

**Children Under Three in Group Care
Settings:**

**A Study of Children's Experiences
and
Adults' Perspectives.**

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June 2008

This thesis could not have been written without the support and cooperation of the children, parents, practitioners and managers involved.

Special thanks to the family who let me into their lives for three years.

This thesis is dedicated to three very special people, Felicity, Edward and Hannah, who gave me the inspiration.

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures & Tables</i>	i
Abstract	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Review of the literature	6
2.1 An historical perspective	6
2.2 Attachment theory	16
2.3 Organisational Culture	24
2.4 Role of women as primary carers	26
2.5 Policy base - Current practices and policies	34
2.6 Theories of child development and learning	48
3. Research questions & methodology	58
3.1 Research design	59
3.2 Personal biases	61
3.3 Interviews with managers and practitioners	66
3.4 Choice of setting	70
3.5 Observing children	72
3.6 Research ethics	75
3.6.i <i>Consent and permissions</i>	75
3.6.ii <i>Contacting and interviewing parents</i>	76
3.6.iii <i>Consent of children</i>	78
3.6.iv <i>Consent of staff</i>	86

3.6.v <i>Interpretation of data</i>	88
3.7 Photographs	90
3.8 Analytical processes - Case study	90
3.9 Effects of observing	97
4. Analysis & findings	99
4.1 Analysis of interviews	101
4.2 Analysis of parent interviews	103
4.2.i. <i>Reasons for choosing a particular nursery</i>	104
4.2.ii. <i>Emotions of parents</i>	110
4.2.iii. <i>The 'key person'</i>	112
4.3 Parents reflections	114
4.4 Analysis of child observations	117
4.5 Analysis of staff interviews	159
4.5.i. <i>Birth to Three Matters</i>	160
4.5.ii <i>The 'key person'</i>	163
4.5.iii. <i>Qualifications and training</i>	166
4.5.iv. <i>Partnership with parents</i>	169
4.5.v. <i>Advantages and disadvantages of working in childcare</i>	170
4.5.vi. <i>Practice of practitioners</i>	172
4.6 Analysis of manager/proprietors interviews	175
4.6.i <i>Staffing issues</i>	176
4.6.ii <i>Staff training</i>	179
4.6.iii <i>Birth to Three Matters</i>	180

4.6.iv <i>Partnership with parents</i>	181
4.6.v <i>Management role</i>	184
4.7 Interview with Mother of Simon who was cared for at home	185
4.7.i <i>Childminders, day nurseries and playgroups</i>	186
4.7.ii <i>'Key person'</i>	191
4.7.iii <i>Choices</i>	192
4.8 Attachment and Emotional Well-Being	195
4.9 Conclusion	200
5. Case Study Narrative 1 – Georgina, Melanie and Martin	203
6. Case Study Narrative 2 – Ben, Josh and Mark	236
7. Case Study Narrative 3 - Simon	254
8. Case Study Narrative 4 - Lynda	346
Reflection on the case studies	369
9. Personal & Professional Implications	371
10. Conclusions & Future Research	376
10.1 What are the experiences of children under 3 in group care settings?	376
10.1.i <i>Sunshines Day Nursery – children's experiences</i>	376
10.1.ii <i>Tiny Feet Day Nursery - children's experiences</i>	380
10.1.iii <i>Simon – at home</i>	381
10.2 What are the perspectives of the adults involved?	382
10.2.i <i>Sunshines Day Nursery – parents' perspectives</i>	382
10.2.ii <i>Tiny Feet Day Nursery – parents' perspectives</i>	383

<i>10.2.iii Perspectives of staff, managers/owners</i>	383
<i>10.2.iv Perspectives of Simon's mother</i>	385
<i>References</i>	387
 <i>Appendices</i>	
<i>Appendix 1-Overview of the Subscales and Items of the ITERS-R</i>	394
<i>Appendix 2- TCRU Group Day Care Observation Checklist</i>	395

FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Impact of manager qualifications on the quality of the setting	47
Figure 3.1 Overview of the research process	60
Figure 3.2 Codes for parent interviews	88
Figure 3.3 Codes for staff interviews	89
Figure 3.4 Codes for managers/proprietors interviews	89
Figure 4.1 Codes for parent interviews	102
Figure 4.2 Codes for staff interviews	102
Figure 4.3 Codes for managers/proprietors interviews	103

TABLES

Table 2.1 Table showing the change in thinking about brain development	48
Table 3.1 Children involved in the case study	96
Table 4.1 First edition of the Framework developed	120
Table 4.2 Framework 1, using the observations of Amy	125
Table 4.3 The second edition of the Framework developed	145
Table 4.4 Framework 2, using the observations of Tim	147
Table 4.5 An over view of the issues that the managers discussed in the interviews	176
Table 5.1 Forbes (2004, p.82 & 83)	274
Table 5.2 Timetable of Simon's involvement with the treasure basket	275

ABSTRACT

Government policy in the UK since 1989 has led to increasing numbers of children under three attending group day care whilst their mothers return to work. The experience of young children in day care remains an under researched area. Two research questions underpin this thesis:

- *What are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?*
- *What are the perspectives of the adults involved?*

This thesis contributed new knowledge to understanding of children's experiences of group day care through an investigation of fifteen children under the age of three in group care settings over a period of four years. The thesis also examines the perspectives of the adults involved; parents, managers and staff. The thesis first reviews the literature on the history of childcare in the UK and critically examines research into the implications of children under three attending daycare. Methodological and ethical issues are then identified and discussed. The study then presents narrative cases studies of children's experiences by using observational data to present four case study narratives of children in group care settings and one of a child cared for at home by his mother. The case study observations are analysed using different methods: diary form, cohort overview, a monthly account and two using a Framework for analysis which was developed as part of the study. The study includes analysis of interview data which were gathered to illuminate the perspectives of the adults involved. Findings raise questions about the grouping of children in age cohorts, the knowledge and skills of the adult in interacting with children and in challenging their learning, relationships between parents, practitioners, and the crucial role of the manager in leading a day care setting.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the context of recent UK government policy, as outlined in the Ten Year Strategy (HMSO, 2004), an increasing number of mothers are returning to work when their children are under three years of age. Consequently an increasing number of babies and toddlers are attending childcare provision in either group or home settings (Bryson, 2006). However, little is known about the effects on and experiences of young children in day care but recent studies (Elfer & Selleck, 1999, Mathers & Sylva, 2007) suggest that an understanding of the detail of children's experiences is crucial to the development of high quality provision.

This study creates detailed case studies to investigate the experiences of fifteen children over a period of four years. Two research questions underpin this thesis:

- What are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?
- What are the perspectives of the adults involved?

This chapter provides an overview and introduction to the rationale for and structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature which gives an historical perspective of early years education and care in the UK, identifying the links between the past and the present practices and theories. It establishes that lifting

children out of poverty has been a driving force over the centuries and that many of the early pioneers, such as McMillan (1930) and Coram (Pugh, 2007) were far sighted in their vision for the development of children's services.

Discussion in chapter 2 also includes consideration of Attachment Theory, (Bowlby 1989), and how this has impacted on large numbers of children now cared for in group day care or childminding provision. Chapter 2 goes on to discuss findings from the *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project* (1997-2004) (Sylva et al, 2003), in particular changes in children's behaviour patterns depending on the hours that they spend in out of home settings, an issue also raised in the *National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative* (Mathers & Sylva, 2007).

The situation in relation to child care in other countries is also examined (OECD, 2001, 2006). As is national policy (DfEE, 1998, DfES, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2007). Chapter 2 concludes with consideration of the child development theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Trevarthen on child development.

Research questions and methodology are presented and discussed in Chapter 3 which provides an overview of the research design examines my personal bias and justifies my research questions. This is followed by a description of how the research developed and evolved over the four year period, with an examination of

the approaches used to interview parents, practitioners and managers. The parameters for the choice of settings and a rationale for the use of observation case studies are established as the preferred method of research. The ethical implications are also considered in Chapter 3 including consultation and consent of children, parents and practitioners and the use of photography.

Having considered the research methodology Chapter 4 presents the rationale for an analysis of the research data. The analysis precedes the case studies so that the voices of the parents, practitioners and managers can be heard first. Difficulties incurred during the research programme are considered before an in depth analysis of the data collected from the interviews with parents, practitioners and managers. Within this analysis there is an examination of the different frameworks used, before a framework to suit the needs of the study was developed. The newly developed *Framework for Analysis* is used to analyse case studies of two children.

In total fifteen children were observed over a period of four years and Chapters 5 to 8 present a series of four narrative reports which reflect on the observations of eight children. These Case Study Narratives are presented in different forms. Chapter 5 includes the experiences of three children in one day care setting. Chapter 6 presents the experiences of three boys in one cohort. Chapters 7 and 8 are in diary form - one of a child in a daycare nursery and the other of a child cared for in his own home by his mother.

Chapter 9 draws on the experiences and findings of the thesis to discuss personal perspectives which underpinned the research.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 10 which demonstrates how the study has responded to the two research questions:

- What are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?
- What are the perspectives of the adults involved?

The thesis presents a set of rich narrative accounts of children's experiences in day care, their learning and development. In terms of children's experiences it has shown that some of the adults were not observed to be meeting children's learning and developmental needs, perhaps due to their need for further qualification and their need for a wider knowledge of how children learn and develop. However, some children were challenged in their learning and were well supported by knowledgeable adults. The physical environment, at times, restricted children's play and learning. The study raises issues about the potential benefits of offering care in mixed age groups. Most practitioners are good at meeting the physical needs of the babies and children and tend to give health and safety issues a higher status than the role of adult interaction and the learning environment.

In terms of adults' perspectives the study has shown that the decision to put their child into day care is not an easy one for parents. However, in both nurseries in the study, participating parents reported that they were happy with the care that their

children received but some expressed doubts about their children's learning and development. Parents reported having positive experiences when they felt relationships with the staff within the setting were good and believed that these relationships had a positive impact on the way in which their children learned and developed.

The study indicates that the managers in the settings in the study can be a major influence within a day care setting. The need for systems where the manager can regularly observe and evaluate the practice in the rooms as a means of influencing good practice is highlighted.

Finally, the thesis identifies areas for further research into:

- the role of managers in settings with particular reference to how they influence the practice and quality of the nursery.
- the perspectives of parents to support them in their decisions about child care.

This thesis has developed different methods of reflecting on observations and an original *Framework for Analysis* of observations. A key achievement of the thesis is the detailed narrative accounts which contribute new knowledge of children's experiences in day care.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature confirms the findings of the Birth to Three Matters Review of the Literature (David et al, 2003 p.9) that there is,

... a paucity of evidence about processes and practices in ECEC for children from birth to three years. In particular the field needs research information about toddlers in educare settings, as well as that exploring the impact of practitioner training on the experiences of children and parents.

It begins with an historical perspective to identify of how care has developed and the impact of government policy and the relevance of theories of child development.

It examines attachment theory (Bowlby, 1989) and how it relates to the role of women as primary carers. Longitudinal studies of young children's experiences in 'out of home' care and different types of group care similar to full daycare are also critically discussed.

2.1 An Historical Perspective

Historically, mothers of children under three have been discouraged from working outside the home, apart from the war years. It was felt that it was better for a young child to stay with his/her mother within the home environment before attending nursery or statutory schooling. (Baldock 2001) Society's belief that a mother's role is to remain at home with young children was reinforced by Bowlby's Attachment theory, (Bowlby, 1989. p. 17) ' ... separation from 'his' mother after 'he' has formed an emotional relationship with her can be so damaging to the development

of 'his' personality.' This theory was taken up after the Second World War to dissuade women from working, after they had provided an important role in sustaining the economy and fulfilling jobs during the war. Penn (2005.p.51) recognises that,

Bowlby's theory of attachment struck a chord in the public mind. After the disruption of the war years, traditional family life appealed to many people. His theory was widely (mis)interpreted to mean that mothers should stay at home with their young children. If they worked they ran the risk of causing their children harm.

This theory of the relationships that young children form with their carers is now highlighted by the 'key person' system which is part of the Ofsted Care Standards (DfES 2003).

When looking at the social history of care and education it is seen that it was targeted at the poor as a means of social control. 'Care and education ... are a means of social control ...' (Petrie, 2003. p.77). By educating the poor they could become 'acceptable' members of society and pose less of a threat to the wealthy establishment. As the social reformers set about delivering this care and education to the poor they raised issues that not only dealt with the lives of the children but also those of their parents and families. This was seen in the Ragged Schools of the 19th century,

The Ragged Schools' remit included facilities for adult education, in the broadest sense of the word, such as libraries and reading rooms. The mothers and infants classes ... provide an example of mothers being instructed so that they themselves might provide a 'better' upbringing for their children. (Petrie, 2003.p.69).

This is a forerunner of today's Children's Centres (DfES, 2006) where services are offered as a community model; some on one site and others through a virtual Children's Centre, where the services are offered through a hub within pram pushing distance. There was in the 19th century recognition of the need to care for children after school hours where the schools were made available for more 'recreation' studies and also the need for public spaces where children could be taken off the streets at night. There is a strong link here to the government initiatives in the National Childcare Strategy, (DfEE, May 1998) which promoted childcare in order to encourage parents back into employment, where the high costs and lack of childcare provision are seen as barriers to work, 'Our economy will prosper if more skilled and capable people are able to take up job opportunities because they have access to good quality, affordable and accessible childcare.'(p.5) and the Sure Start programmes (www.surestart.gov.uk) which are targeted at disadvantaged groups and vulnerable children to encourage involvement in education towards employment.

As Ariés (1962) discovered through his studies of paintings, diaries and other literature, 'childhood', as a concept did not exist until the end of the middle ages and children quickly became miniature adults, with all the appearance and behaviour of adults. '...it seems ... that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world.'(p.33). In the 17th century it became common for children to be depicted on their own and also as part of a family unit. The language of childhood changed as did its perception,

... French would borrow from the English word 'baby', which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had denoted children of school age. This borrowing was the last stage ... henceforth, with the French word bébé, the very little child had a name. (p.29)

Cunningham (2006.) describes the way in which childhood has been 'invented' through the centuries. The long period of childhood experienced today is a recent invention. The state's concern over the poverty of children is evidenced in the 16th century, and much as today, the driving force behind government legislation. 'The concern about poor children reached its legislative apogee in 1597 with a comprehensive Act for the Relief of the Poor, which was enacted with only slight modification in 1601'. (p.96)

When looking back to historical writings it is not only the similarity of government approaches that are evident but also some of the ways in which children are brought up. In his writings Locke recognises that children must, '... be tenderly used ... must play, and have Play-things.' (As quoted in Cunningham, 2006.p.111 & 112), 'that *Learning* might be made a Play and Recreation to Children', which is reflected in the play based Curriculum Guidance to the Foundation Stage (DfES, 2000) and of the experiences for babies and young children in Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002). Cunningham (2006, p.244) comes to a chilling conclusion raising the fact that children are now so protected and that their abilities are unrecognised which is having an effect on their happiness.

The cost of maintaining the ideal of the happy childhood is high, not so much in monetary terms as in the protective barriers with which we surround children, perhaps thereby reducing their chance of happiness

It is this protection that makes childhood today one where children do not take risks and because they are so over protected we are producing a generation of obese children who are lacking the ability to think creatively.

This changing perspective on childhood continued with wealthy families of the 19th century putting children on the map as they created a separate world for them in the home nursery. They also became involved in the manufacture of goods for young children. In these families the mother remained at home, something which was difficult for the working class family. As a result of this ‘minding schools’ or ‘baby farms’ were established. These were care arrangements without official recognition until the death of a baby resulted in the official report of 1908 stating that, ‘They are often dirty and unsatisfactory, often conducted by women of the grossest ignorance.’ (Jackson and Jackson, 1979, p. 173) The aim of the 1908 Children Act was to legislate to monitor and control those who were being paid to look after children. Many parts of this early legislation are still in evidence today in the National Standards (DfES, 2003). The regulation in the Act was felt by many to be a way of ensuring that mothers stayed at home to look after their young babies/children. In this Act there were guidelines for the inspection of premises and the establishing of a suitable person, evidenced today in the National Standards (DfES, 2003).

Standard 1

Suitable Person: Adults providing daycare, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so. (p.9)

Standard 4

Physical Environment: The premises are safe, secure and suitable for the purpose (p.13)

(National Standards for under 8s daycare and childminding)

Robert Owen opened the first nursery school in the UK in New Lanark in 1816 for the children of the cotton mill workers where he promoted the concept of unstructured play. The Education Act 1870 established compulsory elementary schools and in 1880 school became compulsory for all children aged between five and thirteen years, but in the absence of any other provision many children under the age of five also attended in order to protect them from their poor home environments. However, in 1905 the Board of Education inspected the schools and found the provision unsuitable for the younger children and they were excluded from them. Owen's school provided some form of provision for young children which in turn ensured that older girls and their mothers were able to work in Owen's factories, an early form of workplace nursery.

In 1737 Thomas Coram started campaigning to establish a foundling hospital on a green field site in London. He was dismayed by the living conditions of poor children, especially of those born out of wedlock, and the high mortality rate of these children. He succeeded in opening the hospital which was soon to be overrun. The children were left at the hospital and then farmed out to wet nurses in the country until they reached five years of age when they returned to London to begin their apprenticeship so that they could live fulfilling lives and contribute to society, in jobs that were fitting to their station in life. The checks that were established are reminiscent of today's day care standards and Ofsted inspections. The wet nurses were vetted to ensure that they could care for the children properly,

The inspector's role was central, pivotal to the success of the whole system, as without the presence of an inspector no child could be placed with a nurse. They identified suitable wet-nurses in the areas where they lived and then supervised the nurses on behalf of the hospital once the babies were placed with them ... (Pugh, 2007, p. 42)

When the children returned to the hospital they were educated so that they had some levels of reading and writing to enable them to be apprenticed or to go into service. The education of the girls was unusual for the time. Thomas Coram had written a letter to a friend outlining his beliefs about the education of girls which again has resonance to this research study as it again places girls/mothers in the pivotal role of influencing the future generations,

... [it] is an Evil amongst us here in England to think Girls having learning given them is not so very Material as for boys to have it. I think and say it is more Material, for girls when they come to be Mothers will have the forming of their Childrens lives and if their Mothers be good or Bad the Children Generally take after them so that Giving Girls a virtuous Education is a vast Advantage to their Posterity as well as the Publick. (Pugh, 2007, p. 65 & 67)

It was at about the time of the 1908 Children Act that the McMillan sisters founded the nursery schools in England in an attempt to regulate the care for the young children of working class mothers. Margaret McMillan and her sister Rachel were Christian Socialists and they were concerned for the health and well being of working class children and recognised the importance of the educational value of the home and the parent's involvement in the child's education.

