

**b) Personnel who plan**

Given that the majority of centres reported using a timetable for planning we explored with the managers which members of their staff were involved in the planning process. Overall, in the majority of centres (63.3%), a designated person alone did the planning for each of the rooms involving 3-5 year olds. In 25.3% of the centres staff shared the planning, and the remaining 11.4% of centres used another individual alone (either the manager or someone else). Table 28 shows the breakdown by pre-school type.

**Table 28- Responsibility for planning (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Manager alone</b>	33.3%	11.1%				11.1%
<b>Designated person</b>	6.7%	66.7%	88.9%	90.5%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>Staff together</b>	60.0%	22.2%	11.1%	4.8%	42.9%	22.7%
<b>Other</b>				4.8%		

In the majority of centres, a designated person alone planned children’s activities. Playgroups were the least likely to operate this system (6.7%). In 60% of playgroups staff worked together to plan children’s activities. Analysis by pre-school revealed that with the exception of ‘other’ the responsibility for planning varied across pre-school type; ‘manager alone’ ( $\chi^2(5)=13.07$ ,  $p<.05$ ); ‘designated person’ ( $\chi^2(5)=30.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ); and ‘staff together’ ( $\chi^2(5)=16.43$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**c) Materials used in planning learning activities**

All centres used materials to aid their planning, and this did not differ across pre-school type ( $\chi^2(20)=12.28$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Overall several sources were used across the sample, and these are listed in rank order in Table 29. Clearly the material which pre-school workers used most when planning their learning activities was the Pre-school Curriculum guidelines.

**Table 29- materials used in planning**

Highest ranked items	Middle ranked items	Lowest ranked items
Pre-sch Curriculum guide 36.7%	Staff 13.9%	Structured play 3.8%
NIPPA guide 32.9%	Nursery project materials 10.1%	Religion 3.8%
ELB scheme 26.6%	Magazine/journals 7.6%	Montessori guide 2.5%
Own material 24.1%	Early Yrs Advisory 5.1%	PEGS guide 1.3%
Other material 16.5%	Training courses 3.8%	Parents 1.3%
		Homefirst prog 1.3%

Of these, only the use of ‘NIPPA guidelines’ and ‘Pre-school Curriculum guidelines’ were found to differ significantly by pre-school type ( $\chi^2(5)=12.49, p<.05$ ) & ( $\chi^2(5)=11.75, p<.05$ ).

Own material	$\chi^2(5)=3.51, p>.05$	Religion	$\chi^2(5)=1.53, p>.05$
PEGS guidelines	$\chi^2(5)=4.32, p>.05$	Early Yrs Advisory	$\chi^2(5)=4.77, p>.05$
ELB schemes	$\chi^2(5)=3.63, p>.05$	Montessori guidelines	$\chi^2(5)=2.90, p>.05$
Training courses	$\chi^2(5)=1.53, p>.05$	Homefirst course	$\chi^2(5)=3.43, p>.05$
Structured play	$\chi^2(5)=3.92, p>.05$	Magazines/journals	$\chi^2(5)=6.01, p>.05$
Staff	$\chi^2(5)=2.56, p>.05$	Nursery project materials	$\chi^2(5)=4.91, p>.05$
Parents	$\chi^2(5)=4.32, p>.05$		
Other material	$\chi^2(5)=4.32, p>.05$		

#### **d) Paid planning time**

Given the importance of planning we asked centre managers whether their staff (both qualified/unqualified & part time/full time) had paid planning/preparation time.

65.8% of centre managers said their full time qualified staff were paid for planning and preparation time, while 16.5% said 'no', and 17.7% considered it 'not applicable'. When questioned about part time qualified staff a slightly different pattern emerged. 26.6% answered 'yes' and 27.8% answered 'no'. However the majority (45.6%) considered the question 'not applicable'. Paid planning/preparation time for staff did vary significantly across pre-school type for full time qualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=22.23, p<.05$ ) but not for part time qualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=9.27, p>.05$ ) as shown in Table 30.

The same question was asked about unqualified full time and part time staff. 40.5% of centre managers said their full time unqualified staff were paid for planning time, 29.1% said 'no', and 30.4% considered the question 'not applicable'. Like above a slightly different pattern was found for the unqualified part time staff. 20.3% answered 'yes' and 36.7% answered 'no'. But again the majority (43.0%) of centre managers considered the question 'not applicable'. Paid planning/preparation time for staff varied significantly across pre-school type for full time unqualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=27.54, p<.05$ ) but did not vary for part time unqualified staff ( $\chi^2(10)=11.74, p>.05$ ) as can be seen in Table 30 below.

**Table 30- Paid preparation/planning time for staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Qual. f/t staff</b>						
Yes	40.0%	47.1%	66.7%	81.0%	85.7%	100.0%
No	26.7%	17.6%		19.0%	14.3%	
N/A	33.3%	35.3%	33.3%			
<b>Qual. p/t staff</b>						
Yes	20.0%	23.5%	44.4%	33.3%	28.6%	11.1%
No	33.3%	23.5%		42.9%	14.3%	22.2%
N/A	46.7%	53.0%	55.6%	23.8%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>Unqual. f/t staff</b>						
Yes	20.0%	56.3%	33.3%	23.8%	57.1%	88.9%
No	33.3%	37.5%		38.1%	28.6%	
N/A	46.7%	6.2%	66.7%	38.1%	14.3%	11.1%
<b>Unqual. p/t staff</b>						
Yes	13.3%	31.3%	33.3%	23.8%		11.2%
No	40.0%	37.4%	11.1%	42.9%	14.3%	44.4%
N/A	46.7%	31.3%	55.6%	33.3%	85.7%	44.4%

The large number of playgroups who considered this question not applicable could reflect the low numbers of full time qualified staff employed in these settings. For part time staff the large number of nursery schools who considered this question not applicable to them could reflect the lack of part time qualified staff in this form of provision.

Similarly the large number of reception classes who considered this question not applicable could reflect the low numbers of full time unqualified staff employed in these settings. For part time staff the large number of nursery classes who considered this question not applicable to them could show the lack of part time unqualified staff in this form of provision.

### 3.5 Good Quality

Managers were asked to identify the good qualities of their centres. There were a wide variety of answers given. The majority of centres (74.7%) believed that a good quality to have was a happy and secure environment for the children to be in. The first three items on Table 24 were analysed across pre-school type and were found not to vary significantly-

‘Happy and secure’ ( $\chi^2(5)=6.22, p>.05$ ), ‘learning fun/enjoyable’ ( $\chi^2(5)=9.17, p>.05$ ) and ‘Child friendly/warm environment’ ( $\chi^2(5)=4.72, p>.05$ ).

Table 31 below lists the forms of ‘good quality’ specified by the centres.

