

Case Study: Sandwell Council Early Years & Childcare Unit Consultation with Children in Childcare and Play Settings 2007/08



BACKGROUND

M·E·L Research was commissioned to consult children aged 4 to 13 years in a range of childcare and play settings across Sandwell, in a collaborative piece of consultation working with Sandwell Council Early Years and Childcare Unit. 69 children took part in the study.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to inform Sandwell's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, aligning with the Every Child Matters Framework. This largely qualitative study complemented Sandwell's quantitative childcare sufficiency assessment questionnaire data. This work was designed to capture the voice of children, in terms of their likes and dislikes about the settings they attend.

METHODOLOGY

The sessions were arranged with the help and cooperation of local gatekeepers in each of the settings, to ensure the necessary ethical and consent issues were fully covered. Three age-appropriate consultation tools were designed for children of different ages and abilities, including nursery rhymes, smiley and sad faces, happy and sad corners, smiley faces questionnaire and disposable cameras. The consultation sessions were facilitated by two experienced M·E·L consultants, working with the Strategic Manager of the Early Years and Childcare Unit as co-researcher. The findings of the interactive consultation sessions, questionnaires and photographs taken by children were collated and analysed by key Every Child Matters outcomes. The collaborative approach to this consultation was a real strength, with M·E·L providing expertise into research ethics and rigour, and the Early Years and Childcare Unit brokering access to settings and providing the framework for the questions.

OUTCOMES

Two reports were produced, a Word summary comprising an overview of the methodology, approach and learning points, plus a Powerpoint report containing photographs and the key findings themed by Every Child Matters outcome. The findings capturing children's voices were used by Sandwell Early Years and Childcare Unit to inform their Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

Each of the childcare and play settings received a photograph album containing the photos they had taken, and each setting also received a digital camera as a thank you for taking part.



TESTIMONIAL

Lynn Beckett, Strategic Manager, Sandwell Borough Council Early Years and Childcare Unit:

'M·E·L worked collaboratively with us and delivered within tight timescales. The report findings and photograph albums were powerful and accessible, and will be used to help staff and managers respond to the children's needs and implement change. The M·E·L team were very responsive and professional and I felt assured that all ethical considerations were dealt with'

For further information about our work with Sandwell Early Years & Childcare Unit, please contact Anne Forshaw @ anne.forshaw@m-e-l.co.uk or call 0121 604 4664