But from the age of one to seven, space, that is ample space, is almost as much wanted as food and air. To move, to run, to find things out by new movement, to "feel one's life in every limb," that is the life of early childhood. (McMillan, 1930. p. 11)

The sisters were politically active within the Labour Party and were involved in the 1889 London Dock Strike and the Suffrage movement. They campaigned to have school meals for children which culminated in the 1906 Provision of School Meals Act.

The McMillan nurseries were a forerunner of the present agenda for giving more choice and opportunity for parents to be involved in their child's education. Within the nurseries there was a great emphasis on nourishment, hygiene, exercise and fresh air and Margaret's methods still influence nurseries in England today.

As soon as he can toddle we introduce the child to a new environment, which is nevertheless his long lost natural home, his God-designed habitat, where his sense and spirit may be allowed to waken, and his impulse and activity will not meet unnatural obstacle or definite arrest. He is to live in the open air from the first, having shelter from rain, cold, and heat, every extreme and undue rigour of climate, but free to look upon the sky ...
(McMillan, 1930.p. 1)

The methods that can still be seen within today's early years are the ways in which she advocated that it is through observation that children's development and learning can be seen and that the testing through questioning is irrelevant. She trained her staff that it is through observation and interaction with children in their every day experiences that their learning can be challenged and extended

He lets the water pour through his fingers and the nurse laughs, and plays with him, which is almost as important as the giving of the bath. The bath is a splendid place for two-year-olds to study physics (McMillan, 1930.p.50)

This emphasis on observation, play and adult interaction is seen in the themes and principles of the EYFS (DfES, 2007),

Theme: A Unique Child

Principle: Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Theme: Positive Relationships

Principle: Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Theme: Learning and Development

Principle: Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

Theme: Enabling Environments

Principle: The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

The McMillan nursery schools encouraged the freedom of the child to choose but the pioneering of the sisters did not stop the fragmentation of children's daily experiences that still exists today. Today as then the question of the role of the mother was on the agenda,

Why, we are asked, do we want Nursery Schools? Should not every mother take entire charge of her little ones till they are of school age? Is it not her duty to remain at home and to devote herself to them? (McMillan, 1930, p.6)

The McMillan sisters had a vision for those children whom they saw as deprived and living in a society where there was a distinct difference between the 'have's and have nots' and where their poverty was indicative of their future adult lives and of the differences in society

Within the nation of troubled men and women there is another – of untroubled little children. Go into a public park on any fine morning and you may see the nursling of some wealthy home eyeing the child of poverty who gambols near him on the grass. Ah! If there was no stately nurse in attendance on the former how quickly these two little people would strike up an acquaintance and toddle off to play together. They do not know as yet what a gulf yawns between them. But they feel that they have in common, and that it would be delightful to be playfellows (McMillan, 1900. Preface)

Then, 'The nursery school was caught between the respectable world of education and the disreputable world of baby farming.' (Baldock, 2001.p.3) The sisters saw that the nursery school could have an influence on the developing education system in England, '... the Nursery School will, if successful, change and modify every other order of school, influencing it powerfully from below.' (McMillan, 1930. p.8). It seems that in the 21st Century we are still trying to solve the problem of child poverty and early years practitioners are still trying to use their influence to have a bottom up model of education.

Another advocate of the nursery school was Susan Isaacs who opened the Malting House School in 1924. Isaacs expanded on the practice of the McMillan sisters and promoted the idea that children learn through their play,

If you were to mention one supreme psychological need of the young child, the answer would have to be 'play' – the opportunity for free play in all its various forms. Play is the child's means of living, and of understanding life. (Isaacs 1954. p. 23)

The Second World War brought about a change in public opinion because it was necessary to encourage women to work outside the home to make up for the loss of production when the men went away to war. This change, however, did not mean that caring for young children outside of the home became acceptable, but it was none the less 'accepted' during this period as, '...the answer to almost all social problems, a rhetoric to be heard again only 60 years later in the early twenty-first century.' (Cunningham, 2006.p.188) Although at this time there was an increase in the amount of provision it was short lived,

...amid fears that women might not return to the home to release jobs for men, was a closing of the wartime nurseries, and an emphasis on home as the place in which to bring up a child up to the age of five. (Cunningham, 2006.p.188)

2.2 Attachment Theory

Since the launch of the National Childcare Strategy (DfEE May 1998) there has been an increase in the number of out of home child care providers with babies and young children spending longer hours separated from their primary caregivers; in most cases this is parents. This separation according to Bowlby (1989), Ainsworth (1969) and Belsky (2001, p.846), has detrimental effects on the developing child.

... more than twenty hours per week of such care posed risks for the infant-parent relationships and for psychological and behavioural adjustment during the toddler, pre-school and early primary school years.

Bowlby's attachment theory, as stated previously, was used by government to deter women from working. This theory centres around the view that, '... separation from his/her mother after he has formed an emotional relationship with her can be so damaging to the development of his personality' (Bowlby 1989 p.17)

Some developmental psychologists believe that the mother child bond/attachment is based around the child's need for gratification. Original theories were that the child could not decentre and therefore associated the mother with feeding and were nothing to do with relationships. Ainsworth (1969) and Bowlby (1989) both questioned this and asserted that food plays a minor role in the child's attachment to the mother. Their questioning of this is reflected in the work of Kaye and Fogel

(1980, p. 463) who studied the interactions of mothers and babies outside of feeding. Their studies showed that mothers adjusted their interactions with their babies as they developed.

The changes in the infant's behaviour over this period are more striking than those in the mother's. Yet the mother does adjust to her infant's attentional preferences by the timing of her expressive displays ... a mother seems to yield to her infant's shifting agenda, spending her energy on enriching the periods of joint gaze whenever they happen to occur.

Ainsworth furthered Bowlby's theory by looking at separation anxiety which involved putting children in strange situations and observing their differing patterns of behaviour when the mother was in, out of and returning to the room and also by introducing a stranger. The differing reactions of the child indicated whether a child was secure or not. Burman (1994) and Bruer (1999) rightly questioned the validity and ethics of the strange situation arguing that it is wrong to suggest that children of working mothers are distressed by being left in care, raising the point that for these children care is seen as part of their everyday life and that attachment theory negates the close relationships and bonds that children have with other carers apart from their parents.

The importance of Attachment Theory came to the fore again in 2006 when Sir Richard Bowlby, son of John Bowlby, wrote an open letter that was printed in the national press. In this letter he openly targeted group daycare where,

Researchers have found that many babies and toddlers have elevated levels of cortisol whilst experiencing certain forms of daycare. The causes may include physiological stress from loud noises, minor accident, conflicts and aggressive play or from psychological stress if they lack continuity of

personalised care-giving. (Daily Telegraph, 21/10/06. p.25)
(www.telegraph.co.uk)

He goes on to describe a situation where ‘... regular swapping of carers to prevent any bond attachment developing can be a risk factor’.

Professionally I have had close relationships with a variety of daycare settings and although I have had concerns about the turn over of staff I have never encountered a situation where staff are moved to avoid attachments being formed. On the contrary I have had experiences where the staff or ‘key persons’ have moved with children to the next room in order to ensure consistency of care. In his conclusion Sir Richard Bowlby recognises that childcare with a secondary attachment figure, childminder, grandmother or other relative is a more positive model and that where

... a society which encourages both parents to work outside the home while their children are under three, it is attachment focused childcare arrangements that have a crucial role to play in facilitating the healthy emotional development of children. (Daily Telegraph, 21/10/06. p.25)
(www.telegraph.co.uk)

Attachment theory assumes that if a child is insecure in the first year this continues for life. Bruer (1999, p.58) questions this assumption by recognising that, ‘What matters is early experience plus whatever happens afterward’, and unlike Belsky argues that there is no research that links attachment theory to brain development. Fonargy (2001, p.30) states that, ‘Evidence that suggests that attachment is the foundation for later adaptation is neither reliable or consistent’. Eliot (1999, p.313)

extends this further when she writes, ‘... that quality childcare (and quality parenting) is the key to protecting babies’ brain and emotional development.’

These challenges to attachment theory are raised in research into children who have experienced extreme levels of deprivation. Research into the effects of deprivation on the children discovered in Romanian orphanages, who were later adopted, showed that children are resilient and that depending on the duration of deprivation, there is cognitive catch up. The findings are not conclusive and as O’Connor et al (2000, p. 388) state,

What is clear is that further follow-up is needed, not only to examine the trajectory of cognitive skills and general developmental progress, but also to examine the intersection of cognitive, social and emotional development in the formation of peer relations and academic achievement, as well as ongoing family relations

The research appears to challenge the theory that deprivation has a lasting effect on children’s cognitive development, ‘The marked catch-up observed in most children appears to be at odds with the (above) emphasis on early experiences’ (O’Connor et al, 2000, p. 388)

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project 1997-2004 (Sylva, et al 2003) a longitudinal study of children’s development between 3-7 years of age in the UK has been looking at the effects of pre-school attendance on children’s long term development. The findings from the Pre-school Period (Sylva et al 2003) reflect on the findings to date. Although the study started when the children were

three some of these findings have reflected on children's patterns of care before that age. Their findings show that an early attendance (between 2 and 3 years of age) in some form of pre-school has a link with cognitive attainment and social development and that these benefits continue at the end of Key Stage 1.

The EPPE research, however, has also found that attendance prior to 2 years of age can lead to some slight behaviour problems for a small group of children. It was found that these issues were reduced depending on the quality of the pre-school provision.

When looking at those children who had no pre-school experience there was evidence of poorer cognitive attainment, sociability and concentration upon entry to school. The research recognised that parental intellectual levels had no bearing on children's outcomes. What was of greatest importance was what parents, and mothers in particular, did with their children in terms of interaction, offering activities such as painting and drawing, going on visits and giving children regular opportunities to play with their friends.

The NICHD Study of Early Child care and Youth Development is another longitudinal study which is being carried out in the United States of America. The study started in 1989 to look at the relationship between children's care experiences and children's developmental outcomes. The results from Phase 1 show that the average age at which children in the study started in non-maternal care was just over

three months and that by twelve months over 68.6% were accessing regular non-maternal care. The study concludes, as did the EPPE Project (1997-2004), that smaller groups, lower child to adult ratios, less authoritarian child rearing beliefs and a safe, clean and stimulating environment impact on the quality of care received. Quality of care is closely linked to social and emotional development, which will be discussed later and also has an impact on mother child interactions.

The time spent in care is also found to be a factor in mother child attachment,

... analyses of attachment at 15 months showed that children who spent more hours in child care *and* had mothers who were relatively insensitive and unresponsive were at heightened risk for insecure infant-mother attachments. At 24 months, spending more hours in care was associated with mothers' reports of lower social competence and caregivers' reports of more problem behaviours. (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2001. p. 485)

The EPPE Project(1997-2004) also studied the amount of time spent in non-maternal care with the conclusion that, ' ... there was no evidence that full day attendance led to better development than half day attendance' (Sylva et al, 2003. p.3).

Of interest in the NICHD Phase 1 is the conclusion that it is the mother-child relationship that has the greater impact on a child's development, both cognitive and social, no matter how much non-maternal care is accessed. It is the impact of external effects, divorce, changes in care arrangements, family relocation and on a larger scale the history of the time, within the family that appear to have the greatest influence on development.

In England the Families, Children and Childcare (FCCC) study is focusing on the relationship between childcare and outcomes for children. The FCCC concludes in its rationale for the study (Sylva et al at www.familieschildrenchildcare.org, p.10), 'Whatever the nature of the care provided, it is the quality of parent-child relationships which shape developmental outcomes'. The study sets out to learn more about families in the U.K who are making childcare choices. It is these choices and the home environment which,

It is hypothesised that families make a vital contribution to the outcomes of childcare for their children, not only through their choice of type, quality and amount of care, but also through their own expectations of, and relationships with, their children's caregivers and the explanatory "frames" they provide to enable children to make sense of their care arrangements and environments
(ibid, p. 11)

In order to address the issues the study recruited mothers from two centres in London and Oxford, antenatally and post-natally. The study recognises that there are many variables when studying outcomes for children; gender, the individual child and his/her relationship with the mother, when and for how long the child is in care and which setting and which practitioner. These variables mean that it is impossible to come to a definite and reliable conclusion.

When looking at mothers' decisions concerning employment and out of home care Leach et al (2006) found that warmth of carers and the quality of their interactions along with the length of sessions and location were of importance. In the study group the most common type of childcare accessed was a childminder, because

these mothers thought that group day care was inappropriate for young babies. It was felt that childminders, nannies or relatives could offer a more individual approach to caring.

Key to questioning attachment theory where children are in out of home settings is the relationship between the setting and the parents. Practitioners need to be non-judgemental towards parents and they need to recognise the importance of their role in trying to establish a strong bond with the baby. As Gerhardt (2004, p.23) states,

Babies need a caregiver who identifies with them so strongly that the baby's needs feel like hers. If she feels bad when the baby feels bad, she will then want to do something about it immediately, to relieve the baby's discomfort – and this is the essence of regulation.

Practitioners, who work long hours and are underpaid, have to establish the same strong bond with parents.

What is urgently needed now is an unequivocal recognition of the value for children of parents and carers working together with practitioners. Parents really matter to their children (Langston, 2006.p.10)

What is recognised in the literature on attachment theory is that it is the quality and consistency of care that has effects on the child's relationships and social development. If a child receives good quality care in an out of home setting and the adult support is consistent then the child is able to develop attachment to more than one caregiver.

What does seem to be true is that attachment relationships remain stable as long as the childcare situation, and the circumstances of the parents and family, remain stable (Bruer 1999, p. 184)

Attachment is related to care giving and it is here that the role of the mother is raised. Mothers are traditionally seen as a child's primary caregiver. Although in recent years fathers have played a greater role in the parenting of their children, it has always been the woman who has taken on the primary role. '... 'parenting' – which is, within current social arrangements, usually mothering.' (Burman, 1994, p.33)

2.4 Organisational Culture

In both of the nurseries that were used within this study there was a common feature in the way in which they were managed. Both nurseries were managed by owner proprietors and as the analysis of their interviews shows there was a difference in style and effectiveness of their management.

The manager of Sunshines Day Nursery found it difficult to separate her management administrative role from that of leader to a team of practitioners. The literature on

management in early years settings recognises this as a common failing,

... a certain hesitance to engage with concepts of leadership among professionals in the early years settings, who view themselves first and foremost as educators and child developers. (Muijs et al 2004 p. 158)

In their work Muiji et al (ibid) discovered that managers traditionally saw their role as managing and maintaining as opposed to leading. This perspective of the role of the manager was seen in Sunshines Day Nursery and it was probably the lack of leadership that was shown by the manager which meant the staff as a team did not

know what was expected of them. The evidence for this can be clearly seen in the way in which the staff at this nursery were unsure as to how to operate an effective 'key person' system because the manager did not 'create' the climate for this to occur. In this setting there was not a clear vision something which the Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector (ELEYS study, Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2007 p. 13) recognised as a component of effective practice,

In most effective settings better leadership was characterised by a clear vision, especially with regard to pedagogy and curriculum, which was shared by everyone working within the setting

The issue of the role of the manager creating an ethos within a setting is supported by Yeon Lee's study (2006 p. 143) where she found that,

First, the head caregivers played a significant role. They provided on-going support and caring for the student caregivers in the room, in the seminar, and through the supervisor meetings, in addition to providing good models for interacting with the infants. Implementing the center philosophy in the room, the head caregivers created a supportive classroom atmosphere where the student caregivers could develop their own styles as caregivers and in building relationships with their key infants. Their respect for individual styles and pace was deeply appreciated by the caregiver participants.

Since the observations of the children in daycare settings were concluded both settings were inspected by Ofsted. The following comment was made about the management of Tiny Feet Day Nursery and the effectiveness of the 'key person' system,

The small groups and the effective key worker system allow the staff to get to know the children well. Staff share warm relationships with the children, who are happy and secure in their care. They dedicate time playing and talking to the children and they support them well in their play and exploration. Staff provide lots of positive physical contact by means of hugs and cuddles. The children respond by openly seeking reassurance when needed; sitting on staff's knees as they play and holding out their arms for a hug.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. Effective systems are in place to set clear direction to the staff team. Regular staff meetings ensure open lines of communication and regular staff supervision and appraisals help to identify any training needs.

When Ofsted inspected Sunshine Nursery the following comment was made about their 'key person' system,

The children thoroughly enjoy their time in the setting, as they actively engage in play according to their individual choices from an early age. They benefit from close warm relationships that are well established with their key workers. This enables them to be happy, settled and to make other secure relationships. They receive consistent care from familiar adults who know them well. The staff skilfully interact well with the children and are supportive to their individual needs as they play. For example, those who are insecure are given lots of reassurance and cuddles.

Both of the comments about the 'key person' within the settings show that in the interim period when the observations ceased, 2006, to when Ofsted inspected in the autumn 2007 both settings had established effective 'key person' systems but that Tiny Feet was delivering this better as their outcome was Good compared to Satisfactory for Sunshines.

2.5 Role of women as primary carers

As women move further into the work force, for both personal and economic reasons, there has been a growth in children accessing out of home care. Women are no longer in the traditional role of mother at home looking after the house and the children. This increase in the time spent out of the home does not mean that women have lost the responsibility of being the primary carer. Women now take on three work roles; paid work, domestic work and caring work. It is women who are

responsible for establishing and maintaining childcare and for the unpaid work that accompanies caring.