**Table 31- Good quality**

Highest ranked items	Middle ranked items	Lowest ranked items
Happy & secure environ 74.7%	Structured learning prog. 27.8%	Develop. at own rate 12.7%
Learning fun/enjoyable 58.2%	Team work 27.8%	Responsibility & respect 12.7%
Child friendly environment 55.7%	Ind. needs of child met 24.1%	Good discipline 11.4%
Relevant training 44.3%	More like home than sch 21.5%	Knowledge of child develop 10%
Other 43.0%	Staff development 20.3%	Language development 8.9%
Safety 41.8%	Independ & individuality 19%	Motivation & initiative 8.9%
Develop. of whole child 39.2%	Play based curriculum 16.5%	Develop of creativity 8.9%
Parent involvement 39.2%	Approp.personal skills 16.5%	Adequate outdoor area 8.7%
Curriculum planning 34.2%	Develop. of self confid. 16.5%	In & outdoor curriculum 7.6%
Develop. of social skills 31.6%	Good organisation system 13.9%	Continuity & consistency 7.6%
		High staff/child ratio 5.1%

### 3.6 Goals

We investigated centre managers' views on what was important in early years care and education. To this end managers were asked to rank eight items in response to the question 'What are the major objectives of your centre in addition to caring for children while their parents work?'. Scores were obtained on a three point rating scale ('not important', 'quite important', and 'very important'). Table 32 below shows the percentage of centre managers who ranked the objectives of their centres.

**Table 32- Managers' perception of the importance of the 8 goals for children**

	Very important	Quite important	Not very important
<b>Language &amp; reasoning</b>	91.0%	7.6%	
<b>Friendship &amp; sharing</b>	84.8%	13.9%	
<b>Reading &amp; Maths</b>	67.1%	27.8%	3.8%
<b>Physical coordination</b>	84.8%	13.9%	
<b>Positive self concept</b>	97.5%	1.3%	
<b>Values, religion, cultures</b>	50.6%	45.6%	2.5%
<b>Manners &amp; self discipline</b>	73.4%	24.1%	1.3%
<b>Other skills</b>	26.6%	38.0%	34.2%

Managers were also asked to identify their three most important goals. Table 33 shows the percentage of centres that rated a given goal as one of their three most important ones. It would appear that in addition to providing care itself, a positive self-concept was the most important objective with 86.6% of managers ranking it first, second or third. This was followed by language and reasoning skills (73.7%), and friendship and sharing (61.0%). 94.6% considered these three objectives to be the most important for their centres.

**Table 33- Percentage of managers' three most important goals from the 8**

	1 <sup>st</sup> most important	2 <sup>nd</sup> most important	3 <sup>rd</sup> most important	Total
Language & reasoning	21.3%	34.6%	17.3%	73.3%
Friendship & sharing	6.6%	29.3%	25.3%	61.3%
Reading/Maths	4.0%	6.6%	13.4%	24.0%
Physical co-ordination	1.3%	1.3%	9.4%	12.0%
Positive self concept	66.6%	13.3%	6.7%	86.6%
Values, religion, cultures		4.0%	9.3%	13.3%
Manners & self discipline		9.3%	17.3%	26.6%
Other skills		1.3%	1.3%	2.6%

### **3.7 Perceived importance and performance of aspects of pre-school**

The managers were asked to rank 31 quality items for their perceived importance on a 5 point scale. The scale ranged from 'extremely important' (scoring 5) to 'not at all important' (scoring 1). They were then asked to consider the same items in terms of how well their centres fulfilled those characteristics. Again a 5 point scale was used to assess performance ranging from 'extremely well' (scoring 5) to 'badly' (scoring 1). A figure was computed to establish the degree of agreement between perceived importance and performance. Table 34 shows the mean scores for the perceived importance and performance of the 31 items and the degree of agreement between the mean scores. (See Appendix D for full Kruskal Wallis results).

Table 34- Mean scores of perceived importance and performance of the 31 quality items

31 quality items	Importance	Performance	Agreement
Staff Warmth	4.91	4.79	0.12
Attention	4.82	4.75	0.07
Discipline	4.60	4.49	0.11
Preparation for school	4.29	4.32	-0.03
Day to day activities	4.59	4.64	-0.05
Chd get along together	4.65	4.53	0.12
Religion	3.58	3.72*	-0.14
Cultural values	4.00	3.84	0.16
Learning opportunities	4.73	4.64	0.09
No. of children in a group	4.40*	4.39	0.01
Pupil-staff ratio	4.47*	4.33*	0.14
Staff experience	4.56	4.75	-0.19
Staff training	4.53	4.36	0.17
Equipment	4.36	4.32	0.04
Cleanliness	4.51	4.57	-0.06
Nutrition	4.31	4.36	-0.05
Safety	4.86	4.76	0.10
Health	4.68	4.59	0.09
Care	4.68*	4.62	0.06
Communication with parents	4.74	4.58	0.16
Sharing parent values	4.04	3.90	0.14
Support for parents	4.38	4.29	0.09
Drop-in parents	3.65*	4.00	-0.35
Prefer home rather than school	3.61*	3.99	-0.38
Close staff-parent relationships	3.95*	4.12	-0.17
Licensed childcare	4.45*	4.69	-0.24
Settling in process	4.72*	4.83	-0.11
Regular child dev. Evaluation	4.57	4.59	-0.02
Child see staff regularly	4.48	4.73	-0.25
Same friends regularly	4.27	4.67	-0.40
Cultural differences	4.04	3.91	0.13

\* denotes significant differences by pre-school type.

### 3.8 Entry Assessments

In exploring how centres devise their programmes it is important to consider how much account is taken, within planning, of the stage of development and abilities of the individual children within a centre. In order to explore this, centre managers were asked about their assessment programmes. In all, a third, 32.9% (26), of the managers told us that some form of entry assessment was used with the children.

Table 35- Entry assessment (by pre-school type)

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Yes	33.3%%	16.7%	22.2%	52.4%	42.9%	22.2%
No	66.6%	83.3%	77.8%	47.6%	57.1%	77.8%
Response	15/15	19/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9

### 3.9 Regular Assessments

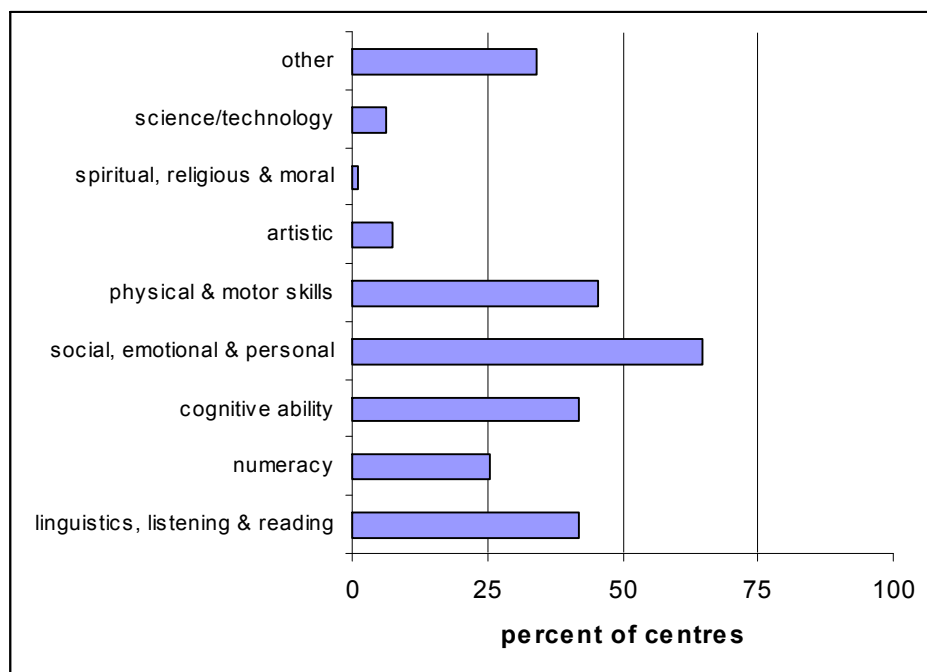
In addition to an entry assessment we asked managers if their staff conducted other regular assessments of their children. The vast majority of centres reported that they did conduct regular assessments of children (86.1%).

**Table 36- Regular child assessments (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Yes</b>	66.7%	88.9%	66.7%	100.0%	100.0%	88.9%
<b>No</b>	33.3%	11.1%	33.3%			11.1%
<b>Response</b>	15/15	19/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9

Reception groups and nursery classes were unanimous in their approach to assessment. Playgroups and reception classes, whilst still being over 50 per cent, were the least likely type of provision to make regular assessments (66.7%) of children’s development and abilities.

We explored the issues of assessment further by asking centre managers in what areas of development did they assessed. As shown in Figure 10, there were variations in the areas that managers told us were being assessed by staff.



**Figure 10- Areas of child assessment**



Analysis by pre-school revealed that the incidence of assessment of 1 of these 9 areas varied across type of pre-school. Namely 'Numeracy' ( $\chi^2(10)=20.1, p<.05$ ). 'Physical & fine/gross motor skills' also approached statistical significance ( $\chi^2(5)=10.9, p=.053$ ).

Linguistics, listening, & reading	$\chi^2(5)=7.76, p>.05$
Cognitive ability	$\chi^2(5)=4.85, p>.05$
Social, emotional, & personal	$\chi^2(5)=7.62, p>.05$
Spiritual/religious, moral, & cultural	$\chi^2(5)=3.71, p>.05$
Artistic	$\chi^2(10)=12.18, p>.05$
Science/technology	$\chi^2(10)=12.85, p>.05$
Other	$\chi^2(10)=4.93, p>.05$

### 3.10 Use of assessment in planning

It was reported that 86.1% of centres conducted regular assessments of some kind on their children. When we asked the centres if their assessments were used in planning classroom activities 78.5% of those who answered said 'Yes', 11.4% centres answered 'No', and 10.1% of centres felt that the question was 'not applicable'. The use of assessment in planning did differ across pre-school type ( $\chi^2(10)=18.59, p<.05$ ).

### 3.11 Staff assessment training

Overall 83.5% of managers stated that their staff had undergone some form of training in assessment.

**Table 37- Staff assessment training (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Yes</b>	60.0%	88.9%	77.8%	95.2%	100.0%	77.8%
<b>No</b>	40.0%	11.1%	2.2%	4.8%		22.2%
<b>Response</b>	15/15	19/19	9/9	21/21	7/7	9/9

No clear patterns emerged from our questions regarding the form of training staff received (Table 33). While 31.0% of managers referred to the initial childcare and education training e.g. B.Ed., 14.0% referred to the ELB training that staff had received, and only 2.5% of the centres had staff who had been on a specific course on assessments skills.

**Table 38- The different forms of staff training used by centres**

Highest ranked items	Middle ranked items	Lowest ranked items
Initial training 31.6%	Specific person training 7.6%	EEL prog. 2.5%
Part of qualification 29.1%	On the job training 7.6%	KEELE prog 1.3%
Other 15.2%	Experience of staff 5.1%	Mary Sheridan dev. chart 1.3%
ELB training 14.0%	Specific course on assess. 2.5%	
Baseline assessment 8.9%	Non specific inset days 2.5%	

Table 39 shows those which differed significantly across pre-school type ('baseline assessment' ( $\chi^2(10)=22.43$ ,  $p<.05$ ); 'part of qualification' ( $\chi^2(10)=30.92$ ,  $p<.05$ ); 'experience of staff' ( $\chi^2(10)=19.56$ ,  $p<.05$ ); 'ELB training' ( $\chi^2(10)=24.74$ ,  $p<.05$ ); 'KEELE programme' ( $\chi^2(10)=18.85$ ,  $p<.05$ ); 'EEL programme' ( $\chi^2(10)=26.65$ ,  $p<.05$ ); non specific inset days ( $\chi^2(10)=27.17$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 39- the different forms of staff training used by the centres (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Baseline assess			22.2%	23.8%		
Part of qualification	53.3%	38.9%	44.4%	9.5%		22.2%
Experience of staff		16.7%			14.3%	
ELB training		11.1%	22.2%	14.3%	57.1%	
KEELE prog						11.1%
EEL prog						22.2%

Initial training	$\chi^2(10)=15.29$ , $p>.05$
Specific person training	$\chi^2(10)=16.54$ , $p>.05$
On the job training	$\chi^2(10)=12.50$ , $p>.05$
Mary Sheridan development chart	$\chi^2(10)=14.08$ , $p>.05$
Specific course on assessment	$\chi^2(10)=15.79$ , $p>.05$
Other	$\chi^2(10)=13.66$ , $p>.05$

### 3.12 Assessment feedback to parents

Earlier in this report we discussed when and how pre-school centres were assessing children's development. Here we report on whether these assessments were communicated to parents. Overall 74.7% of managers told us that records for monitoring child development were available for the parents to look at. This did not vary across the different pre-school settings ( $\chi^2(5)=6.27$ ,  $p>.05$ ).

**Table 40– Feedback to parents on children's development (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Yes	60.0%	83.3%	66.7%	85.7%	85.7%	55.6%
No	40.0%	16.7%	33.3%	14.3%	14.3%	44.4%

## SECTION FOUR

### 4.0 Provision for Children with Special Needs

#### 4.1 Number of children with special needs

The importance of early detection of developmental delays (both physical and cognitive) in children cannot be over-emphasised. Early intervention strategies, on special needs, are generally recognised as cost effective and have been shown to be crucial to the future wellbeing of children (Owen and Smith, 2000; Slavin, 1996; Wolfendale, 1997). Given the importance of early intervention strategies for children who may have some form of special educational or health need, we explored with the centre managers the types of programmes they had in place to detect and monitor children who fall within this category. We asked the managers if they had children in their centres who they considered had a 'special need'.