Three quarters of most forms of unpaid care is done by women. They do most of the childcare; in 1997, women spent 166 minutes a day, on average, caring for children compared to 68 minutes by men (Pocock, 2003, p. 189)

In her research on the work/life balance in Australia, Pocock (2003) looks at the pressure that faces most mothers today. The main pressure is around time; the time that is not only involved in going to work but the time to take the children to a daycare setting and the time implications at the end of the day where they are pressured to collect their children and then take on the role of house wife and mother. It is usually the mother who makes the childcare arrangements and is also responsible for providing the care if the child is ill. These pressures have implications for women's place in the workforce. They are not seen as committed because they find it difficult to work outside office hours. For many women this results in working part time, sacrificing their career paths which has an impact on their earnings.

The tendency for women to take the 'mummy track' when they try to combine work and family A 'mummy track' exists for women who put their caring responsibilities squarely alongside or in front of their paid work. This track is a second class career track, in that women drop back in status, pay or career to secure conditions that accommodate motherhood. (Pocock, 2003, p. 146)

In the UK the Women and Work Commission's Independent Review

(www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk February 2006) Shaping a Fairer Future

examined the issues women face when combining work and family life. The

Review recognised that, ‘... women continue to have the main responsibility for childcare, other unpaid care and domestic work’ (p.27). An interesting corollary to this is that, ‘Men with children actually tend to work longer hours than those without’ (p.28). As Pocock found the review also recognises that, ‘Nearly half of women workers with children under 5 years are in jobs that under-utilise their skills’ (p.31).

Shaping a Fairer Future (2006) made recommendations that the Ten Year Childcare Strategy (HMSO 2004) should be implemented in consideration of the working needs of mothers, particularly shift workers who need flexible childcare arrangements. It also recommends that employers look at providing more quality part time work with flexible hours so that working mothers can break the ‘glass ceiling’.

This pattern of female employment is also seen within the OECD countries, with the highest rates of part time female employment in the Netherlands, Norway and the UK.

Part time employment has increased in the past decade in most OECD countries, and typically accounts for over 20% of total female employment and around 10% less for males
(OECD, 2001. p. 27)

Part time employment is also a reflection of the way in which societies view the role of the mother being at home to care for their children.

Along with these challenges of time many women are also faced with guilt. For those women who remain at home to care for their children, and there is a decrease in the number of these, they face the guilt of not contributing to the family income and also because fewer women stay at home there is a not the same support network within the community.

.. women who adhered to the expert advice of their day, by, for example, staying home with their child rather than engaging in paid work, are now portrayed as over-involved and clingy
(Burman, 1994, p. 59)

For those women who return to work there is the guilt that they are neglecting their child, which is not helped by media revelations that childcare is bad for children. Parents, and mothers in particular, are bombarded with a plethora of contradictory information from the media. In newspaper articles parents are told that,

... some nursery provision can have negative consequences (Henry 2006)

Young children develop better if they are looked after by their mothers at home (Harris, 2005)

Children cared for by anyone other than their mothers tended to show high levels of aggression or were inclined to become more withdrawn, compliant and unhappy (Bale, 2005)

whilst also being informed that,

Mothers who find more satisfaction in their jobs than staying at home looking after toddlers should not feel guilty about leaving their children in a nursery (and) that more time in nursery care could benefit children ...
(Womack, 2005)

This feeling of guilt evoked by media coverage is expressed in the FCCC study
(Leach et al, 2006.p.49)

...that mass media, especially television, played a large part in shaping their (mothers) beliefs and that the images of childcare that T.V conveyed and mothers retained was almost invariably negative.

Parents today are bombarded with advice on how to bring up their children through the medium of television. Behavioural strategies and possibly 'quick fix' solutions are offered in programmes such as *Super Nanny (ITV Channel 4)* & *The House of Tiny Tearaways (BBC 2)*

In the past parents used to seek their advice from grandparents and/or the extended family but with families having more mobility this family support network is becoming increasingly rare. The main feature of these programmes is about parents re-establishing relationships with their children. This pressure on parents has increased since Pugh et al (1994, pp34 & 35) commented that,

An unintended pressure on parents can be the relationship between parents and the considerable number of specialists, experts and professionals in the field of child care and family support they encounter through their child's life ... attitudes of many professionals are tending to undermine parents' self confidence and their belief in their own abilities.

This pressure has recently peaked with the publication of Palmer's *Toxic Childhood* (2006) and the Daily Telegraph campaign *Hold on to Childhood* (September 2006) with the support of a letter from a 110 academics, writers and medical experts. 'The letter published yesterday said youngsters had been tainted by over exposure to electronic entertainment, lack of play space and the emphasis on academic testing in schools.' As the Daily Telegraph campaign gathered momentum Michael Morpurgo took up the challenge under the headline, *Working mothers 'damage their child'*.

(Daily Telegraph, December 30th, 2006). In an interview Morpurgo, ‘... sparked controversy by saying that it was utterly extraordinary “that half of mothers with children under five had jobs outside the home.”’, again laying the guilt on working mothers. The article is more about the early age of starting formal education in Britain, than about the fact that children are in day care. It has long been recognised that in the U.K children start formal schooling two years before their peers in Europe but I disagree with the assertion by David Willets, the Conservative shadow education secretary, that, “What is happening is we are making child care for three and four year olds much too like a formal school experience – that’s what all these Ofsted inspections are forcing them to do.”, because the whole focus of The Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES 2002), The Curriculum Guidance to the Foundation Stage (DfES, 2000) and ultimately the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007) is about supporting settings to offer an holistic play based curriculum. The government’s 10 Year Strategy (HMSO, 2004) is progressively extending the maternity leave entitlement so that very young children can be cared for at home, much the same as mothers are entitled to do in European countries like Sweden

By law, all children 1-12 years have a right to childcare, as long as both parents work or study ...0-1 year: almost all children are looked after at home by a parent (generally, the mother) on parental leave at home. In general, children begin in day-care at about 15-18 months (OECD, 2001.p.177)

In the Telegraph article (Daily Telegraph, 2006), there is only the voice of Hayley Doyle, spokesman for the National Day Nurseries Association, talking for parents when she says, “Many parents need to work and should not be criticised for choosing to send their children to a nursery.”

Palmer (2006, p.16) refers to the external pressure on parents, ‘... one of the problems I recognised in my research was that the growth in ‘parenting experts’ has contributed to the syndrome (Toxic Childhood) – parents feel de-skilled and unable to trust their instincts.’ This is a sympathetic recognition of external pressure and yet Palmer (2006) proceeds to offer advice as to how parents can detox their children from the ills that exist in today’s society. It appears that parents are in a ‘no win’ situation; the government and society as a whole is encouraging women to rejoin the labour market (especially single mothers) to bring down the levels of child poverty, and yet in her book Palmer consistently refers to the lack of time that parents, mothers in particular, are spending interacting with their children and also preparing their food. ‘...but it’s also widely agreed that the way young children are bought up inevitably influences their development.’ (Palmer, 2006 p.5)

In the end, though, the main responsibility for rearing children lies, as it always has, with parents. They have to wise up, stop being paralysed by a combination of rapid change, uncertainty and guilt and concentrate on providing a secure, healthy environment in which their children can grow (Palmer, 2006 p.18)

Although Palmer recognises the economic benefits to society for mothers to return to work the tone of her comments is critical and judgemental when she writes

... problematic single mothers the social revolution left cluttering up state benefit systems. As well as helping them make the wondrous transformation from drain-on-the-public-purse to valued taxpayer, it brings their children ... under the care of the state during the working week (Palmer, 2006 p.172)

Although critical of much within *Toxic Childhood* I would agree with much of Palmer’s writing, especially when she describes the dangers of ‘hot housing’ children,

In fact, it's likely that pressure to achieve too much too soon does more harm than good. There are many tales of hot-housed children who failed to live up to their potential, and others whose eventual success was off-set by emotional turmoil and social ineptitude (Palmer, 2006 p.173)

Like other writers she does recognise that for some children being in full time day-care is better than being at home. Although, as stated elsewhere, I would personally seek a different form of childcare, I would not follow Palmer's rhetoric by suggesting that all day-care is bad for children. My research findings have provided evidence that children can develop emotionally and socially within these settings if the care is consistent and if the setting is striving to offer quality for children and families, as well as achieving financial success.

What has to be recognised within the plethora of literature, experts and advice, is that parents want the best for their child and, '... that although all parents want to do their best for children, there is no single right way to bring up children, no rigid set of rules by which all 'good' parents should abide.' (Pugh et al, 1994, p.53) It also has to be recognised that many parents face dilemmas when putting their child into care,

The interaction between economic, social and educational deprivation is complex, but it is clear that many parents find it extremely difficult to bring up their children when basic personal and family needs, such as adequate income, whether through employment or benefits, and housing, daycare and other support are not taken care of first. (Pugh et al, 1994, p. 57)

Some 12 years later Pugh's words still ring true.

2.6 Policy base - Current practices and policies

The return of mothers to work has increased in recent years as women have sought greater economic independence and governments have encouraged the return to work for economic reasons. The provision of daycare in the UK is diverse in that children under the age of three have access to different provision which is not universally funded and which consists of childminders, playgroups, private day nurseries and for children under one with their mothers or through informal arrangements within the extended family. Outside the UK few offer universal provision for the 'under ones' and access is often related to the length of parental leave.

The nature and availability of paid and flexible maternity and parental leaves are closely linked to policy and provision for children under three, and reflect social views about young children and their care and education (OECD Starting Strong, 2001 p.55).

In this study 12 countries participated in a review of their Early Childhood Education and Care and with the exception of some of the Nordic countries this provision is not subsidised, 'Subsidised provision for under 3's is the most developed in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, countries with a long history of supporting publicly funded ECEC provision' (p.56) When looking at the policies for parental leave it can be seen that the Nordic countries offer longer periods so that very few children need to access provision before the age of one.

In 2006 this study was revisited in Starting Strong II (OECD, 2006, p.3) with the objective of reviewing the eight key elements from the original report.

- A systemic and integrated approach to ECEC policy
- A strong and equal partnership with the education system
- A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
- Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure
- A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
- Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
- Systematic attention to data collection and monitoring
- A stable framework and long-term agenda for research and evaluation

Of particular interest to this research are the comments that are made within this report about the involvement of parents, the status of early years workers and their concluding comment about the future of education. Starting Strong II reaffirms the importance of the role of parents in early childhood education and care whilst recognising the pressures that parents are under,

Families play a critical nurturing and educational role toward their children, particularly in the early childhood period when brain and personality continue to form. As the first educators of children, parents would like to support their child's development and learning. Many are prevented, however, by the lack of time, or by underestimating the importance of the responsibility or by not knowing how they can effectively support their children's learning. (OECD, 2006. p.215)

In the UK this involvement of parents has been identified in the government's Children Centre Programme which also recognises the importance of giving parents support.

How parents help their children to learn and play at home is vital – it not only influences the child's development of skills and knowledge, but also their enthusiasm for and attitude to learning (DfES, 2006. p. 26)

The quality and care that babies and toddlers receive from their parents is the most important influence on their future life chances. Parental interest and involvement in children's learning boosts cognitive attainment. (DfES, 2006. p.38)

Starting Strong II (OECD, 2006, p. 216) refers to the low status that childcare workers have within the labour market,

Close attention needs to be paid to the level of recruitment of early childhood workers, their initial and ongoing training, and even in some countries, to the long term sustainability of recruitment into early childhood services. Because of poor wages, lack of professional development and long hours, staff turnover can be high and the quality offered to young children clearly inadequate. These shortcomings are exacerbated in child care markets that operate without sufficient state and support or regulation. The government have started the process of looking at the levels of qualifications of staff working with children by recognising that they,

... want to see all practitioners providing early years provision in children's centres to qualified to level 3. This will give them the sound understanding of child development they need to effectively tailor learning and play opportunities to individual children (DfES, 2006, p. 8)

One of the concluding remarks within Starting Strong II is a chilling reminder of how far governments have to go in order to effectively meet the needs of children in early childhood education and care as they progress through the education system,

Organisation, curriculum and decision-making in schools continue to resemble 19th century patterns: curricula imbued with the certainties of the past, formal testing of discrete skills and knowledge items, and the "balkanisation" of teachers into separate classrooms and disciplines. The school as an education institution cannot continue in this way. Knowledge is inter-disciplinary and increasingly produced in small networks. In the future, it will be constructed through personal investigation, exchange and discussion with many sources, and co-constructed in communities of learning characterised by team teaching. This approach to knowledge can begin in early childhood and, in fact, fits well with the child's natural learning strategies, which are fundamentally enquiry based and social (OECD, 2006, p. 222)

The U.K government now has a vision, set out in their 10 Year Strategy (HMSO 2004), '... a goal of twelve months paid maternity leave by the end of the next Parliament' (p.1) to offer parents choice and flexibility in balancing their work and

family lives. The Work and Families Act (June 2006) started this process by extending statutory maternity leave to 9 months with effect from April 2007 with entitlements and flexibilities for fathers. The 10 Year Strategy (HMSO 2004) also emphasises the importance of one to one contact for children in their first year of life, which could have a major impact on the role of childminders as well as on the Private Day nurseries as there will be a potential reduction in the number of baby places that are taken up.

This process began with the National Childcare Strategy (DfEE 1998), Early Excellence centres (1997) and the Sure Start programmes (1999). The Early Excellence centres were set up across the country in 1997 to promote models of good practice in integrating services for young children and families. This model of promoting good practice and offering children and families a one stop approach has been extended with the Children's Centres which are part of the government's vision for there to be a '... Sure Start Children's Centre in every community by 2010, co-ordinating a range of services for pre-school children.' (HMSO 2004, p.33). Sure Start was set up in 1999 and it worked, '... by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support for the benefit of young children living in disadvantaged areas and their parents.' (www.surestart.gov.uk) The Children's Centre model is being established in local authorities. 'Over 800 Sure Start Children's Centres have now opened, reaching over 650,000 children.' (DfES 2006. p.19)

Within this context the political environment was challenging the quality of care and learning through the transfer of care from social services to education and the introduction of the 14 Care Standards by which Ofsted began inspecting a range of childcare providers in 2001. It was in the Care Standards Act 2000 that there was an amendment to the Children Act 1989 moving the responsibility of inspecting and regulating daycare to Ofsted. Historically the responsibility for services for children under three had been with the Department of Health and the responsibility for children aged three to five years was held by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) but this was changed as the DfEE came to hold the responsibility for implementing policy and delivering planned outcomes. In May 1998 the government announced the National Childcare Strategy which was to be delivered locally by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) and the Sure Start Initiative. The Strategy's aim was '...to ensure good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0-14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements.'

(www.surestart.gov.uk). This was then followed by the transfer of the responsibility for registration and inspection of daycare and childminding to the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in September 2001 and the publication of the National Standards for Under Eights Daycare and Childminding (DfES, 2003) against which to inspect and regulate. This raising of the standards runs alongside the government's agenda of providing child care to enable mothers of young children to return to work and also to break the

poverty barrier through education and employment opportunities. Part of the National Childcare Strategy was to make childcare more affordable by introducing Working Families Tax Credit to help parents who wish to return to work or education and training, thus meeting one of the tests for the success of the Strategy, ‘... more parents with the chance to return to work, education and training because they have good access to diverse, good quality childcare.’(www.surestart.gov.uk)

The Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) were evaluated in November 2006 with mixed outcomes. The evaluation highlighted that in order to monitor effectiveness in such a programme it has to be recognised that it can take up to three years for them to become embedded and that proper evaluation will take place further down the line. In the executive summary it states that,

Some of the detected effects of SSLPs can be regarded as beneficial whereas other effects were developmentally adverse. In all cases, the size of these limited effects, whether developmentally beneficial or adverse, was small.

(DfES, 2005.p.2, executive summary)

There were examples that the SSLPs were successful in some of the areas. This is evidenced in Weinberger et al (2005) which describes the developments in the Sure Start area in Sheffield. The book describes the different programmes that were developed and the successes and lessons learned from each project. The encouraging thing from this SSLP is that it has raised awareness, not only

within early years provision but also about the importance of including and involving the whole community in a range of areas; from improving health, social and emotional development, children's learning and strengthening the community network. In the concluding chapter, 'Looking to the Future' the authors look back on the lessons learned and reflect on the way forward,

Whatever the initial uncertainties, one finding now that is quite clear is that this Sure Start programme was actually devised, implemented, managed and sustained over a period of years... There have been many challenges to be overcome but local energies, coupled with national funding and support, did make things happen. (Hannon et al, 2005, p. 249)

The SSLPs have now been included as the leads on the Children Centres from where they will deliver their services to the local community. It has been shown that although the effects of the SSLPs have been minimal there have been some benefits which can be built on within the new Children's Centre model, '...there are grounds for concluding that the effects detected, while limited and small, are nevertheless meaningful, especially given that they form a coherent pattern' (ibid p. 31).

In response to the 10 Year Strategy (HMSO, 2004) the Childcare Act 2006 sets out how the government will establish high quality early learning and care for children under five years of age.

As part of this agenda to establish high quality learning and play for the under 5's, the government is supporting longitudinal research. The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which commenced in 2000, is following the lives of 19,000 babies born between 2000 and 2002. When the study started the children were pre-school age. Within this study, *The Quality of Childcare Settings in the Millennium Cohort Study* (QCSMCS) was established to look at a sample of 10,000 millennium children to answer the following research questions,

1. What is the quality of the group childcare settings attended by a sample of Millennium Cohort Study Children?
2. Is there a relationship between the quality of childcare received and children's home background?