Overall 62.0% of centres reported that they currently have children with special needs, however this varied significantly by pre-school type ( $\chi^2(5)=13.58, p<.05$ ) and is shown in Table 41. Centres who did not have any special needs children were asked if they planned to admit them. 34.2% of centres would enrol these children whilst 3.8% reported that they had no such plans. This remained stable across the different settings ( $\chi^2(10)=12.53, p>.05$ ).

**Table 41- Centre Provision for Children with Special Needs (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Currently enrolled	33.3%	72.2%	44.4%	66.7%	71.4%	88.9%
Plans to enrol	60.0%	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	28.6%	11.1%
No plans to enrol	6.7%	5.6%	11.2%			

#### 4.2 System for identifying special needs

The centres were asked whether they had a system for identifying these children with special needs and what this involved. Almost all centres (89.8%) had some system and this did not vary across provision ( $\chi^2(5)=4.72, p>.05$ ).

**Table 42 System for Identifying Special Needs (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Yes	100.0%	72.2%	88.9%	100.0%	85.7%	88.9%
No		27.8%	11.1%		14.3%	11.1%

As shown in Table 43 the most commonly mentioned component of this system was some form of observation schedule. Very few centres liaised with a special needs school but consulting parents and other professionals was frequently mentioned.

**Table 43- Methods for Identifying Children with Special Needs**

Top group	Bottom group
Observation schedule 49.4 % (39)	Daily record of child 10.1% (8)
Consult parent 30.4% (24)	Code of practice 5.1% (4)
Consult professional 29.1% (23)	Special person responsible 3.8% (3)
	Liase with special school 1.3% (1)

Two of these methods varied across the different settings, ‘observation schedule’ ( $\chi^2(10)=18.59$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and consultation of professionals ( $\chi^2(10)=19.37$ ,  $p<.05$ )

Consult parent	$\chi^2(10)=16.51$ , $p>.05$
Daily record of child	$\chi^2(10)=11.27$ , $p>.05$
Code of practice	$\chi^2(10)=14.74$ , $p>.05$
Special person responsible	$\chi^2(10)=11.41$ , $p>.05$
Liase with special school	$\chi^2(10)=15.38$ , $p>.05$

#### 4.3 Strategies for special needs

We asked the 49 centres who cater for children with special needs which strategies they employ to meet the needs of these children. A range of strategies were mentioned and the incidence of these across the sample is shown in Table 44. Four strategies differed in their incidence across pre-school type: ‘Specialised equipment’ ( $\chi^2(5)=19.33$ ,  $p<.05$ ), ‘SENCO help’ ( $\chi^2(5)=21.56$ ,  $p<.05$ ), ‘Specially trained staff’ ( $\chi^2(5)=18.42$ ,  $p<.05$ ), ‘ELB support’ ( $\chi^2(5)=19.95$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 44- Strategies for Dealing with Special Needs**

Top group	Bottom group
Professional 29.5%	Health and Social Services 6.3%
Other strategies 46.2%	Extra helpers 5.1%
Specialised equipment 17.9%	ELB support 5.1%
SENCO help 13.9%	E.Y.E.S. programme 3.8%
Awareness courses 9.0%	M.I.S.T. programme 3.8%
Through observation 7.7%	
Specially trained staff 7.7%	

Professional	$\chi^2(5)=12.84$ , $p>.05$
Other strategies	$\chi^2(5)=6.95$ , $p>.05$
Awareness courses	$\chi^2(5)=10.58$ , $p>.05$
Extra helpers	$\chi^2(5)=13.70$ , $p>.05$
Observation	$\chi^2(5)=6.07$ , $p>.05$
M.I.S.T. programme	$\chi^2(5)=16.64$ , $p>.05$
E.Y.E.S. programme	$\chi^2(5)=13.41$ , $p>.05$
Health & Social Services	$\chi^2(5)=13.81$ , $p>.05$

## **SUMMARY**

The majority of centres held staff meetings on a regular basis where the focus was individual children, and childcare and educational practice. The statutory sector was more likely to fund attendance at such meetings.

There was widespread use of daily timetables and planning. The majority of centres made use of the 'Pre-school Curriculum Guide' and 'NIPPA Guide'. Again the statutory sector was more likely to provide paid planning time for staff.

Managers agreed that the development of a positive self-concept, language and reasoning, physical coordination, and friendship and caring were the most important objectives of their centres.

When considering 31 pre-school characteristics, managers agreed that all were of some importance with the majority being very important. None of the characteristics were considered of little or no importance.

The majority of pre-school centres conducted regular assessments in a wide variety of developmental areas. This information was usually available for parents if requested.

Whilst two thirds of centres currently have children with special needs enrolled, the majority of centres have a system for identifying such children and this usually involves some form of observation schedule.

## SECTION FIVE

### 5.0 Centres and Parents

#### 5.1 Parental access and interaction with staff

The opportunities that exist for pre-school providers to engage with the communities they serve are extremely wide. They provide opportunities for adults to develop knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation in both parenting and personal development. The EPPNI centre managers' interview provided an opportunity to discuss with the managers of pre-school settings some of the contacts they have with parents. Whilst information from this interview cannot provide a comprehensive measure of 'parental involvement' across a very wide spectrum, it does give an indication of the perceptions of the centre managers in our study about the contact they have with their parents.

Given the age of pre-school children, parents would have daily contact with their child's pre-school centre either personally or (for most full-time working parents) through the child's day-time carer. Twice a day parents or carers usually visit a centre to either deliver or pick up a child. The interview asked about contact that existed between parents and pre-schools outside of this daily routine. A large majority of managers (84.8%) felt that parents and staff had a chance to talk to each other on a daily basis (outside the daily routines) of dropping off and collecting, and 91% said that parents could regularly approach staff for advice and information. Despite this, only 54.5% of managers stated that parents were allowed to visit their setting daily in addition to dropping children off, however 49% of parents availed themselves of this opportunity.

The voluntary sector (i.e. playgroups and private day nurseries) was compared with the educational sector (i.e. nurseries classes/schools and reception classes/groups) and was found to be statistically different for centres where parents were allowed to visit daily

( $\chi^2(2)=6.7$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

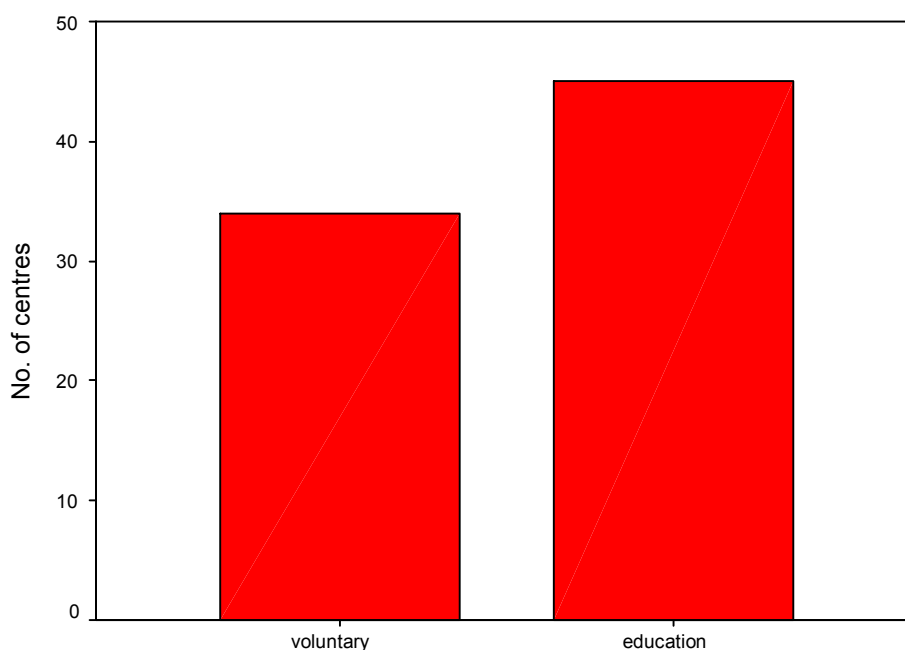


Figure 11- No. of centres allowing daily visits by parents

## 5.2 Parent/staff meetings

Managers were also asked about formal meetings between parents and staff. Overall 62% of managers reported that parent/staff meetings were scheduled with some regularity. When asked how often these meetings were held, weekly, monthly, termly or other, the popular response was 'other' (30.4%), followed closely by 'termly' (25.3%). The scheduling of parent/staff meetings varied by pre-school and is shown in Table 45.

Table 45- Parent/Staff Meetings (by pre-school type)

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Scheduled	46.7%	50.0%	77.8%	90.5%	42.9%	44.4%
Weekly						11.1%
Monthly	6.7%	22.2%				
Termly	20.0%		33.3%	47.6%	14.3%	33.3%
Other	20.0%	33.3%	44.4%	42.9%	28.6%	

Parent/staff meetings  $\chi^2(5)=13.05, p<.05$

Weekly  $\chi^2(10)=21.67, p<.05$

Monthly  $\chi^2(10)=27.13, p<.05$

termly  $\chi^2(10)=21.52, p<.05$

other  $\chi^2(10)=18.03, p>.05$

### 5.3 Parents as Helpers

This report has referred in earlier sections to adults who act as unpaid workers. This section of the interview asked specifically about parents who come into the pre-school setting and 'help out' under the direction of paid staff on a less regular basis and are therefore 'helpers' rather than unpaid staff. They do not have timetables and do not have a regular time commitment to the centre. It cannot be assumed that parents who 'help out' in pre-school settings are all directly involved with children. Many parents offer their time, skills and expertise in both domestic and administrative roles. Overall 93.7% of settings benefited from regular help from parents. This did not vary across the different types of centre ( $\chi^2(5)=5.12, p>.05$ ).

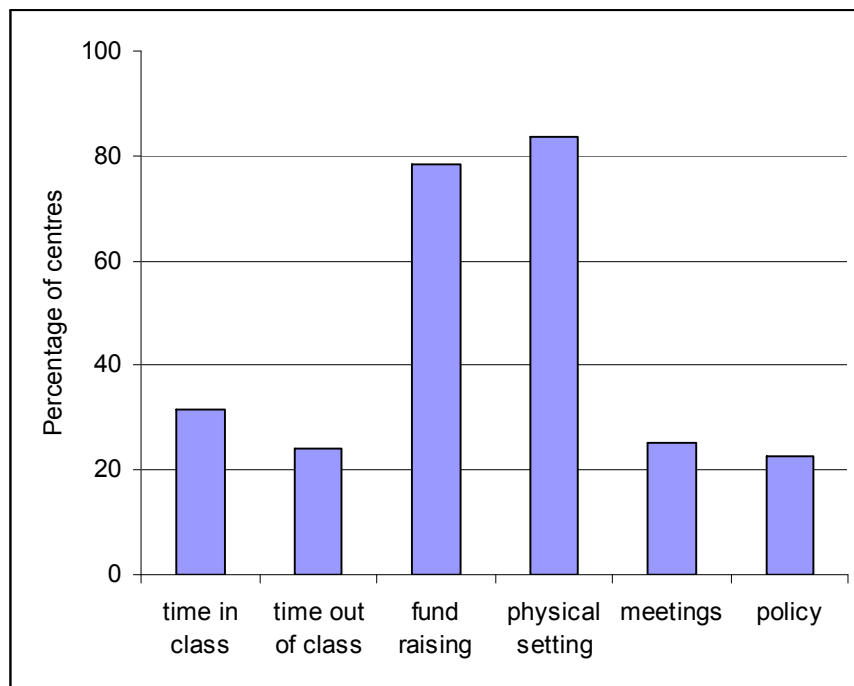


Figure 12- Areas of Parental Involvement



The particular methods of help given by the parents varied by pre-school depending on type as shown in Table 46.

**Table 46- Areas of parental Involvement (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Time in class	46.7%	16.7%	22.2%	42.9%		44.4%
Time out of class	40.0%	11.1%	33.3%	38.1%		
Fundraising	80.0%	44.4%	77.8%	100.0%	85.7%	88.9%
Meetings	40.0%	16.7%		28.6%	28.6%	33.3%
Physical setting	80.0%	61.1%	100.0%	100.0%	71.4%	88.9%
Policy	66.7%	22.2%		4.8%	14.3%	22.2%

Time spent in classroom	$\chi^2(5)=8.94$ , p=.111
Time spent out of classroom	$\chi^2(5)=11.50$ , p=.042
Fundraising	$\chi^2(5)=18.92$ , p=.002
Meetings	$\chi^2(5)=5.94$ , p=.312
Policy	$\chi^2(5)=23.24$ , p=.000
Physical setting	$\chi^2(5)=13.57$ , p=.019

Fundraising and help with maintaining the physical setting seemed to be a major preoccupation for most types of centres. Private day nurseries received least help in these areas than the other types of provision. This may be related to the number of full-time working parents and the fact the parents pay fees in private day nurseries more than in any other type of centre.

#### 5.4 Settling In Procedure

We asked the managers about the procedures they employed for ‘settling’ new children into their settings. In all 97.5% of centres said that they used some form of procedure for settling children into their centre. Each of the five procedures employed was stable across the different forms of provision

**Table 47- Procedures for settling child (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
Parental involvement	86.7%	88.9%	66.7%	71.4%	85.7%	100.0%
Previsit	53.3%	50.0%	66.7%	81.0%	43.9%	44.4%
Process builds up	46.7%	77.8%	22.2%	33.3%	57.1%	77.8%
Process varies	40.0%	50.0%	33.3%	28.6%	57.1%	41.8%
Open day	26.7%		44.4%	9.5%	28.6%	11.1%

The occurrence of each strategy did not vary by pre-school type.