A supplementary question which has arisen during the study is:

3. Which centre characteristics are associated with higher or lower quality of provision?

(Mathers et al, 2007, p.4)

Of interest to this research study are some of the findings reported in March 2007 when the age range of children in a room cared for in an out of home setting is considered. The report states,

The ages of children catered for was a significant predictor of quality for 3-5 year old children. Having older children (for example, children over 4½ years) in the room was beneficial, particularly in terms of quality of interactions, provision to develop children's language and reasoning skills and overall curriculum quality. It is likely that this is due to the higher levels of language, communication and educational activities developed to meet the needs of (and challenge) these older children. (Mathers et al, 2007, p. 9)

The report then moves on to look at the impact on quality when younger children are in the group,

While the presence of older children was beneficial in terms of quality, having younger children (i.e. children under the age of 3 years) in the group alongside 3 and 4 year olds had a negative effect on provision quality. This could be because the presence of younger children, and the staff time required to care for them, means that less time and resource is available to devote to challenging educational activities for the older children. In addition, the requirement to have a range of activities and materials appropriate for both older and younger children may lead to a 'dilution' of the educational content required to challenge 3 and 4 year olds. (Mathers et al, 2007p. 9)

This statement highlights the difficulties that many pre-school settings encounter when they cater for children aged 2½ to 5 years of age. In my research one of the settings involved was based in one room, with a defined area for the under two's and one of the issues raised in my findings was the influence on the care and learning of the younger children when the older children were present.

This issue is also raised in the findings from the National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative: The Relationships between Quality and Children's Behavioural Development (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p.5). The study was,

... intended to fill two major gaps in the UK literature. Firstly, the majority of studies exploring the relationship between quality and child outcomes have focused on provision for 3 and 4 year old children. The current study focused on children under the age of 3½ years.

Within this research ages of children within rooms was studied. Unlike the MCS (Mathers et al, 2007) it was shown that,

Quality scores were significantly higher in these mixed age groups than in rooms which provided only for younger children ... Younger children experienced better quality provision in rooms with clear and 'stretching' aims for children's development : the dimensions which improved with the presence of older children were those related to educational provision. In a mixed age room, younger children were able to experience higher level language, communication and educational activities developed to meet the needs of the older children. They also have the opportunity to interact with, and model the behaviour of, more mature peers. (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p. 8)

The study, however, did identify that the mixing of ages was likely to have a negative impact on behavioural outcomes for younger children which creates a dichotomy with the improved cognitive outcomes for these children,

Children under the age of 3½ years displayed more worried and upset behaviours when they attend a mixed age room with children aged 4 years and over ... This is particularly interesting, since mixed age rooms were rated as being of higher quality. ... Thus, mixed age rooms may be better for children in terms of cognitive outcomes, but not in terms of behavioural outcomes. (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p. 10)

This conclusion and the recommendation from this study is that, 'Further research into the impact of mixed age rooms is recommended. They may enhance cognitive ability at the price of emotional security.' (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p.81)

Another interesting conclusion from the National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative: The Relationships between Quality and Children's Behavioural Development (Mathers & Sylva, 2007) is concerned with the amount of time that children attended out of home care, 'The more time (hours and days) children spent each week at a childcare centre, the more confident they were, and the more sociable they were with their peers.' (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p. 10). Whilst recognising that there are also some detrimental effects, 'However the effect on anti-social behaviour was significant for both age groups, and this suggests that intensity of child care (measured in hours/days per week) is relevant for children up to the age of 3 ½ years.' (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p. 11) and concluding that, '... it is not the age at which children start at their centres which is important, but the cumulative number of months they attend, and the amount of time they spend in centre-based provision each week'. (ibid) The report recommends that there should be further research into this 'tipping point' which suggests at the moment, '...that the 'tipping point' is around 35 hours and/or five days attendance i.e. almost full-time'. (Mathers & Sylva, 2007, p. 76)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfES 2007) published in March 2007 and which will become statutory in September 2008 is a single statutory framework for those working with children from birth to five years of age. The framework will build upon existing guidance in the Foundation Stage (DfES 2000) and Birth to Three Matters (DfES2002) 'to promote the well-being of

every child and provide high quality experiences covering six areas of learning and development' (DfES 2006. p.53). It will also build upon the findings from research, for example the Rose review

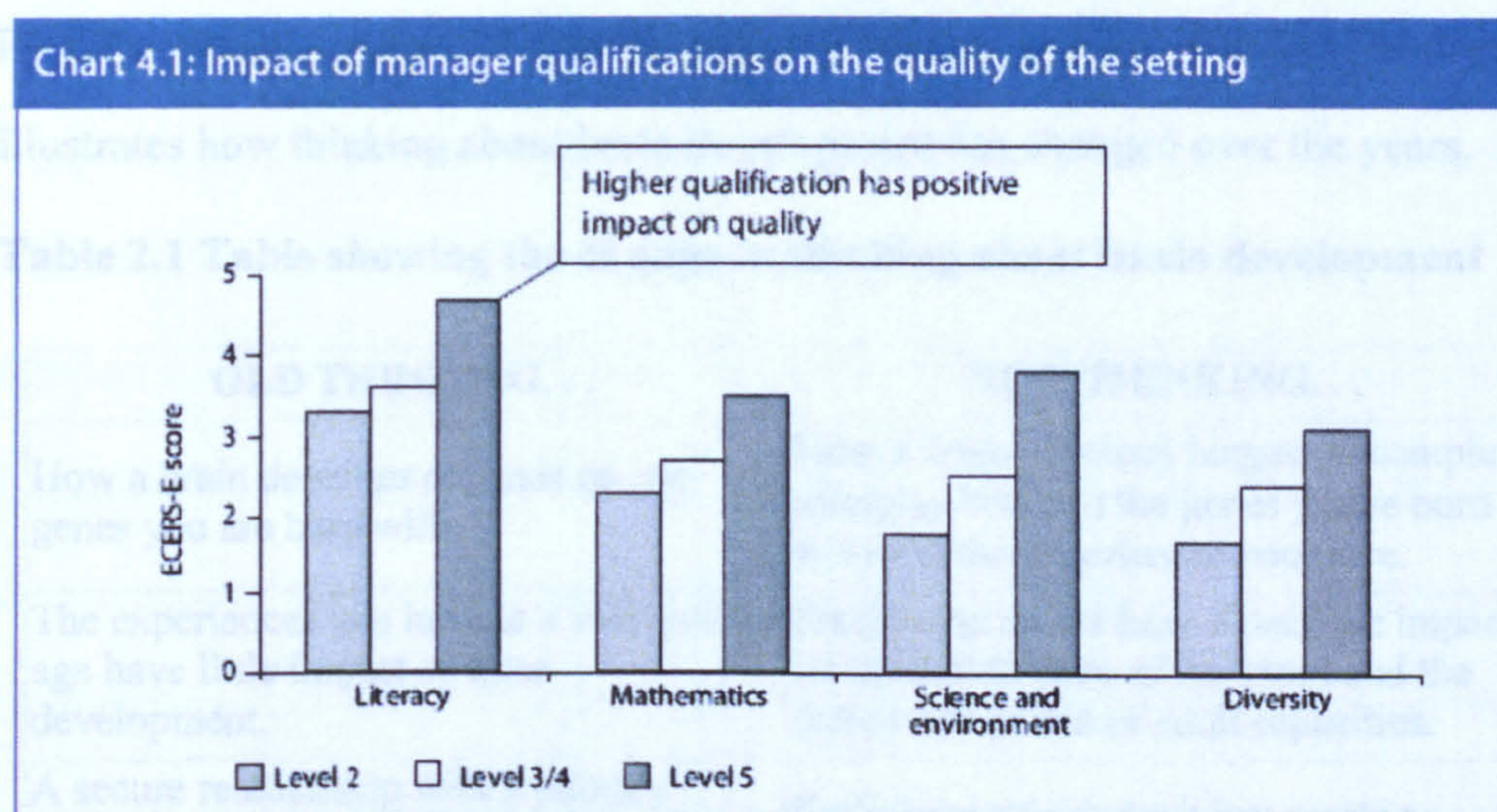
[\(www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/rosereview/finalreport/\)](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/rosereview/finalreport/). This review into the reasons why the standards of reading had not risen over the nine year period since the introduction of the National Curriculum (1989-1998) reported in March 2006. The final report (DfES, 2006) found, controversially, that the training and delivery of phonics to young children needed to be of a higher quality. The framework also incorporates some of the national standards for under 8's daycare and childminding. The action plan for the 10 year strategy (DfES 2006) stresses the importance of the continuing role of childminders, who are mainly involved with children from birth to three years of age.

The introduction of the Framework is important as it offers all practitioners caring for young children in out of home provision the opportunity to provide a high quality seamless approach to caring and learning. It is also important because this will strengthen the early years as it will no longer be working to a 'top-down' model. The Framework will also link into the Primary National Strategy, thus placing it in a position of importance. The Framework recognises the importance of children learning through play with the support and challenge of knowledgeable adults. In line with the EPPE Project (1997-2004) EYFS promotes the balance between adult led and child initiated activities. The adult

to child ratio for under two's will remain at 1:3 and for two to three year olds at 1:4.

In order to address the issues around knowledgeable and skilled adults the government has allocated £52 million to the Children's Workforce and Development Council (CWDC) to develop and deliver the training for the Early Years Professional (EYP) status. The EYP will be responsible for leading on and delivering the EYFS in all settings. The development of this status has been in response for the need to skill the workforce and to raise its professional status. In the EPPE Project (1997-2004) it was concluded that the highest levels of learning and a raising of quality occur when the practitioner has higher qualifications. Within the private, voluntary and private sector this has always been a concern. In this sector the majority of practitioners work long hours with poor pay and working conditions. There is a need to raise the levels of qualification from level 3 (most practitioners have only achieved level 2) if all children are to receive high quality learning and care (see table below). There is also a need for those who are qualified to a higher level (normally teachers) to obtain knowledge and experience of working with children under the age of three if they are to become involved in delivering the EYFS within children's centres.

Figure 2.1 Impact of manager qualifications on the quality of the setting



Source: EPPE Technical paper 5 (2000) pg 67.

The need for the government to address these issues has been brought about by changes in society during the twentieth century.

In recent years, there have been many significant changes to family arrangements with implications for educational and social policy. Women's desire for greater economic independence and increased household standards, their improved educational levels, and demands from the economy for more labour have all contributed to increasing female labour force participation in paid work (OECD 1999a in OECD 2001 p.25)

More women have returned to work whilst their children are still young. There are more children in single parent families and there has been a breakdown in the extended family as people are more likely to move location to find employment. For many of these reasons women are seeking daycare for their young children. This drive by the government to raise standards for babies and young children is

supported by recent studies into brain development which have changed society's perspectives on child development. The following table from Shore (1997, p.18), illustrates how thinking about brain development has changed over the years.

Table 2.1 Table showing the change in thinking about brain development

OLD THINKING...	NEW THINKING...
How a brain develops depends on the genes you are born with.	How a brain develops hinges on complex interplay between the genes you're born with and the experiences you have.
The experiences you have at a very young age have little impact on later development.	Early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain and the nature and extent of adult capacities.
A secure relationship with a primary caregiver creates a favorable context for early childhood development and learning.	Early interactions don't just create a context, they directly affect the way the brain is "wired."
Brain development is linear: the brain's capacity to learn and change grows steadily as an infant progresses toward adulthood.	Brain development is non-linear: there are prime times for acquiring different kinds of knowledge and skills.
A toddler's brain is much less active than the brain of a college student.	By the time children reach the age of three, their brains are twice as active as those of adults. Activity drops during adolescence

(source: Shore 1997, p.18)

2.7 Theories of child development and learning

Traditionally theorists such as Piaget and Ainsworth have studied children's development through the laboratory rather than looking at how children interact with their environment, their peers and others. The ecological approach through observations means that children are given a voice.

Vygotsky's work was banned in Russia and did not emerge until the 1950's. His theories stressed the importance of language in children's learning development. Vygotsky (1978) studied development across the whole life span rather than stages. His theory considered children's characteristics, such as their age, gender, temperament, interpersonal factors, what is used and who else is involved in the wider cultural and historical setting. Vygotsky's concept of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) examined the ways in which children developed alongside such factors. The ZPD is the way in which children have their learning scaffolded by others, their peers and knowledgeable adults, are influenced by what they already know and can do, and are within a particular society/culture at a moment in time, in order that they can move forwards.

Vygotsky believed that the child's social environment is an active force in their development, working to mould children's growing knowledge in ways that are adaptive to the wider culture in which they grow up

(Keenan, 2002 p. 132)

Vygotsky (1978, p.86) described ZPD as

... the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Vygotsky believed in the importance of adult support and interaction in structuring children's learning. When looking at the relationship between thought and language, Vygotsky (1986, p.8) linked a child's understanding of a word to his/her understanding of the concept of the word,

That is why certain thoughts cannot be communicated to children even if they are familiar with necessary words. The adequately generalized concept that alone ensures full understanding may still be lacking

In this respect Vygotsky differed from Piaget (1959) when he states,

His (Piaget's) conception of the development of thought is based on the premise taken from psychoanalysis that the child's thought is originally and naturally autistic and becomes realistic thought only under long and sustained social pressure (Vygotsky, 1986, p.18)

Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky believed that it is a child's interaction with society and with others that enables him/her to develop. Piaget's child has to lose 'his' egocentric nature before 'he' can use social interaction as a driver for development which is the opposite to Vygotsky (1986, p.48), who states,

To say such a thing means to claim that the reality plays no substantial role in the development of a child's thought. It is the 'collision' of our thought with the thought of others that engenders doubt and calls for verification

With reference to pre-school children Vygotsky (1978, p.96) stressed that, 'The influence of play on a child's development is enormous. Play in an imaginary situation is essentially impossible for a child under three ...'. He asserts that, '... play creates a zone of proximal development of the child' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102) and that it is through this play that a child learns and develops long before they go to school. 'Learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life.' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84)

Like Vygotsky Bronfenbrenner's (1979) work examined children's development over periods of time. He saw that with longitudinal studies of children's development it is important,

... to also consider the element of time (by doing longitudinal studies that allow one to examine development in process) as well as locating these developmental processes within their historical setting (Tudge & Hogan, 2005 p.106)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that to understand interactions, it was necessary not only to be aware of how others influence children's development within these interactions but also how children influence their own development by the way in which they initiate interaction and how they influence their environments.

Bronfenbrenner describes the ecological environment as, '... a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person. This can be the home, the classroom ...' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.3). He also stated that the wider environment could have an impact on the development of children so that a change to the economy of the society in which the child lives could have either a positive or negative impact on the future development of that child.

This emphasis of the impact of the wider environment on a child's development is particularly relevant to the children observed within this research. Bronfenbrenner

(1979, p.165) recognized that there was a lack of research into the impact that day care can have on children's development and he suggested that,

... the impact of day care and preschool on the nation's families and on the society at large may have a more profound consequence than any direct effects for the development of human beings in modern industrialized societies.

When looking at this issue Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.205) raised the following as one of his hypothesis,

The developmental potential of a day care or preschool setting depends on the extent to which supervising adults create and maintain opportunities for the involvement of children in a variety of progressively more complex molar activities and interpersonal structures that are commensurate with the child's evolving capacities and allow her sufficient balance of power to introduce innovations of her own.

Research in the United States and the United Kingdom (NICHD, <http://secc.rti.org/publications.cfm>. EPPE, Sylva et al, 2004 & FCCC, Leach et al 2006) are in line with Bronfenbrenner's theory that research on children's development should be longitudinal. The results to date of these studies are recognizing that there are factors outside of the setting and the numbers of hours attended that are influencing children's development. These studies, as discussed previously, highlight the importance of the home environment and the quality of the child care received. The influences of the family can impact on a child's development, even if they are attending a high quality childcare setting.

Historically theorists have observed children with the aim of obtaining a scientific conclusion so they have not needed to refer to the outside factors that influence child development.

Piaget, unlike Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner, believed that it is through the child's own actions that they begin to develop, '... that individuals develop progressively ...' (Oates et al. 2005 p. 63). He believed that direct adult involvement may inhibit children's learning. This according to Piaget (1996) accounts for the repetitive behaviour patterns that are common in babies and young children. Piaget also believed that infants lack an understanding of object permanence; that if an object is no longer visible to the infant then it no longer exists.

At about five to seven months (Stage 3 of Infancy), when the child is about to seize an object and you cover it with a cloth or move it behind a screen, the child simply withdraws his already extended hand or, in the case of an object of special interest (his bottle, for example), begins to cry or scream with disappointment. He reacts, therefore, as if the object had been reabsorbed (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p.14)

Central to Piaget's thinking about a child's development are the steps that he said all babies and young children go through as they develop. The four development stages are described in Piaget's theory as

- Sensorimotor stage: from birth to age 2 years (children experience the world through movement and senses and learn object permanence)
- Preoperational stage: from ages 2 to 7 (acquisition of motor skills)

- Concrete operational stage: from ages 7 to 11 (children begin to think logically about concrete events)
- Formal operational stage: after age 11 (development of abstract reasoning).

Piaget saw these stages as sequential in that each child will go through the stages in order (except where there is a reason for slow development, such as a long stay in hospital) without missing any out. Piaget felt that children under the age of seven are not social in their verbal interactions and in their play, ‘... the absence of any sustained social intercourse between the children of less than 7 or 8 ...’ (Piaget, 1959, p.40) and ‘Up till the age of about 5, the child almost always works alone.’ (Ibid, p.41) The case studies of children under the age of three in both day care settings and at home would challenge the latter statement as I have observed children initially playing alongside and then beginning to actively engage in social play with their peers and siblings. Piaget’s studies have been criticized as more recent research has shown that in some cases young children can operate above Piaget’s levels. Burman (1994) recognizes the contribution that Piaget has made to the field of children’s development.

Critiques of Piaget have largely set out to show that under different circumstances children can demonstrate possession of the qualities associated with the concept of ages earlier than those indicated by Piaget. (Burman, 1994 p.156)

James et al (1998 p. 19) also challenge Piaget's stages in that they mean children are judged against the 'norm' and that, '... those who fail to meet that standard, whether in education, bodily development or welfare, the repercussions and sanctions are strong'. This

Domain-specific exploration, although critically important to the advancement of scientific understanding, has the continued potential to isolate processes that occur simultaneously within the child. (Ayoub & Fischer, 2006 p.62)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Vygotsky (1978) sought to address this division by the way in which they researched all the factors influencing children's development over long periods of time. As Ayoub and Fischer (2006 p.77) discuss,

An integrative approach to early development promotes the ability to assess and support the whole child by examining the child's holistic functioning without losing sight of the interaction of domains one with another.