Time to settle is built up	$\chi^2(10)=16.46, p>.05$
Parental involvement	$\chi^2(10)=8.61, p>.05$
Previsit	$\chi^2(10)=9.88, p>.05$
Process varies	$\chi^2(10)=5.73, p>.05$
Open day	$\chi^2(10)=13.10, p>.05$

### 5.5 Educational support for parents

As well as meeting children's needs, pre-school centres have a wider role within their community. They can encourage community involvement by working with parents on issues of parenting and then expanding this to broaden parents' own educational opportunities. We asked managers whether they provided some form of parent education. Overall 49.4% of the managers reported some form of parent education provision was available in their centre. There was no significant variation across type of provision ( $\chi^2(5)=9.72, p>.05$ ).

Overall 7 areas of parental education were identified as shown in Table 48.

**Table 48- Areas of parental education**

Top Group	Bottom Group
One off meetings 13.9%	Specific reading course 6.3%
Parenting courses 10.1%	Health education/first aid 6.3%
Delta programme 10.1%	Other 6.3%
	Regular parent group 5.1%

All of the above areas of parental education did not across pre-school type.

One off meetings	$\chi^2(5)=4.74, p>.05$	Parenting course	$\chi^2(5)=8.68, p >.05$
Other	$\chi^2(5)=2.75, p>.05$	Regular parent group	$\chi^2(5)=3.21, p>.05$
Delta programme	$\chi^2(5)=9.67, p>.05$	Health education/first aid	$\chi^2(5)=5.32, p>.05$
Specific reading course	$\chi^2(5)=9.38, p>.05$		

The most common form of parental education provided was 'one off meetings' which included open nights, information evenings and social events. Parenting courses (10.1%) covered the management of child behaviour and issues of safety and child abuse.

## **SUMMARY**

Parents could approach staff regularly for advice and information in the majority of centres.

Surprisingly parents were allowed to visit on a daily basis in nursery classes/schools more so than in playgroups or private day nurseries.

Parents helped with fund raising and maintaining physical setting more than any other area.

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## Appendix A- Staff Benefits

Tables (A.1), (A.2), (A.3), & (A.4) present the percentages of centres that provide certain staff benefits

**Table A.1— Benefits for FT qualified staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Paid holiday</b>						
Yes	60.0%	94.1%	75.0%	100%	85.5%	100%
No	33.3%		25.0%		12.5%	
N/A	6.7%	5.9%				
<b>Pension</b>						
Yes	6.7%		66.7%	90.0%	100%	88.9%
No	60.0%	64.7%		10.0%		11.1%
N/A	33.3%	35.3%	33.3%			
<b>Expenses</b>						
Yes	53.3%	47.1%	33.3%	50.0%	85.7%	66.7%
No	13.3%	17.6%	33.3%	50.0%	14.3%	33.3%
N/A	33.3%	35.3%	33.3%			
<b>Reduces fees</b>						
Yes	20.0%	41.2%		10.0%	14.3%	
No	46.7%	17.6%	66.7%	90.0%	85.7%	100%
N/A	33.3%	41.2%	33.3%			
<b>Recompense</b>						
Yes	33.3%	47.1%	11.1%	15.0%	33.3%	12.5%
No	33.3%	17.6%	55.6%	85.0%	66.7%	87.5%
N/A	33.3%	35.3%	33.3%			
<b>Merit wages</b>						
Yes	35.7%	47.1%	33.3%	40.0%	42.9%	50.0%
No	28.6%	17.6%	33.3%	60.0%	57.1%	50.0%
N/A	35.7%	35.3%	33.3%			
<b>Formal grievance</b>						
Yes	33.3%	56.3%	66.7%	85.0%	100%	100%
No	33.3%	6.2%		15.0%		
N/A	33.3%	37.5%	33.3%			

Paid holiday	$\chi^2(10)=18.76, p<.05$
Pension	$\chi^2(10)=58.44, p<.001$
Expenses	$\chi^2(10)=20.62, p<.05$
Reduced fees	$\chi^2(10)=32.48, p<.001$
Recompense	$\chi^2(10)=27.69, p<.05$
Merit wages	$\chi^2(10)=18.20, p>.05$
Formal grievance	$\chi^2(10)=28.14, p<.001$

**Table A.2 — Benefits for PT qualified staff (by pre-school type)**

	<b>PG</b>	<b>PDN</b>	<b>RC</b>	<b>RG</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>NS</b>
<b>Pension</b>						
Yes	6.7%		44.4%	45.0%	28.6%	
No	46.7%	47.1%		30.0%	14.3%	33.3%
N/A	46.7%	52.9%	55.6%	25.0%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>Expenses</b>						
Yes	35.7%	29.4%	22.2%	45.0%	28.6%	11.1%
No	14.3%	17.6%	22.2%	30.0%	14.3%	22.2%
N/A	50.0%	52.9%	55.6%	25.0%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>Reduces fees</b>						
Yes	13.3%	35.3%		10.0%	14.3%	
No	40.0%	5.9%	44.4%	65.0%	28.6%	37.5%
N/A	46.7%	58.8%	55.6%	25.0%	57.1%	62.5%
<b>Recompense</b>						
Yes	33.3%	35.3%	22.2%	20.0%	33.3%	11.1%
No	20.0%	11.8%	22.2%	55.0%	16.7%	22.2%
N/A	46.7%	52.9%	55.6%	25.0%	50.0%	66.7%
<b>Merit wages</b>						
Yes	21.4%	35.3%	11.1%	25.0%		11.1%
No	28.6%	11.8%	33.3%	50.0%	42.9%	22.2%
N/A	50.0%	52.9%	55.6%	25.0%	57.1%	66.7%
<b>Formal grievance</b>						
Yes	26.7%	50.0%	44.4%	70.0%	42.9%	33.3%
No	26.7%					
N/A	46.7%	50.0%	55.6%	25.0%	57.1%	66.7%

Pension  $\chi^2(10)=24.08, p<.05$   
 Expenses  $\chi^2(10)=7.25, p>.05$   
 Reduced fees  $\chi^2(10)=19.78, p<.05$   
 Recompense  $\chi^2(10)=12.93, p>.05$   
 Merit wages  $\chi^2(10)=12.17, p>.05$   
 Formal grievance  $\chi^2(10)=19.11, p<.05$



**Table A.3 — Benefits for FT untrained staff (by pre-school type)**

	PG	PDN	RC	RG	NC	NS
<b>Pension</b>						
Yes	6.7%		33.3%	31.6%	71.4%	88.9%
No	46.7%	94.1%		26.3%	14.3%	
N/A	46.7%	5.9%	66.7%	42.1%	14.3%	11.1%
<b>Expenses</b>						
Yes	26.7%	29.4%	22.2%	40.0%	71.4%	75.0%
No	26.7%	64.7%	11.1%	20.0%	14.3%	12.5%
N/A	46.7%	5.9%	66.7%	40.0%	14.3%	12.5%
<b>Reduces fees</b>						
Yes	13.3%	52.9%		5.0%		
No	40.0%	29.4%	33.3%	55.0%	85.7%	85.7%
N/A	46.7%	17.6%	66.7%	40.0%	14.3%	14.3%
<b>Recompense</b>						
Yes	33.3%	82.4%	22.2%	20.0%	50.0%	37.5%
No	20.0%	11.8%	11.1%	40.0%	33.3%	50.0%
N/A	46.7%	5.9%	66.7%	40.0%	16.7%	12.5%
<b>Merit wages</b>						
Yes	13.3%	64.2%	22.1%	20.0%	14.3%	33.3%
No	40.0%	29.4%	11.1%	40.0%	71.4%	55.6%
N/A	46.7%	5.9%	66.7%	40.0%	14.3%	11.1%
<b>Formal grievance</b>						
Yes	26.7%	87.5%	33.3%	42.1%	71.4%	88.9%
No	26.7%	6.3%		15.8%	14.3%	
N/A	46.7%	6.3%	66.7%	42.1%	14.3%	11.1%

Pension  $\chi^2(10)=55.60, p<.001$   
 Expenses  $\chi^2(10)=26.63, p<.05$   
 Reduced fees  $\chi^2(10)=32.29, p<.001$   
 Recompense  $\chi^2(10)=25.64, p<.05$   
 Merit wages  $\chi^2(10)=25.03, p<.05$   
 Formal grievance  $\chi^2(10)=24.43, p<.05$

**Table A.4 — Benefits for PT untrained staff (by pre-school type)**

	<b>PG</b>	<b>PDN</b>	<b>RC</b>	<b>RG</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>NS</b>
<b>Pension</b>						
Yes	6.7%		33.3%	36.8%		
No	46.7%	70.6%	11.1%	36.8%	14.3%	50.0%
N/A	46.7%	29.4%	55.6%	26.4%	85.7%	50.0%
<b>Expenses</b>						
Yes	26.7%	17.6%	22.2%	35.0%		11.2%
No	26.7%	52.9%	22.2%	30.0%	14.3%	44.4%
N/A	46.7%	29.4%	55.6%	35.0%	85.7%	44.4%
<b>Reduces fees</b>						
Yes	13.3%	41.2%				
No	40.0%	17.6%	33.3%	65.0%	14.3%	62.5%
N/A	46.7%	41.2%	66.7%	35.0%	85.7%	37.5%
<b>Recompense</b>						
Yes	20.0%	64.7%	22.2%	20.0%		11.2%
No	33.3%	17.6%	22.2%	45.0%	16.7%	44.4%
N/A	46.7%	29.4%	55.6%	35.0%	83.3%	44.4%
<b>Merit wages</b>						
Yes	13.3%	52.9%	11.1%	15.0%		11.2%
No	40.0%	17.6%	33.3%	50.0%	14.3%	44.4%
N/A	46.7%	29.4%	55.6%	35.0%	85.7%	44.4%
<b>Formal grievance</b>						
Yes	33.3%	68.8%	44.4%	52.6%	14.3%	44.4%
No	20.0%	6.3%		21.1%		11.2%
N/A	46.7%	25.0%	55.6%	26.3%	85.7%	44.4%

Pension  $\chi^2(10)=26.13, p<.05$   
 Expenses  $\chi^2(10)=11.69, p>.05$   
 Reduced fees  $\chi^2(10)=28.78, p<.05$   
 Recompense  $\chi^2(10)=21.68, p<.05$   
 Merit wages  $\chi^2(10)=19.63, p<.05$   
 Formal grievance  $\chi^2(10)=14.41, p>.05$

## Appendix B- Results of chi-square analysis of ‘Training content and delivery’

Tables B.1 and B.2 summarise chi-square analysis of staff training content and delivery by pre-school type.

**Table B.1- Content areas of training**

On the job training	$\chi^2(5)= 5.96,$	$p= .310$
Child abuse protection	$\chi^2(5)= 4.37,$	$p= .497$
Health and Safety	$\chi^2(5)= 7.03,$	$p= .220$
First aid	$\chi^2(5)= 16.29,$	$p= .006$
Special needs training	$\chi^2(5)= 9.66,$	$p= .086$
Reading course	$\chi^2(5)= 2.79,$	$p= .731$
Numeracy course	$\chi^2(5)= 2.79,$	$p= .731$
Other curriculum areas	$\chi^2(5)= 4.66,$	$p= .459$
Issues in Early Years Education	$\chi^2(5)= 7.88,$	$p= .163$

**Table B.2- Delivery of training**

Specific inset days	$\chi^2(5)= 7.01,$	$p= .220$
Provided by Social Services	$\chi^2(5)= 2.90,$	$p= .715$
Provided by NIPPA	$\chi^2(5)= 11.02,$	$p= .051$
Provided by CASS	$\chi^2(5)= 5.67,$	$p= .340$
Provided by EEL	$\chi^2(5)= 7.88,$	$p= .163$
Provided by BAECE	$\chi^2(5)= 7.88,$	$p= .163$
Provided by Early Years Education	$\chi^2(5)= 7.88,$	$p= .163$
Provided by DELTA	$\chi^2(5)= 3.43,$	$p= .634$
Any other	$\chi^2(5)= 10.72,$	$p= .057$
Certified Qualification	$\chi^2(5)= 10.76,$	$p= .056$
Non specific inset day	$\chi^2(5)= 2.94,$	$p= .710$
Non specific external day	$\chi^2(5)= 10.42,$	$p= .064$
Organised by ELB	$\chi^2(5)= 34.51,$	$p= .000$

## Appendix C- Coding scheme for five-point childcare scale

Table C.1- Coding scheme for the 5-point childcare scale

No qualifications	0	<b>Childcare degrees</b>	
		BA	4
<b>Childcare vocational courses</b>		BA Hons + NNEB	5
GNVQ Foundation	2	BSc	4
GNVQ Intermediate	3	BSocSc	4
GNVQ Advanced	3	Other degree	4
NVQ Level 1	2	MA	4
NVQ Level 2	2	M Ed	4
NVQ Level 3	3	D Phil	4
NVQ Level 4	4	PhD	4
NVQ Level 5	5	Other higher degree	4
BTEC Certificate	2		
BTEC Diploma	3	<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
National Certificate	2	Health and safety certificate	0
National Diploma	3	Food handling certificate	0
HN Certificate	2	First aid	0
HN Diploma	3	British Sign Language	0
City and Guilds I	2	NESW (Social Work)	3
City and Guilds II	2	Social Work degree	4
City and Guilds III	3	State Registered Nurse	3
NNEB	3	State Registered Nurse (BSc)	4
CECS	2	State Registered Children's Nurse	4
PPA Foundation Level	2	Dip Social Care	3
PA Level II	2	Classroom assistant	3
PA Advanced	3	Registered Child Minder	2
DPP Level III	3	Registered Child Minder	3
NNEB with Portage	3		
ADCE	4	<b>Courses uncertified</b>	
DCC	3	Modular Course in CC	2
Montessori	3	Modular Course in CC	3
Montessori (degree length)	4	PLA Learning Through Play	2
<b>Education / Teaching</b>			
Dip. Ed	3		
Cert. Ed	5		
B. Ed	5		
PGCE	5		

## Appendix D- Results of Kruskal Wallis analysis of the 31 quality items.

Table D.1 shows the difference in means by pre-school type of the 31 quality items.