Emotional expressions of caregivers help children lay the foundations of their emotional development. This development begins in the early years and mainly occurs within family relationships. In recent research about the brain development of new born babies, (Gopnik et al 1999) it can be seen that babies react positively to voices and facial expression. In Murray and Andrews (2000 p. 19) they carried out close studies of babies from birth to look at the development of their communication,

One of the dramatic abilities of the newborn that shows she is ready for social contact with other people is her ability to imitate another person's facial expression

and by nine months,

... they can tell the difference between expressions of happiness and sadness and anger, and even can recognize that a happy-looking face, a face with a smile and crinkly eyes, goes with the chirp of a happy tone of voice. (Gopnik et al, 1999 p.28)

Trevarthen (2002) has shown in his research that the use of 'motherese' or Infant Directed Speech (IDS) and nursery rhymes can affect the emotional responses of young babies; babies are more emotionally responsive to this type of speech.

Trevarthen talks about the '...sensitive two-way mirroring of the enhanced emotional values of expression that overrides the great difference in maturity of the baby and the adult.' (Trevarthen & Malloch, p.21) This mother-child musical partnership is not always present. When a mother does not react vocally and facially to her baby then the baby can become distressed and withdrawn. When mothers have been videoed the response of the baby is apparent; when the mother uses her voice and facial expression in response to her baby s/he becomes animated, physically and vocally, whereas if the mother adopts 'a still face' (experiment pioneered by Lynn Murray) the baby becomes withdrawn showing no physical or facial responses. The baby becomes withdrawn and within seconds can become very distressed. Trevarthen's theory of mother and baby in partnership is an example of the Vygotskian concept of ZPD, where the mother is scaffolding the baby's developing social, communication and emotional skills.

As they develop infants interpret positive and negative facial and vocal expressions, which Mumme et al (1996) call 'social referencing'; that if a negative expression is shown to a particular toy the child will then avoid it. Alongside early emotional development is the establishing of secure relationships. The most important of these is that between parent and child,

In general, a secure parent-child attachment relationship is associated with enhanced emotion understanding, greater cooperation, less negativity and decreased aggression in close relationships, as well as other indications of positive emotional growth in early childhood (Thompson & Lagattuta, 2006, p.324)

Chapter 3 gives details of how the research was carried out.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This study asks two questions.

- What are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?
- What are the perspectives of the adults involved?

At the commencement of this study I had been working within an Early Years Partnership for four years, supporting practitioners and settings working with children aged 3-5 receiving nursery education grant in the Foundation Stage. Prior to the launch of the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES 2002) I had many concerns about the lack of support, advice and training given to those working with the under 3's and it therefore appeared to be a natural progression to look at the impact that the launch of this document had, not only on settings and practitioners, but more importantly on the quality care and learning for children and parents accessing daycare outside of the home. This Framework is designed for use by a range of practitioners, including childminders, nursery nurses, health visitors, colleges and any other agencies working with babies and children under three and their parents. It is not a curriculum (unlike the Foundation Stage guidance, DfES 2000) but a starting point for practitioners; to raise awareness about the importance of observation and interaction and to give examples of effective practice. The Framework is not statutory in its own right, but because it is embedded in the National Daycare Standards (DfES, 2003).

In September 2008 The Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES 2002) will be incorporated into the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfES 2007) along with the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfES 2000) and the National Daycare Standards (DfES 2003). The EYFS will become a statutory document as set out in Choice for Parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare (HMSO 2004. p.43), ‘... a reformed regulatory framework and inspection regime, creating a single system for all early years and childcare services to be in place by 2008.’ The purpose of the EYFS is laid out in Choice for parents, the best start for children: making it happen (DfES 2006. p.6), that this is a ‘... single framework for learning and development for children up to the age of 5 – to ensure consistently high standards and promote achievement.’

3.1 Research design

The research questions about children’s experiences required a close observation of practice and children and the second question required interviews with staff and parents. As such I did not so much decide that this was the best method but felt as Clough and Nutbrown (2002. p.17) that, ‘... this way of doing it was unavoidable – was required by – the context and purpose of this particular enquiry.’ I felt this because in order to look at quality and its impact on parents, staff and children within the settings I needed to observe what was happening, the effects that are being brought about by settings which have engaged with the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES 2002) and also the reasons why parents chose a particular form of childcare.

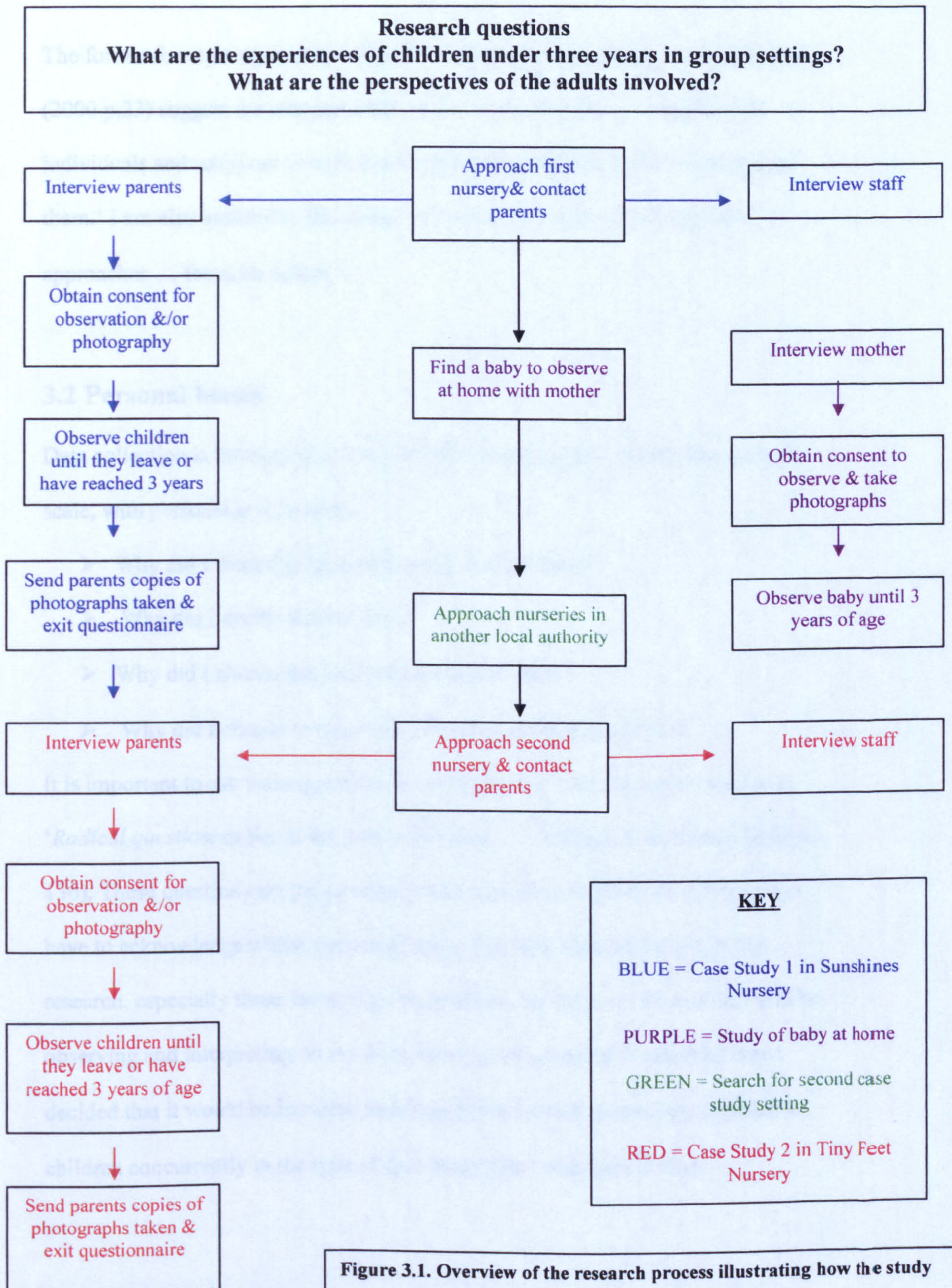


Figure 3.1. Overview of the research process illustrating how the study evolved over time.

The format for my research lay within the interpretative paradigm, as Cohen et al (2000.p.23) suggest the interpretative researcher as one who, ‘... begins with individuals and set(s) out to understand their interpretations of the world around them.’ I am also inclined to this method of research because, ‘Interpretative approaches ... focus on action.’

3.2 Personal biases

Data collection is through interviews and observation which is subjective, small scale, with personal involvement.

- Why did I form this approach to my research study?
- Why did I decide to interview?
- Why did I choose the particular setting to study?
- Why did I choose to observe children over a period of time?

It is important to ask these questions at the beginning of the research process as, ‘*Radical questioning* lies at the heart of a thesis ...’ (Clough & Nutbrown 2002.p. 136). These questions are personal and need to be answered before moving on. I have to acknowledge whilst answering these questions that the format of my research, especially those involving observations, are open to criticism as I will be observing and interpreting on my own. Having recognized this potential bias I decided that it would be intrusive and impossible for two researchers to observe children concurrently in the type of case study that I was undertaking.

I decided to interview parents because I felt that it was important to understand their reasons for choosing a particular type of childcare and setting. 'The interview is a good tool for researchers interested in safeguarding the subjective point of view who believe the meaning participants give to things is key to understanding their decisions' (Cannold, 2001, p.190). Parental reasons could range from financial necessity to career development but whatever the reasons for placing a child in an out of home care setting,

Parents need to be able to feel comfortable in their childcare choice and have a sense of trust in those who provide such care. From the child's perspective, children need to feel honoured and respected as individuals, feel safe and be protected and be regarded for who they are in their own right. Whether the considerations are from the perspective of the child or the parent, families who are seeking childcare most often find themselves entering the marketplace.
(Goodfellow, 2005, p. 56)

It is important to gather information from parents about the reasons for choosing a particular form of childcare because,

Reasons for choice of childcare influence the type of care chosen. In this sense it is the parent who is perceived as the consumer or user of the service as well as the purchaser. While guidelines may be provided, the assessment of care is complex and it is often very difficult for parents, as purchasers of care to assess the quality of care both at the time of searching for a childcare place and during the time when their child is in care. (Goodfellow, 2005, p. 60)

When I started my research journal I wrote about my experience as a first time mother when I had to put my daughter into full time daycare, not through choice but through financial necessity. I initially wanted my daughter to have 1:1 care but after seeking the advice of others, I was convinced that it was 'safer' for my child to be

where there were a number of people to safe guard and protect her. Having reached this decision, choosing the setting was not an issue; a sister-in-law had worked within a setting, the team leader was a personal friend and I also had a 'gut feeling' about the nursery when I walked through the door. In carrying out this study I needed to dispel my own prejudices about why parents make childcare choices and so I decided to interview them. Interestingly my thoughts in this area were challenged at the time by the reports in the Guardian (8th July 2004) which raised concerns about the behaviour of children under the age of two in day nurseries, '.... mounting evidence that day nurseries for children under the age of two can lead to increased incidence of antisocial behaviour and aggression.' , and by the Real Story programme on BBC 1 (12th August 2004) which showed incidences of 'verbal abuse of toddlers, breaches in hygiene and under-staffing....filmed staff shouting at children, and, in one nursery, terms of abuse were used.' (BBC News, 2004). Journalistic reports need to be questioned but must also be taken into account in a society where the media can be a political driver. This opinion was supported by an announcement made in the Ofsted Early Years Bulletin (www.ofsted.gov.uk Issue 14, 13th August 2004) when Maurice Smith stated, 'Although the cases shown in the programme are concerning, we should like to put them in perspective. Such incidents are rare and relate to only a very small number of child carers'. The timing of the Guardian article had to be called in to question as the research reflected Belsky's studies (1986, 1988,1990) which,

.... highlighted evidence suggesting that more than 20 hours per week of such care posed risks for the infant-parent relationships and for psychological and behavioural adjustment during the toddler, preschool and primary-school years. (Belsky, 2001. p.846)

The media reports were mainly about the stress levels that children had when they attended daycare before the age of 2 and little attention was paid to the opinions of mothers. Some of the reports, however, talked to mothers about their experiences with out of home care. Many mothers responded positively,

Annette Wiles, who returned to a full time career as a policy manager when her son was 10 months old, feels that working mothers are “lambasted” for trying to do their best for their children ... “I couldn’t be happier with the nursery.” (Henry, 2006, p.8 The Sunday Telegraph, June 4th)

In July 2004 the government announced its, Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners with a stated aim as, ‘From birth to two, more opportunities for parents to stay at home with their children if they want to’ (DfES July 2004.p.6). The above questions prompted me to consider *why* parents choose a private day nursery instead of a childminder and so my study asks questions about the rationale for choice of daycare.

Personally, and with hindsight, I would now elect to have my daughter cared for by a childminder whilst she was under two years of age. This could be a reflection of the way in which the Children Act (1991) has increased the regulation of childminding (I was looking for childcare prior to this date), which is now regulated by Ofsted and is subject to the same quality inspections as other daycare providers. It could also be a reflection of my involvement with childminders in my professional capacity; I have seen an increase in their attendance at training and have observed the professionalism with which they observe and plan the time that they spend with the babies and young children in their care. It is also through my

research that I have seen the benefits that caring for a young child in a home environment can have for the child's personal, social and emotional development. Childminding does have its limits because it cannot offer children that wider engagement and interaction with a larger group of children that a pre-school or day nursery can provide. So in line with the EPPE (Sylva et al 2003) research and the families, children and childcare research (www.familieschildrenchildcare.org) 'There is considerable evidence in the literature and in this study of relatively poor quality care for infants and toddlers in nurseries' (Leach, Barnes, Malmberg et al, 2006. p.32). The model of childcare that I would now choose would be childminding until 2 years old and then pre-school or day nursery prior to starting formal schooling because this would offer the baby the opportunity to be cared for within a home setting where there could be a more personal relationship with the childminder. This would also be a relationship that had more consistency of care than could be guaranteed within a private day nursery where there has traditionally been a high turnover of staff. Being with a childminder would also give me the opportunity to have a greater influence over the way in which I wanted my baby to be cared for; it is easier for parents to have this influence because childminders are with the baby for the whole time (no shift patterns to contend with) and also because the numbers of children being cared for in one environment are smaller. I would chose the mix of pre-school or day nursery with a childminder as the baby got to two years of age. The reason for doing this would be to give a greater opportunity for social interaction and for experiencing being with others in the same environment. I also feel that it is important at this age for children to have a wider

access to a range of resources. I would probably only access this provision part time to maintain the child's relationship with the childminder and also to continue the offer of care that is home based.

3.3 Interviews with managers and practitioners

I needed to balance parental interviews with interviews with managers and practitioners to provide another viewpoint to the study. In interviewing the adults within the setting I needed to overcome my preconceived ideas about their reasons for working with young children, ideas conceived through my professional work with practitioners. I had to recognise that it was going to be difficult to be objective in such a study, '... there are serious strains in conducting fieldwork because the researcher's own emotions, attitudes, beliefs, values, characteristics enter the research.' (Cohen et al 2000, p.140). I had to engage in radical listening, '... the interpretative and critical means through which 'voice' is noticed' (Clough & Nutbrown 2002, p.24) because I wanted to listen to all those, '... who may be heard within and around any given topic.' I needed to listen to the breadth of opinions on which to base my conclusions and also to raise further questions. By listening to parents and practitioners I would be able to challenge my biases and those of others.

When using interviewing it is important to recognise these personal biases as they can have a bearing on the interview itself and on the subsequent analysis. As Cohen et al (2000, p.121) state, 'Interviewers and interviewees alike bring their own, often unconscious experiential and biographical baggage with them into the interview

situation.’ In order to dispel these biases it would be appropriate to create a level field within the interviews; selecting the cohort so that there were commonalities and also by asking the same questions in the same manner and way. The nature of my study meant that I could not do the former because I was dependent on parents, staff and managers to opt to take part in the research and so it was a random group. The latter solution would have been more of an option; however I decided that although I would have the same starting points for the questions I wanted them to be open-ended giving the opportunity to follow up on any of the responses that the interviewees gave. Being rigid within the questioning process I felt would inhibit the process and be alien to the study that I was carrying out and that rigidity would not totally avoid the issue of bias, ‘... is to misread the infinite complexity and open-endedness of social interaction: controlling the wording is no guarantee of controlling the interview.’ (Cohen et al, 2000, p.121). Cohen et al (2000, p.122) support this conclusion when they state that, ‘... what is a suitable sequence of questions for one respondent might be less suitable for another, and open-ended questions enable important but unanticipated issues to be raised.’ This statement was held to be true when in some of the later interviews that I conducted there had been the showing of ‘The Real Story’ (BBC, 2004) where the issues raised could have had an impact on the parents’ choice of care for their children; it was, therefore, important that I asked questions of these parents so that they could reflect on the choices that they had made about the setting. The ‘Real Story’ (BBC, 2004) was an investigation by reporters into three private day nurseries which had been inspected and approved by Ofsted. The investigation, which secretly filmed within

these settings, showed staff shouting at children, poor standards of health and hygiene and poorly trained staff.

The question of the relevancy of the size of the sample used for this study was an important issue but as Cohen et al (2000, p.93) state,

In an ethnographic or qualitative style of research it is more likely that the sample size will be small. Sample size might also be constrained by time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources.

Owing to the way in which the research was developed it meant that I engaged in, 'Convenience sampling-or as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling- involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents...'
(Cohen et al, 2000, p.102)

Another point to consider in the sample was that I did not start to interview and observe at the same moment and time. Parents opted to join in the study as it progressed. This came about as the original response was low and so as parents started at the setting the manager asked them if they would like to join in the research and so the number of children involved grew. In one of the studies a mother had heard about it from a friend and contacted me to ask if she could take part. People joining the study as it progressed did not cause me any issues because it helped me to pace the study as it grew.

Ethnographic research regards this as natural rather than a problem. People come into and go from the study. This impacts on the decision to have a synchronic investigation occurring at a single point in time ... In

ethnographic inquiry sampling is recursive and *ad hoc* rather than fixed at the outset (Cohen et al 2000, p. 143)

Another consideration when conducting interviews is how to collect the information. As this research is an ethnographic study involving qualitative as opposed to quantitative data I decided to give the interviews a minimum of structure in order to maintain the open-ended nature of the research.

The popularly used interview technique employed in qualitative interviewing is the semi-structured interview, where a schedule is prepared but it is sufficiently open-ended to enable the contents to be re-ordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included, and further probing to be undertaken. (Cohen et al,2000, p. 146)

It was also important to identify to the interviewees my professional role within the settings and to ensure that parents and practitioners understood that the two roles would remain separate. Apart from separating these roles there was also the difficulties incurred by carrying out the interviews face-to-face which as Cohen et al (2000, p.145) state is where,

...differences and similarities between the researcher and the participants (e.g. personal characteristics, power, resources), and how these might affect relationships between parties and the course of investigation.

I do not feel that for my study this was an issue because I ensured that my professional and personal life remained separate from the contact with parents, managers and staff. I also feel that the way in which the parents continued their engagement with me by completing the exit interview was evidence that our relationship was not affected by our differences.

By balancing the collection of the data I was seeking to ensure that its interpretation and collection were reliable and valid. As stated previously it is inappropriate within the case study that I am doing to ensure validity through investigator triangulation but analysis will include forms of triangulation in order to ensure methodological rigour. As I have supported the observations of the children with interviews of parents and practitioners I have ensured the possibility of using triangulation seeking to balance the data by using different methods and perspectives.

Triangulation, as Cohen et al state is, ‘... a useful technique where a researcher is engaged in case study.’ (2000.p.115) I have to recognise that triangulation within this study was only a possibility and that I did not obscure my research by asserting that if triangulation has taken place then it is a reality.

3.4 Choice of setting

Why did I choose the particular setting for my first case study? I did not want to choose a setting to show bad practice, nor did I want a setting ‘in crisis’. I therefore chose a new private day nursery which had achieved a ‘Good’ in its Ofsted quality inspection in August 2003, nine months after opening. An Ofsted Quality Care Standards Inspection had three outcomes at the time, the highest of which was ‘Good’. It was a nursery that I had been engaged with professionally since its formation and one where I had established an excellent working relationship with the manager/proprietor. It was this relationship and my impression that the proprietor/manager was not only seeking to establish a profitable business but also a setting of the highest quality that helped to make the choice. As the case study will

show there have been many failings in this choice which I have endeavoured to rectify in the choice that I made for a second setting as the initial research progressed.

When deciding to further my case studies of children in out of home care I wanted to find a setting outside of the authority where I work so that there would be no professional biases. In order to find a setting I chose an authority and then checked on the outcomes of some day nurseries last Ofsted Inspection before writing to them. I contacted 10 settings by post in 2004 with negative responses. This was likely as a response to the BBC Real Story Programme (12th August 2004), owners of nurseries were very suspicious of people coming into their settings at this time. Having failed to find a second nursery in another authority I returned to my authority and obtained permission from a nursery that met all my criteria. This nursery was also useful as a comparison of the first in that it is based in the City and is unusual in that all of the children are in the same room with a separate area for children under two. This environment has also made it easier for me to observe within my professional time restrictions, as all three children are in the same environment.

In addition to engaging with a second setting I also found a family who were willing to become involved with my research. This was a family of three children, where the older two had accessed out of home care, childminders, day nurseries and pre-school, whilst their mother returned to work for three days a week and where the

youngest child was going to remain at home as his mother was not returning to work after his birth. I began the observations with this family a month before the baby was born in August 2004. Observing a baby at home to study and research has proved invaluable when looking at what the out of home care can offer as a balance to a child staying at home with his mother.

3.5 Observing children

Why did I choose to observe the children over a period of time? I wanted to increase my knowledge and understanding of children aged birth to three years in daycare settings. I, therefore, needed to look at what this 'looks like' and try to understand what impact that this has on the children. The only way of achieving these aims was by observing the children, seeing how they developed and importantly how they engaged with the environment and the adults around them. As Yarrow (1963, p. 223) states, 'The forte of observation is, obviously, the firsthand nature of the data.'

Historically children have been observed for what they will become rather than where they are at the present. This is apparent in the way in which the education system looks at where the children are heading and what they will learn in the future rather than what they are learning and experiencing in the now. It is by observing children closely that the researcher can have a deeper understanding of their development and experiences. 'If we accept a view of children as persons, the nature of children's experiential life becomes of central interest.' (Greene & Hill, 2005.p. 3). Through the observations the young children involved in this study are

able to become participants; through observing them the researcher is able to have a greater opportunity to 'listen' to what they are saying. Observation is a process that has become embedded within quality early years provision and so it was appropriate that I used this model for gathering evidence about young children. It is also appropriate to observe children in situ as the adults and the environment are both contributing factors.

Observing process sits comfortably with the current tradition of developmental psychology, which has acknowledged that to understand family influences one needs to know about not just dyad but also triads and larger groups of children and adults. The major methodological concern when observing paid child care is how to reflect each individual carer within a centre or a carers home, each child's experience with a number of carers, but also arrive at a final estimate of quality that represents the centre or care home rather than one person's experience. (Barnes, 2001.p,5)

I decided to carry out direct, narrative observations over time because this would produce rich data and would give more depth to the case studies. I was keen to note the experiences of the children, including the relationships they made with adults and other children. Because of the timing of observations it was not possible to an analysis of children's relationships with their 'key person' who was not always present. But I did note how adults responded to children. The main problem encountered with this form of data collection was limited time,

Direct observation can be time consuming but the richness of data achieved, and the insights that come from prolonged periods of sustained attention to the behaviours of interest as they occur in the ongoing behavioural stream, more than compensates (Rolfe, 2001. p, 230)

When observing children in order to have a deeper understanding of their experiences it is important for the researcher to be careful about making

interpretations of these experiences because the observer cannot understand the child's internal experiences. The observer of children's experiences must be 'aware of the limitations of his or her capacity to access the experience of another person, but also the limits of what a focus on an experience can tell us about the other' (Greene & Hill, 2005.p. 6). It is important when conducting observations and their subsequent analysis to be aware of personal influences which may affect the observations, 'As human observers, it is inevitable that our own feelings and interpretations influence what we see or don't see.' (Rolfe, 2001.p, 231)

Any researcher who is observing babies and young children has to be wary of a patronising interpretation of what he or she thinks the children are experiencing. It is important to look at children's individuality rather than to generalise using developmental stages and chronological ages.

I have carried out the observations of the children in the two settings and the baby at home on a regular monthly basis, where possible, until they have reached three years of age or have left the setting for one reason or another. I asked the mother at home to talk about her observations of her son for me in the time between observations. This is a method recommended by Dollard (1935, p. 89) when he studied different ways of observing the young child, 'A possibility still remains, namely, of inducing one of the parents to become the participant observer of the growing child.' The longitudinal nature of this study is important in that there are few studies of children's experiences over time and because time enables the

children to build up an element of trust with the researcher. This trust has been shown as I have observed the children in the nurseries and the child at home. I have become a familiar figure to them and they have all greeted me on arrival as the study has progressed. They are more relaxed in my presence and have become less prone to attracting my attention and doing things to please me. This is in agreement with Green and Hill (2005, p.17)

Contact with children over time should not only be seen as justifiable in a developmental design since it is clear that time is sometimes needed for children to relax enough with a researcher to reveal their thoughts, feelings and concerns.

3.6 Research ethics

Having decided that the starting point for my research was to be a single case study within one setting and focusing on interviews with parents, a manager, practitioners and observations of children it was essential, before starting, to consider any ethical issues.

3.6.i Consent and permissions

Before conducting these interviews and observations I obtained the relevant permissions from those involved. As an employee of a local authority EYDCP who has access to a variety of settings where I can carry out observations on children, I felt it was important to separate my professional role from that of researcher. As the case study will show I have doubts that this separation was successful and was the reason for trying to select a second setting in another authority. I wrote to the

manager of my service asking permission to contact nurseries with a view to gathering data. After gaining this permission I approached the proprietor/manager of a private day nursery asking if I could use her nursery as the first case study in my research. I explained that I wanted to interview her and her staff as well as asking her for permission to contact parents to take part in interviews and for permission to observe/photograph their children. The manager gave consent expressing the view that some of the findings from the case study might enable her to develop the quality of provision that she was offering.

With necessary permissions I began the study. I decided that I would first approach the parents to interview them and gain permission to observe their children. This also helped in creating a timetable for the study.

3.6.ii Contacting and interviewing parents

In order to maintain the contract of confidentiality between the parents and the setting a letter was sent to all parents requesting permission to contact them. The letter offered a variety of ways in which they could consent to me contacting them. I gave as much information as possible so that they were fully informed and also explained that I would provide more detail and answer any questions about the research when I met them. Once contact had been made a date and time for the interview was arranged at a time and venue of their choice.

At the start of the interview I obtained verbal consent to record it, explaining that this would make transcribing easier and more accurate. I also re-emphasised the fact that any data gathered and written down would be anonymous.

When I interviewed the parents at the second setting I approached them in the same way, offering them the same choices. One of these parents had concerns about the recording of the interview and the way in which I would use the tapes after I had transcribed them. We came to an agreement that once I had transcribed the interview I would send her the original tape for her to dispose of as well as a copy of the transcript for her approval. As a result of this I decided that in future interviews I would send the transcript of the interview to the parents and staff giving them the opportunity to correct and so verify that it was a true reflection of what had been said.

At the end of the interview I left the parents a form for them to sign, giving permission for me to carry out observations and/or take photographs within the setting. I wanted to give them time to reach their decision without feeling under pressure. Also as some of the interviews were conducted with just one parent it was important to get the positive consent of the absent parent. This was an important ethical consideration. The consent form was signed by all parents with the exception of the parent who wanted the original tape recording of the interview. The right of the parent to request the tape and to withhold permission for photography was an

important ethical decision which is in line with Barnardo's Statement of Ethical Research Practice (www.barnardos.org.uk)

- Research participants should be made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish.
- Research participants should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality and should be able to reject the use of data-gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras.
- Where there is likelihood that data may be shared with other researchers, the potential uses to which the data might be put may need to be discussed with research participants.
- When making notes, filming or recording for research purposes, researchers should make clear to research participants the purpose of the notes, filming or recording, and, as precisely as possible, to whom it will be communicated.

As the research developed I contacted the parents again by letter asking them for their permission to use the observations and any photographic evidence in any training or publications that might ensue as part of my research. When I sent this letter I also sent a copy of all of the photographs of their children so that they could make an informed decision about their use. I also sent the photographs so that parents would have a record of their child's early years and as an expression of my appreciation for their involvement.

3.6.iii Consent of children

The gaining of the consent of the parents also raises ethical questions about the rights of the child within this process. The 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989) has raised the public awareness of the '... personhood of children' (Aubrey et al 2000, p.160). As the children that I wanted to observe

were aged 0-3 it was important that I gained parental consent but it also raised the question as to whether I needed to gain the consent of the individual children. This issue is discussed by Mac Naughton et al 2001, who state that, 'It is good practice, however, and in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to ask the child also to give consent, or 'assent' as it is known ...' (p.66) As Aubrey et al (2000) state,

Firstly how does one decide at what age or stage the child's consent is needed? Secondly, bearing in mind that the child may not fully understand what is to happen or the implications, they may agree to take part in order to please the adults who ask them... (p.160)

This issue is also raised by Hill (2005, p. 68) when he states, 'At what age are children able to give informed consent? This will vary from child to child, though clearly a tiny baby cannot...' Among researchers, 'Informed consent was (is) widely regarded as an important principle...' (Heath et al, 2007, p.414) Perhaps with hindsight I should have consulted with the children as they neared the end of the study, when they were three and in more of a position to make a judgement as to their involvement with me, thus ensuring that all ethical questions were ongoing and not just dealt with at the beginning of the study. I have asked the children on several occasions if they mind if I watch them but this has not been consistent.

In order to address this issue I felt that it was appropriate for the adults in the room to introduce me to the children when I arrived and secondly for me to ask the children, if I interact with them, if 'they mind if I play' with them. The Society for Research in Child Development (1991) has developed codes for researchers

working with children. Within this code they address the issue whether assent constitutes consent and how this applies to research with infants

Assent means that the child shows some form of agreement to participate without necessarily comprehending the full significance of the research necessary to give informed consent. Investigators working with infants should take special effort to explain the research procedures to the parents and be especially sensitive to any indicators of discomfort in the infant.
www.srcd.org/ethicalstandards

Consent to playing with the child does not constitute “permission” for observation and photography but it does give the child respect. Children under three are too young to understand the reason for the study and so parental permission has to take precedence. The ethical question of children’s rights also has to be addressed to the use of photographs of individual children. I only photographed those children for whom I had parental consent, but could the rights of the child be impinged on if the photographs were published and the individuals were affronted by them at an age when parental permission is not appropriate.

Another obstacle for children is the common assumption by adults that the consent of parents or teachers will suffice, and that children need not or cannot express their own consent or refusal to take part in research (Anderson, 2000, P.244)

The use of photography is invasive and it was important to consider the way in which it can intrude into the lives of others.

There is a kind of intrusive quality to photography ... we had used pictures to gain access to information we could not otherwise collect. They had taken us into the private domain of the home and transformed the private into the public (Moss, 2001, p.281)

It is ethical when using photography to consider the reason for using visual images to support the research. Is it justifiable to use photographs, do they contribute to the research? I considered when commencing my observations the relevance of photography and decided that it was a method which would add to my observations and aid me in there analysis. Why would these visual images assist my research? When observing children in the context of the day nursery it is difficult to write down all the relevant features of the observation. Moss (2001, p.289) raises questions about the interpretation of photography. In her research a group of 7 to 9 year olds were given cameras to photograph the use of literacy in their homes.

There is a kind of deceptive transparency to photography which leads us to read it at face value and overlook the extent to which it too mediates what it records, and constructs what it wants us to see ... If we do not remember this it can lead us to focus too narrowly on what the photograph shows, and ask too few questions about what it might mean.

A photograph can capture 'the moment' and therefore contribute to the quality of the observation. I have found the images useful when writing up the observations because they can reflect the 'moment' and help to give more depth to the observation. I have used the images in training and I have found that they have been invaluable because practitioners respond better to a visual image than to the spoken word. I have used photography with all but one of the observed children and I feel that there is more depth in my observation notes for those with photographs because in many ways the photograph can describe the situation better because it shows the emotion, the concentration on a child's face when they are engaged in their play or when they are interacting with others. When I commenced my studies I was unclear

as to the contribution of the images which is in agreement with Pink (2001.p.32)

when she states,

Researchers should not have fixed, preconceived expectations of what it will be possible to achieve by using visual research methods in a given situation. Sometimes visual methods will not support the researcher's aims

I feel that the photographs did support my research. Pink (2001) discusses considering the cultural implications of using photography. Sometimes the use of photography is inappropriate to the culture and perhaps in this age of concern over paedophiles it is an issue that should be considered when photographing young children. I feel that by asking parents for specific consent to photograph I have considered this issue and I have respected their right to refuse consent. I have been rigorous in my editing of the photographs; in a nursery setting it is impossible to always photograph without other children, for whom permission has not been gained, being present in the image. Whenever this has occurred I have always edited their faces out of the image as I have transferred the images from the digital camera. I have also sent the parents copies of the photographs and have therefore given them the opportunity to withdraw their consent if they wanted to.

By thinking through the implications of image production and visual representation in this way ethnographers should be able to evaluate how their 'ethnographic' images would be invested with different meanings by different political, local and academic discourses (Pink, 2001.p33)

Having concluded that photography contributed to my research it was important to consider which technology I would use to capture these images. I used a small digital camera because it is unobtrusive and easy to use in conjunction with handwriting the observations. In the majority of cases I was able to take the

photographs without distracting the children. With one child, however, the camera proved to be intrusive and her desire to be photographed impinged on the quality of the observations. The reaction of this child was also seen in Moss's (2001, pp 281 & 282) research. 'Some we know made themselves invisible by deliberately staying out of shot; others dutifully posed and contrived to make happen what they thought we wanted to see'. In order to remedy this I did not always take the camera with me when carrying out the observations and over a couple of months she became less preoccupied with being photographed. The baby observed at home was also aware of the camera and did make comments when he saw the flash but it did not have the same impact on the observations as with the other child. The digital camera also has the option to take short video sequences and I did use this option on several occasions when observing the child cared for at home. I attempted to video in the day nurseries but it was impossible to keep other children out of the frame and if they were the sequence would be contrived and meaningless; unlike the photographs the video cannot be edited. Using the video with the child at home caused no such problems as there were no other children involved.

Anonymity within the study is also an ethical concern. When I interviewed the parents and gained written consent to carry out the observations, and in some cases to use photography, of their children I assured them that the children would be anonymous within the study as would the settings where the observations were carried out. Although the names of the children, the adults involved and the settings have been changed this does not constitute anonymity as all may be identified by

implication. The analysis of the observations will make the setting identifiable as they are both very different in their environment set ups and also the adults will know in which rooms the observations were carried out. By the same token the photographs will immediately identify settings, children and adults; only those for whom permission was not obtained have been anonymised.

The initial response from the parents was limited so I wrote to them again giving them the option of refusing to be interviewed but giving me written permission to observe and/or photograph their children. In this letter, when asking for consent I informed the parents that I had already gained consent to observe some of the children in the setting but that when I did so I would only observe those for whom written consent had been obtained and that these signed consent forms would be shown to the owner/manager before starting any of the observations.

Since commencing the observations of the children I have noted some reactions which have had an effect on the observations. I have noted that those children who were present when I interviewed their parents appeared to recognise me when I went in to the rooms to observe; these children made eye contact with me and were happy to engage in distant interaction with me. As I have continued with these observations I have noted that the children in the rooms are comfortable with my presence and they will come over to me and interact with me at close quarters but that those children I am observing, whilst happy with me being in their environment do not interact with me directly. The only exception has been Amy, who will now

approach me. This may be because during the study she has learnt to walk and has grown in confidence. Other children, especially James and Ben, appear to give their consent by making eye contact and interacting with me by playing peek a boo across the room. James, especially often looks up from his activities to see if I am looking at him. When I conducted the interviews I gave the participants a clear understanding that it would last for approximately 30 minutes.