**Table D.1- Result of Kruskal Wallis analysis of manager-rated importance and performance of the 31 quality items**

31 quality items	Importance	Performance
Staff Warmth	H(5)=9.05, p=.107	H(5)=1.34, p=.930
Attention	H(5)=1.61, p=.900	H(5)=0.69, p=.983
Discipline	H(5)=5.04, p=.411	H(5)=3.36, p=.645
Preparation for school	H(5)=5.92, p=.314	H(5)=7.36, p=.195
Day to day activities	H(5)=9.25, p=.099	H(5)=3.25, p=.662
Chd get along together	H(5)= 1.57, p=.905	H(5)=6.23, p=.285
Religion	H(5)= 11.88, p=.036	H(5)=13.278, p=.021
Cultural values	H(5)= 6.92, p=.227	H(5)=2.99, p=.701
Learning opportunities	H(5)= 2.96, p=.706	H(5)=7.07, p=.215
No. of children in a group	H(5)= 12.65, p=.027	H(5)=7.98, p=.157
Pupil-staff ratio	H(5)= 13.89, p=.016	H(5)=15.46, p=.009
Staff experience	H(5)= 7.08, p=.215	H(5)=8.23, p=.144
Staff training	H(5)= 2.67, p=.750	H(5)=5.99, p=.306
Equipment	H(5)= 6.25, p=.282	H(5)=6.44, p=.265
Cleanliness	H(5)= 6.09, p=.298	H(5)=4.83, p=.436
Nutrition	H(5)=9.31, p=.097	H(5)=7.24, p=.203
Safety	H(5)=5.96, p=.310	H(5)=3.43, p=.635
Health	H(5)=6.59, p=.253	H(5)=7.08, p=.688
Care	H(5)=5.29, p=.383	H(5)=1.97, p=.852
Communication with parents	H(5)=12.24, p=.032	H(5)=7.14, p=.191
Sharing parent values	H(5)=11.02, p=.051	H(5)=4.89, p=.429
Support for parents	H(5)=4.43, p=.490	H(5)=4.97, p=.419
Drop-in parents	H(5)=15.801, p=.007	H(5)=8.07, p=.153
Prefer home rather than school	H(5)=15.738, p=.008	H(5)= 10.53, p=.061
Close staff-parent relationships	H(5)=17.198, p=.004	H(5)=8.40, p=.135
Licensed childcare	H(5)=20.96, p=.001	H(5)=7.47, p=.188
Settling in process	H(5)=12.68, p=.027	H(5)=1.96, p=.854
Regular child dev. Evaluation	H(5)=2.76, p=.737	H(5)=2.91, p=.714
Child see staff regularly	H(5)=4.23, p=.516	H(5)=1.54, p=.908
Same friends regularly	H(5)=3.152, p=.677	H(5)=5.68, p=.339
Cultural differences	H(5)=10.02, p=.075	H(5)=1.06, p=.955

G2.How do you judge quality?

How important are the following aspects of child care and education?

	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>				
	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Little</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Very</b>	<b>Extremely</b>
(1) staffs warmth toward children	1	2	3	4	5
(2) the attention children receive	1	2	3	4	5
(3) the staffs style of discipline	1	2	3	4	5
(4) preparation for school	1	2	3	4	5
(5) children's day to day activities	1	2	3	4	5
(6) children learning to get along with others	1	2	3	4	5
(7) teaching of religious or spiritual values	1	2	3	4	5
(8) teaching of cultural values	1	2	3	4	5
(9) learning opportunities for children	1	2	3	4	5
(10) the number of children in the group	1	2	3	4	5
(11) the number of children for each adult	1	2	3	4	5
(12) staffs experience in caring for children	1	2	3	4	5
(13) staff training	1	2	3	4	5
(14) equipment, toys and materials	1	2	3	4	5
(15) attention to cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
(16) attention to nutrition	1	2	3	4	5
(17) attention to children's safety	1	2	3	4	5
(18) attention to children's health	1	2	3	4	5
(19) care that is always available	1	2	3	4	5
(20) the staffs communication with parents about their children	1	2	3	4	5
(21) staff who share parents' values	1	2	3	4	5
(22) staff support for parents	1	2	3	4	5
(23) openness to parents' dropping in to see children during the day	1	2	3	4	5
(24) more like a home than a school	1	2	3	4	5
(25) close relationship between staff and a child's family	1	2	3	4	5
(26) child care that is licensed	1	2	3	4	5
(27) sensitive settling-in process	1	2	3	4	5
(28) regular evaluation of child's development	1	2	3	4	5
(29) children see the same staff regularly	1	2	3	4	5
(30) children see same friends regularly	1	2	3	4	5
(31) appreciation of cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5

G3.How well do you think your centre does on these aspects?

	Performance				
	Badly	Not well	Moderately	Very Well	Extremely Well
(1) staffs warmth toward children	1	2	3	4	5
(2) the attention children receive	1	2	3	4	5
(3) the staffs style of discipline	1	2	3	4	5
(4) preparation for school	1	2	3	4	5
(5) children's day to day activities	1	2	3	4	5
(6) children learning to get along with others	1	2	3	4	5
(7) teaching of religious or spiritual values	1	2	3	4	5
(8) teaching of cultural values	1	2	3	4	5
(9) learning opportunities for children	1	2	3	4	5
(10) the number of children in the group	1	2	3	4	5
(11) the number of children for each adult	1	2	3	4	5
(12) staffs experience in caring for children	1	2	3	4	5
(13) staff training	1	2	3	4	5
(14) equipment, toys and materials	1	2	3	4	5
(15) attention to cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
(16) attention to nutrition	1	2	3	4	5
(17) attention to children's safety	1	2	3	4	5
(18) attention to children's health	1	2	3	4	5
(19) care that is always available	1	2	3	4	5
(20) the staffs communication with parents about their children	1	2	3	4	5
(21) staff who share parents' values	1	2	3	4	5
(22) staff support for parents	1	2	3	4	5
(23) openness to parents' dropping in to see children during the day	1	2	3	4	5
(24) more like a home than a school	1	2	3	4	5
(25) close relationship between staff and a child's family	1	2	3	4	5
(26) child care that is licensed	1	2	3	4	5
(27) sensitive settling-in process	1	2	3	4	5
(28) regular evaluation of child's development	1	2	3	4	5
(29) children see the same staff regularly	1	2	3	4	5
(30) children see same friends regularly	1	2	3	4	5
(31) appreciation of cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5