Initially one child in the second setting had an adverse reaction to my presence in the nursery. He did not like strangers and my presence was making him upset. In order to ease his distress I tried the strategy of making myself inconspicuous by sitting on the floor, nearly hidden by a chair. I always tried to position the chair so that he could not see me all of the time. This strategy was effective and over the course of two months I was able to be more visible. I felt it was important for me to do this because it was having an effect on the observations and also because it was distressing for all involved. There was a similar reaction when I went to observe Simon, the child cared for at home, when he was attending the playgroup from the age of two and a half. I made four visits to the playgroup. On the first two visits he avoided eye contact and refused to acknowledge my presence. I was in the 'wrong place'. At the beginning of the third visit I considered abandoning these observations as he began to use tactics to avoid me, which were affecting his levels of enjoyment within the setting. Just as I was leaving, however, he approached me and began to interact with me. When other children questioned me he appeared to

take pride in our relationship and there followed some interesting interactions which contributed to the quality of the observation.

Another child at this same nursery engaged with me from the moment that I entered. She was particularly involved whenever I was taking photographs. Her pattern of attendance at the nursery was part time in the setting and part time with relatives; as a consequence she related well to adults and this accounted for the interaction that she persisted in having with me.

3.6.iv *Consent of staff*

Letters were also sent to staff requesting their permission for interview. The initial response was poor, so I approached them again. I gave the staff an outline of the questions that I would be asking as well as the option to be interviewed in pairs should they prefer. I felt that once I became a familiar figure in the rooms the staff might feel more comfortable and thus more willing to participate. I was not concerned that they were given no option about my being in the room having gained the permission of the owner and the parents. As time progressed and I had carried out the observations of the children I still had a low response from the practitioners. Out of a staff of fifteen working in the under three's rooms only three members of staff and the manager agreed to be interviewed. I find this puzzling as I have established a relationship with the staff whilst conducting monthly child observations. My observations seem to be more intrusive than the interviews as they

have revealed many issues about the practice of the adults. These revelations have been commented on by the manager who admitted that the practice changed when the adults knew that I was visiting to carry out observations. This, however, has not been the case in the room where I am observing a number of two year olds and where the practice causes me some concern. The fact that I am trying to distance my professional role from that of researcher poses an ethical dilemma in deciding what to do about these concerns. I would report anything that was breaking the law but concerns over practice are a different dilemma. The solution for this has been that I am now the Quality Assurance Mentor for this setting and can now address these concerns through the evaluation that we are jointly conducting. When deciding who was to support this setting the EYDCP Quality Development Officer approached them and they requested me as their mentor. I have to acknowledge that my presence as researcher in the room is having an impact on the data that I am collecting. This difference is recognised by Mac Naughton et al (2001. p.129),

Qualitative researchers, therefore, do need to acknowledge that they will disrupt the case (study) Case study researchers therefore aim at low-intrusion data collection methods so that they can do justice to the story the case is telling.

In the second nursery to engage with my research all the staff agreed to be interviewed and the manager/proprietor allowed them to be interviewed in her time. This may have contributed to the high level of involvement of this staff team. There also appears to be a sub conscious confidence in the staff team in the second setting. They appear to be more comfortable with my presence and have easily separated my roles of researcher and local authority officer.

3.6.v Interpretation of data

The next ethical question was the interpretation of the data that had been collected by tape recording and by observation. For the observation I was using a framework which meant that I was going in to observe with a focus and I felt happy about the interpretation of that data. The more difficult was the analysis of the tape recorded interviews. In order for this to be ethical analysis I had to ensure that I interpreted the data faithfully as described by Clough and Nutbrown (2002) when they state, 'The important thing here is 'faithful' interpretation of what is heard, arising from *radical listening* which has the characteristics of honesty and integrity.', (p.82) where *Radical Listening* is '... the interpretative and critical means through which 'voice' is noticed.'(p.67)

When interpreting the interviews I established a colour coded system which helped me to identify common themes and responses. The code consisted of the following:

Figure 3.2 Codes for Parent Interviews

- REASONS FOR CHOICES
- FEELINGS
- STAFF
- SOCIAL ASPECTS
- KEY PERSON
- ACTIVITIES
- REFERENCES TO CHILDMINDERS
- PARTNERSHIP

These codes were chosen because they are central themes of The Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002) and were relevant to gaining an understanding of parents' emotions and choices.

Figure 3.3 Codes for Staff Interviews

- REASONS FOR CAREER CHOICES & PERSONAL QUALITIES
- QUALIFICATIONS & TRAINING
- QUALITY OF TRAINING ACCESSED
- PLANNING, OBSERVATION & ASSESSMENT
- KEY PERSON
- PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS
- BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS
- STRENGTHS & WEAKNESS OF SETTING

These codes were selected because they addressed issues about the practice of practitioners working within private day nurseries.

Figure 3.4 Codes for Managers/proprietors interviews

- MAIN INGREDIENTS WHEN EMPLOYING STAFF
- PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS
- KEY PERSON
- STANDARDS OF TRAINING
- PRACTICE & ITS MANAGEMENT
- BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS
- MANAGEMENT ROLE

These codes were chosen because of the need to ascertain how managers/proprietors manage their settings in relation to parents and staff.

This code was also used to analyse the other correspondence that I had with parents, for example the 'exit questionnaire' that was sent to parents, wherever possible, when their child reached the age of three or left the nursery. In some cases this proved impossible as families had left the area and I had no forwarding address.

3.7 Photographs

When I took the photographs of the children to support the case studies I did not plan to use these specifically as visual data. Rather I took the photographs that I felt would help to visualize the experiences of the children, using them to augment the observations. I therefore did not code the photographs for analysis but I did, implicitly interpret the photographs when I linked them with the corresponding observations and by referring to my original research questions.

3.8 Analytical processes - Case study

According to Bassey (1999) other researchers have called their work a case study when they have carried out research, '... into particular events rather than general events, this being the only form of research open to people who are working at it part-time and with very limited resources.' (p.5) I am carrying out this research whilst working full time and professional commitments have had an impact on how to gather the data that I need. In order to observe children in a setting, visits need to take place during the day. During the first year of data collection I have observed each child in the nursery for about thirty minutes every month. The interviews with

parents and staff have been conducted at night. Cohen et al (2000) say that case study, ‘... provides a unique example of real people in real situations’ (p.181)

... probe(ing) deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs’ (p.185)

The term ‘generalisation’, could cause problems, as a single case does not seek to be generalisable, however, Bassegy (1999) refers to ‘fuzzy generalisations’ which arise from studies such as mine and will result in claims such as, ‘*it is possible, or likely, or unlikely that* what was found in the singularity will be found in similar situations elsewhere: it is a qualitative measure.’(p.12) Observations over a period of time enabled me to look closely at the children’s development and thus answer my first research question, what are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?

One of the other advantages of a case study approach is the depth gained by studying a unit in close detail. As Macpherson et al (2000, p.58) states, ‘Case studies are capable of thick descriptions of social contexts. They allow us the rich insights, to ‘see’ anew...’

Although I originally intended to follow a larger group of children I have found that focusing on a small number means that I am able to develop a greater understanding of the children and to devote more time to examining their interactions and

development than would have been possible with a larger group. When I first approached the nursery I sent letters to every parent with a child under three but the response was low as only eight parents gave permission for me to observe their children. Seven consented to be interviewed with one other parent granting permission to observe her child without being interviewed herself. Data depth is identified by Bailey (1978) and referred to in Cohen et al (1999. p.188)

Because case study observations take place over an extended period of time, researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with those they are observing, generally in more natural environments than those in experiments and surveys are conducted.

This depth and intimacy, however, have also had an impact on my interviews and observations. I have noticed that on the observations of James and Ben in July, August and September, 2004 the boys were very aware of my presence and this has had an effect on the quality of observations of interaction that I am able to make. James in particular engages with me and brings resources to me presumably in an attempt to draw me into his play. After the September observation I was contemplating becoming totally engaged with their play when I next observed. My concern about this is will it give a skew to my analysis. I am aware that as a participant observer I can not remain aloof from the environment, the children or the adults because my presence in the room is obvious.

The response from parents in the second nursery was also minimal. Only three parents consented to be interviewed. As with the first nursery I was disappointed

with the responses but as the study has grown I have found that having this small cohort to observe has not had too much of an impact on my professional work.

This detachment has also raised some issues with the staff within the setting. The response to a request to interview the staff was very low. Out of a staff of about fifteen I only managed to interview the manager and three of her staff. This does raise the issue as to why they feel threatened by this process and yet are happy for me to observe the children and as a consequence their practice on a monthly basis. In discussion with my supervisor it was thought this could be because of my professional role within the authority and relationship with the owner manager. Are they concerned about the confidentiality of the interview? The content of the interview could not have been threatening as I provided them with a copy of the question prompts after the initial request received no responses. This was the reason why I tried to contact another setting out of my authority but with no success.

My next concern was the rigour of the research, would a case study stand up to academic scrutiny? By its very nature a case study is a questionable form of research and one which is challenged by academics. Case study is qualitative and historically has been criticised against,

Quantitative methods (which) are considered to be reliable and valid, objective and clean, and oriented towards producing empirical outcomes that are generalizable ... (Macpherson et al, 2000, p.50)

Stenhouse reinforces this criticism of case study when he writes,

At present there is a considerable interest in qualitative and descriptive work, usually in the form of case study. A good deal of work of varying quality has been done, and more is at present in progress. But such work lacks verifiability and fails to cumulate. It is too individualistic and shows too little sense of the responsibility to lay the foundations of a sound tradition of public scholarship. (Stenhouse, 1978, p. 33)

Bassey refers to Simon's paper (1996), "*The paradox of a case study*" where she recognises that it is difficult for a researcher to generalise from a single case. The weakness of case study is also recognised by Nisbet and Watt's (1984) table as shown in Cohen et al (2000, p.184). One of the weaknesses that they identify is that,

They are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective ... They are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity.

I feel that a study of this nature will be the only way of uncovering the experiences of parents, practitioners and children. Longitudinal case study means that I am able to become familiar to the children and in return I can, '... capture the ongoing flow and complexities of children's daily lives' (Greene & Hill, 2005.p.15). The nature of the research questions means that using observation is a legitimate form of study. If children are to be observed it has to be within their own environments. The difficulty with the nature of this observation is that it cannot match laboratory conditions because the children will all have had different influences prior to attending the out of home care; the way in which their parents interact with them, the level of attachment that has been formed, the social circumstances, the observed child's position in the family, the genetic characteristics, none of these can be the same, just as the behaviours will be different even within the same environment.

In the real world, however, it is often impossible to hold all else equal. There may be many differences between children who did attend infant child care and those who did not, and researchers may not be able to control for all variables. Researchers call this the 'selection bias' problem, and it is a serious challenge in observational studies. (Waldfogel, 2006 p. 8)

There is also a danger in case study that generalisations and conclusions may be drawn which are incorrect because of this lack of laboratory conditions,

... we have to be cautious in drawing conclusions from observational studies and should place the most weight on studies that use rigorous methods to test whether the associations found in observational data are likely to be causal. Studies with a longitudinal design (following children over time) are valuable because they allow researchers to control for how children were doing before they experienced the child care or intervention (Waldfogel, 2006 p.8)

I have been careful within the case studies not to make generalisations about the differences between home care and out of home care because I could not control for what had occurred before I started to observe the children. I have also been careful not to make comparisons between the children as I could not account for their past experiences and for those experiences that they were having when I was not carrying out the observations. The observations were of the real experiences of these children and their families when accessing out of home care. I observed the children within their natural surroundings doing what they wanted; I did not go in with an agenda. I wanted to see what their true experiences were and how these impacted on them. As such case study is the only viable form for this study.

Table 3.1 Children involved in the case study

Name of child	D.O.B	Date observations started	Number of observations	Parent interviewed	Reasons for ceasing observations
Amy	26/03/03	19/2/04	15	Yes	Moved house
Mark	8/11/01	17/2/04	11	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
Ben	18/11/02	27/2/04	14	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
James	2/12/02	18/2/04	16	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
Harriet	7/10/01	27/2/04	3	Yes	Left to go to Independent School nursery
Felicity	12/8/01	17/2/04	7	No	Moved to maintained nursery school September 2004
Maisie	10/06/02	19/2/04	10	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
Josh	25/1/02	18/2/04	5	Yes	Left to go to funded playgroup September 2004
Tim	9/5/03	15/9/04	14	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
Lynda	25/10/03	14/12/04	15	No	Observations stopped when 3
Dan	30/4/04	15/12/04	5	Yes	Observations stopped when pattern of attendance changed
Martin	5/7/05	9/2/05	13	Yes	Moved house
Melanie	28/3/04	9/3/05	16	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
Georgina	5/1/04	9/2/05	16	Yes	Observations stopped when 3
Simon	12/8/04	20/8/04	31	Yes	Observations stopped when 3

Fourteen children in total were observed but because there were under 7 observations carried out on Harriet, Felicity and Dan they were not included in the analysis. Although there were 16 observations on James and only 5 on Josh, I included Josh in case narrative 2 instead of James because he was closer in chronological age to Mark and Ben, and was always in the same room as these boys when the observations were conducted.

3.9 Effects of observing

Having asked myself these questions I observed the children in the settings on a monthly basis from February 2004. As mentioned before the children were aware of my presence and in some cases this had an impact on the observations that I made. I also “became part of the furniture” to the adults and this I feel had a positive impact on the observations. I would, however, like to qualify this with a comment made by the manager in the first setting when I stated that I was impressed by the practice in the toddler room. I did not always contact the manager personally to inform her that I would be in the setting but informed her through the practitioners: the comment from one manager was that she can walk into some of the rooms on the morning and know that I was coming in because of the activities that were on offer. She said that there was more sand/messy play and children involvement when I had arranged to make a visit. I tried to make appointments more indefinite but as a researcher I feel that I owed the setting the courtesy of informing them of my visits so that I did not intrude into the lives of the staff or the children. If there were some children who were settling into rooms it might be inappropriate for me to be in the room. I also felt that the staff were comfortable with me as they knew that one of the parents had asked for copies of the observations. I felt that the parent had a right to see these observations but I only submitted the observation itself and none of the conclusions that I may have drawn from them, thus protecting the confidentiality of the setting by exposing what I feel could be judgements about how individual children could be challenged in their learning. I was also aware of the rights of the parents by

storing the photographs of the children on separate CD's which I gave to parents when the observations were concluded.

Interestingly the parent who recently asked to be involved in the research contacted me after the showing of the BBC programme *Real Lives (2004)*. In the interview that I carried out with her in August 2004 the mother commented, "After watching that programme, it really batters your trust a bit", and when I asked her directly about the programme and how it made her feel about her choice of nursery she stated that, "...it didn't make me think about my nursery because I'm quite happy with the choice that I have made...." During the interview she commented that she wished she could be a fly on the wall to see what happened when she was not present. She made it clear that she also wanted to see the observations. I explained that I did not make judgements in the observations about the children's developments but that they were simply an account of what the child had done. She indicated that that was what she wanted – an idea or picture of what her child was like when she was not there.

This chapter has described how the research was conducted and rationalised the choices that were made throughout the process. Chapter 4 will describe and justify the analytical processes and discuss the findings from interviews and observations.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter analyses the interviews with parents, staff and managers involved with the two day nurseries and the interview with Ruth, the mother caring for her baby at home. I will also describe how I analysed the observations of the children and how I developed a framework to assist with the analysis of two of those studies.

As stated in chapter 3, discussion of methodology and ethical issues, in the following analysis of the parent interviews, staff interviews and child observations the names of those participating have been changed to respect confidentiality. The names of the two nurseries have also been changed. The replacement names are pseudonyms and have no relation to any other setting with the same or similar names.

Once I had gathered all the data from the interviews with parents, staff and managers, from the case study observations of the children and the exit questionnaires, I needed to decide how I was going to analyse and report on them. My process of analysis for each set of data is described in this chapter. It was important for me to stay, ‘... true to the voices of the research participants ...’ (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002, p.105), in my analyses because it was their ‘voices’ that I wanted to be heard.

When conducting analysis it was important for me to be aware of the prejudices that, as a researcher, I may hold and how these might impact on the questions that I asked of the data. Another issue of data analysis with longitudinal qualitative research is the amount of data that is collected, which is why I began to form the questions that I was asking of the data at the beginning of the study and adapted them as further questions arose. I was clear, from the outset, why I was collecting each set of data but also open to changes as the study progressed.

... qualitative research rapidly amasses huge amounts of data, and early analysis reduces the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for future focus ... the process is akin to funneling from the wide to the narrow. (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 147)

One advantage of being a lone researcher is that through the analysis you can become, '... continuously open to fresh interpretations of familiar events ... qualitative research tries to be responsive to what the evidence tells the researcher.' (Edwards, 2001, p.117)

I made use of the electronic versions of the transcripts of the interviews and cut and pasted the relevant units into the narrative of my research findings as relevant to the particular elements of the study.

In the analysis of the findings I sought to show a clear path between the data and the findings in order that future researchers might draw on or use any relevant information in their studies. When analysing the interview data it was important for

me not to lose the sense of wholeness when questioning and interpreting the data; would the interview lose meaning if units were separated out.

The greater tension in data analysis is between maintaining a sense of the holism of the interview and the tendency for analysis to atomize and fragment the data – to separate them into constituent elements, thereby losing synergy of the whole, and in interviews often the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 282)

4.1 Analysis of interviews

In order to analyse the interviews I at first considered using a data analysis programme but it proved financially unviable and I was unable to engage with training for this on the university programme. I therefore decided to colour code the transcripts looking for threads in the responses. Although this was a time consuming method it suited my personal style and gave me a deeper ‘feel’ and greater understanding of the responses. Such coding would have been necessary in any case, prior to using data analysis software. Not using a computer programme meant that I omitted the opportunity to double check my analysis, but I replaced this with a thorough crosschecking of the data myself and continual reflection upon the analytical processes.

I coded the interviews by highlighting in different colours the responses to questions that would reflect the nature of the study as illustrated below. I decided on these particular codes because they were the focus of my question prompts for the interviews and because they were relevant to the research questions. I needed to know why parents made choices and what the main influences on these choices

were. In addition when analysing the staff interviews I needed to ascertain the level of their training and qualifications and also to have an understanding of their attitudes towards working in childcare. With managers I needed to know about their styles and approaches to managing a setting.

Figure 4.1 Codes for Parent Interviews

- REASONS FOR CHOICES
- FEELINGS
- STAFF
- SOCIAL ASPECTS
- 'KEY PERSON'
- ACTIVITIES
- REFERENCES TO CHILDMINDERS
- PARTNERSHIP

Figure 4.2 Codes for Staff Interviews

- REASONS FOR CAREER CHOICES & PERSONAL QUALITIES
- QUALIFICATIONS & TRAINING
- QUALITY OF TRAINING ACCESSED
- PLANNING, OBSERVATION & ASSESSMENT
- 'KEY PERSON'
- PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS
- BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS
- STRENGTHS & WEAKNESS OF SETTING

Figure 4.3 Codes for Managers/proprietors interviews

- MAIN INGREDIENTS WHEN EMPLOYING STAFF
- PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS
- 'KEY PERSON'
- STANDARDS OF TRAINING
- PRACTICE & ITS MANAGEMENT
- BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS
- MANAGEMENT ROLE

This coding system helped me to group the responses from the differing interview transcripts making them manageable and also enabling me to be more reflective about the comments that were made.

Having explained the process of analysis I will now discuss the detail of analysis of each of the different data sets.

4.2 Analysis of parent interviews

In this section I will discuss the interviews that I had with parents from both nurseries in the study. I interviewed nine parents at Sunshines and three at Tiny Feet. One parent at the former consented for me to observe her daughter but did not want to take part in the interviews.

Analysis of parent interviews are discussed under the following headings:

- Reasons for Choices
- Emotions of parents
- The 'key person'

4.2.i Reasons for choosing a particular nursery

When I interviewed the parents I was interested in why they had chosen the particular setting to see if there was a common factor in their responses. The majority of those interviewed stated that they had visited several settings, between two and five, with the exception of one who had only visited one.

Reasons for choosing the nurseries were given as:

Location, staff, trusting other people with their child and their attitudes towards childminders.

Location

Two sets of parents said that their child had previously been to another setting; the reason for the move had been the establishing of this nursery near to where they lived and another because:

“It (the first setting chosen) seemed o.k. when I first walked round; it was quiet and calmwhen I went to pick him up he was asleep in a rocking chair thing and he never falls asleep in those and they just left him – now if that had been me I would never have left him all hunched over even if it took him time to get back to sleep, I would have made sure he was more comfortable and then he was dead poorly when he came back ... and I cried myself to sleep that night. So the next day I went to this nursery.” (*Mother of Tim*)

There was a commonality in the reason why parents had made their initial choice and they responded with comments such as, “I had just like an instinctive feeling about it” and “I just got the feeling”. Probing into this matter a little closer five out of the nine parents interviewed stated that the reason for their choice revolved

around the newness of the setting and its resources, the physical building itself and the size of the rooms. Another common feature was the location of the setting. Two out of nine parents had moved nurseries because Sunshines had opened up in their locality and two others gave the choice of location for another reason. One parent commented that Sunshines was near the motorway junction that she used and therefore this was one of the reasons for making this choice. Two other parents who both use the city based nursery, Tiny Feet, chose it because of its proximity to work.

It helped me. I often work until 6.00 and I looked at the local ones and I would have been struggling if there had been an accident or something. I know they don't dump your child but I didn't want to be late every night. My job gives me free parking opposite the nursery and that is how I saw it.
(Mother of Georgina)

It is very near to work so that if I had to because there was an emergency I can run round in 5 minutes. It is that accessibility as well. *(Mother of Melanie)*

This close availability was obviously important in making these mothers feel that they could reach their children as quickly as possible in case of emergencies.

Staff

During the course of the interviews six out of nine parents who chose Sunshines referred to the staff as a factor in their choice of setting when they talked about the ages of the staff. They felt that in many of the nurseries the staff were very young whereas in this setting there were staff of different ages,

... I noticed that they all had very young staff and that was one of my main concerns – I can't leave my daughter with 18 year olds because they've got no experience(in the chosen setting) there was a mixture. The adult who

looked after her had got children and she was a little bit older ... she had hands on experience as opposed to book experience. (*Mother of Maisie*)

Another point as well was the staff seemed quite mature people which I liked it seemed that they were mothers themselves. What put me off other places was that they were quite young now no discrimination or anything I know people have got to start somewhere but to me it was important to me I felt I could leave her with them and she would be ok. I don't know it was just the experience came across very well that they had and that was the key thing. (*Mother of Harriet*)

This comment about the older member of staff was very revealing especially as she was unqualified but with a wealth of experience.

Another factor in the first setting was that one of the nursery assistants was male.

Two of the parents commented on this during the interviews. One parent saw it immediately as a positive,

Peter wasn't there when we first went ... I think is quite good they are not just getting the female side of things. You've got a mixture particularly if you've got boys. I think it is brilliant. I think it is fantastic; I really, really do especially the little boys ... I think it's a big thing for the lads. I think there should be more of them to be honest. He's fantastic absolutely fantastic. Gets on the floor, he's like a dad really on the floor, he has them all climbing on his back. He was playing football today with them you know things like that. It's nice. (*Mother of Harriet*)

Whereas during another interview a father expressed the following about his initial concerns when Peter started to work in the nursery;

At first I was worried I thought it's a lad what's going on here and from a bloke's point of view.....why is he with kids? But I still don't see him whereas I thought at first fantastic, a good male role model a bit of rough and tumble. I think he is better with the older ones I can't see him with babies. (*Father of Mark*)

Trusting staff with their children

Another interesting response to come out of the parent interviews was the question of trust. Many of the parents expressed their unwillingness to put their children in full time day care, “No one was good enough to look after my daughter”, “I think even if it’s the best nursery in the world you don’t want to send them, you want to stay at home with her...”, but several of them also balanced this with the desire for their children to be engaged with other children for social interaction. Two parents commented on their sister’s children not having attended anywhere and who now find it difficult to mix. One parent expressed the social interaction as the main reason for her son attending nursery because he was showing signs of not accepting the presence of other children or adults. Having done seven months of observations on Josh I would say that the nursery has fulfilled this need, as he approaches and initiates talk with adults and other children and has excellent vocabulary skills. The comments from parents about the importance of social interaction and development were interesting in that parents felt that the development of children’s social skills within the nursery were important, “... to mix with other kids, to develop her communication skills and just to muck in”, but when questioned about the children’s learning they placed care and safety as their highest criteria, “...because he’s so young I just want to be able to go to work just knowing that he’s safe and being looked after.” “I think it is a combination but at this age it is the care. I think care is the main one.” One of the parents made an interesting statement about one of the criteria that she made when looking for a day care setting for her daughter,

I actually wanted her to mix with children of mixed race and to be in an area that has got mixed cultures, and I thought a nursery would be better for that ... I was asking them about how they treated Christmas and Eid and all of the various religious festivals. As I saw it, it was just as they said, Christmas was quite a low key affair, it wasn't the whole place completely decorated- some nurseries every single thing is to do with Christmas and I didn't want her to be in an environment that is totally Christian dominated. Culturally diversity is a key thing that I would like her to be exposed to. As I said having come from London – you think Manchester is multi cultural but it is not. So that is why I went there rather than going for a local nursery here. *(Mother of Melanie)*

This was interesting in that as part of her research into nurseries she read Ofsted reports to see if there was any mention of cultural diversity within them. This parent was the only one of those interviewed who stated that they had referred to the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk) to help them in their search for a nursery.

Choice of day nursery over childminder

The question of trust also came up in the interviews when some of the parents discussed how they had considered using a child minder. Many of these comments refer to the safety factor of their child being in an environment where there is only one adult,

With a day nursery you have got more security. Security because if you don't know the childminder personally and it's on a one to one basis you don't really know what they are doing. They could be doing anything to your child. *(Mother of Tim)*

We didn't have a childminder because of the safety factor. *(Mother of Ben)*

The reason I did not put him with a childminder or a nanny was that I was a bit scared of leaving him with just one person that I didn't know. You would get to know them over time but it would take longer than a few months.

Nurseries are more controlled, there are more people. They are audited and then from time to time there are inspections. *(Mother of Martin)*

Another parent, although concerned about the safety factors involved when using a childminder, did recognise that there could be advantages in her child forming a more personal relationship with one individual.

I was going to go to a childminder because I thought he would have that personal 1:1 contact but after speaking to friends – I did actually go to visit a childminder, she was lovely - she was quite young although she was qualified, she had her own child and one other child and I just got the feeling that she was putting a lot of her energies into her own child and I just thought that it is somebody's house and I am sure everything would be fine but you don't know what she does when I am not there. There are no other adults around to keep an eye on the place and I just felt she was putting quite a lot of her attention onto her own child and Dan might be second – second best almost. My first consideration was actually a child minder but having visited her and gone through that thought process I decided that a nursery would be better because he would have the interaction of other children and there would be other staff there. *(Mother of Dan)*

Melanie's mother stated that from the start she was sceptical of childminders. Her response shows her lack of knowledge about the registration and inspection of childminders, which raises concerns about the way in which this information is disseminated to parents.

I am a bit sceptical about child minders and when I looked into it about a year ago, but a year ago I was living in London. When I looked into it, there didn't seem to be any safeguards, no checks. As I understand it people can just go on a register and there is no checking of those people and so I didn't have any confidence about picking someone off a register. You can go and meet them but then Melanie would be with 2 or 3 other children and they would be in her house. I just didn't like the idea of a childminder. Somebody who has got no strictures, there's no control over them. A couple of people that I know have had bad experiences and so I did not want to go down that road. *(Mother of Melanie)*

Other parents' responses show that they were ambivalent about using a childminder but that upon reflection they feel that they have made the right choice in choosing a day nursery.

I mean to start with I couldn't decide I was actually going to put him with a childminder I just didn't know what to do for the best. I'm so glad we decided as we did. (*Mother of James*)

I was more comfortable with day care than a childminder.

These comments show that these particular parents had made a positive decision to use a day nursery and that the reason for that decision made them feel positive about their experiences within the nursery.

When interviewing the parents about their choice of nursery it was important to also ask them about other issues that they would have encountered once they had started to attend the nursery. The issues discussed were their emotions and the 'key person' system.

4.2. ii. *Emotions of parents*

When looking at the perspectives of parents whose children attend group care settings it was important to ask them in the interviews about their feelings when their child first attended the setting. The majority of those interviewed talked about their distress at leaving their child in the care of others. This feeling of distress was expressed in many ways. One mother talks about her feelings of guilt,

I think the fact that he is not with mum all that time I sometimes feel a bit guilty about the fact that I do have to leave him there as much as it does have its benefits they are your babies and you want them to be with you all

the time, but then I don't think I could necessarily be a full time mum. I think it is just getting that balance right really. (*Mother of Dan*)

Others expressed their feelings of not liking the situation and of having to have made this choice in the first place,

I think even if it's the best nursery in the world you don't want to send them you want to stay at home with her (*Mother of Amy*)

I didn't like any of them to be honest with you. I was having traumas with all of them. To be honest I didn't want to leave her anywhere but it was the best of them all. (*Mother of Maisie*)

If I didn't have to work full time I wouldn't put her in a nursery. I am somebody who would never have thought would say that. I would chat with friends before and say I will be dying to get back to work but I actually enjoy seeing her develop and playing with her. I don't tidy up all the time I leave things around so she can play. I am able to work but if I had a choice I wouldn't. I don't know how long it would last for I would probably get bored after a bit. (*Mother of Melanie*)

For some mothers their feelings about leaving their children were more demonstrative and their comments show the emotional pull on them,

I felt terrible about leaving her at nursery. I burst into tears when I got into the car on the way back. You just think I am not that kind of person, how could I be so pathetic but at the same time it was good to know that I could ring the nursery. (*Mother of Melanie*)

I was worried sick like should I call, I can't remember if I did actually call, rang them about an hour after she was in just in case. (*Mother of Harriet*)

The first couple of months he used to cry and I found that heart wrenching. (*Mother of James*)

These comments illustrate how hard it is for parents to leave their children in the care of others. Interestingly although some fathers were present at the interviews all of the above comments were made by mothers. It seems that no matter what the

quality of the setting and no matter how certain mothers are in their choice of setting they all have a guilt feeling about having to put their child into care. These feelings of guilt are not helped by writers such as Biddulph (2005, p. 13) who states in answer to the question to parents about whether to use a day nursery,

- Earning and spending have become more important in our world than caring and communicating with those around us. Today's world runs on greed and speed
- Childhood has changed, with much less time available and less sense of family and community. The heavy use of day nurseries for very young children is just one symptom of this.
- Your big decisions in life are between money and love. If you put love first, it changes everything.

These comments make no reference to the distress that parents, mothers in particular, struggle with when making these decisions. On the other hand Waldfogel (2006, p.45) recognises that there is no universal answer to the question,

...given individual variation in the ability to read infants' cues and respond to them appropriately, some mothers may not be very good caregivers or may not be as good as available substitutes. Second, even the best of mothers might provide even more sensitive and responsive care if they did not have to provide care twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Third if an infant is with another caregiver on a regular basis, that caregiver could become as good as the mother at knowing the child and reading the child's cues. Fourth, we know too little about the impact of a mother's time away from the baby on the sensitivity of her own care for the child. It might be that when a mother shares the care of the baby with another adult or adults, it is a win-win situation – with the child benefiting from more sensitive caregiver(s) and the mother herself.

4.2.iii. *The 'key person'*

There is a recognition in the parent interview data that it is the quality of the caregiving and the forming of additional bonds that is of great importance. It is with this recognition in mind that I asked parents in the interview about the 'key person'

system and the ways in which they felt that their children had formed relationships with the adults. I found it revealing that when asked about the 'key person' system (as discussed by Elfer, 2003), parents at Sunshines were ambivalent about it and many were unaware of its existence. Some of the parents refer to seeing information or lists up on the walls of the nursery,

On the list on the wall its got a list of carers for each child, Tim has got a girl called M. I think but I don't know who she is. *(Mother of Tim)*

They've not introduced me to it but I've seen the notice up about the key worker stuff but I've not had any talk about it. I don't know what the procedure is. It depends who is in the room to give me feedback. *(Mother of Josh)*

Other parents recall that they were told about the 'key person' system and had heard it mentioned once they were in the nursery, but did nothing more to find out how it operated or who their child's 'key person' was,

They have a key worker system I believe I don't know who the key worker is but they did tell me in detail about it. *(Mother of Ben)*

They do but they don't tell you whose Marks is. She did say do you want one of us to be his key worker because we've got the same number each so I said you decide it as you decide it. But I don't really know who it is. *(Mother of Mark)*

I don't think when I first started they had a key worker. *(Mother of James)*
One of two because one of the other girls doesn't speak very much but I couldn't tell you her name. I'm only aware of it because it does say on the door what is the key worker. *(Mother of Maisie)*

The parents in Tiny Feet had a different response to the question about key working. They were aware of its existence and knew what it involved,

D. is her key worker but she seems to go to other people. I did speak to another friend who said that their daughter got into a relationship with a key

worker and when she left she was at a loose end and she cried all the time. Melanie only cries when I go to pick her up. If I knew what she (D) was doing that would be good. *(Mother of Melanie)*

Parents in both settings, however, were able to discuss the relationships that their children had made with adults in general and also to talk about how well the adults knew their children,

They know his moods, yes they know him. At the end of the day he spends quite a lot of time with them. *(Mother of Martin)*

They seem to know him well. Two people look after him all of the time and yes I have been quite pleased by how they are with him. *(Mother of Dan)*

I think they know her very well. *(Mother of Harriet)*

Within these responses there were no signs of jealousy from the parents about the relationships that their children had formed with the adults in the setting.

I was very surprised, they knew when she was tired, and they knew I don't know it was really weird. It was a good thing but the way they just kind of read her and just knew everything just like they had been with her weeks and weeks and weeks. *(Mother of Harriet)*

As well as they could get to know them when there's so many there. *(Mother of Maisie)*

I think they do know him well because he has now graduated to the toddler group before he was in the baby group and they say he is happy to go in there. In the morning when you drop he's happy to go in there. There is no remorse. *(Mother of Ben)*

4.3 Parents' reflections

When children had left the setting or had reached the age of three I had asked parents to complete an exit questionnaire asking them to be reflective about their

experiences with the nursery. These exit interviews have been very interesting especially when looking at Sunshines. From the responses of those parents that were contactable after they had left the nursery many of them were quite critical in their reflections of the setting and what it had offered them and their children. "When Mark finished we got an incomplete folder of stuff that the staff could not be bothered to complete or communicate to us." (Father of Mark) The parents of Amy were very critical when asked to express their opinions of the nursery and the service that they had received once their daughter had left the baby rooms,

... care was very poor and communication between staff and parents was non-existent. Teenagers looked after the children whilst more experienced and mature staff seemed to leave or be promoted to managers and do clerical duties.

These reflections were evident in all of the returns (at Sunshines nursery nine parents were interviewed and four completed the exit questionnaires) from this nursery where there were comments about the age of the staff. This is ironic as many of these parents had chosen this particular nursery because of the range of ages of the staff. These parents commented on the high turnover of the staff and the lack of communication. All respondents to the questionnaire commented on the strength of the care and communication in the baby rooms. "The care was very good downstairs but was poor upstairs." Could this be that when parents are first choosing a nursery they are focusing on the care and the relationships with staff in the baby room and pay very little or no attention to the structure of the whole nursery? Or could this be where nurseries feel more comfortable in what they are offering to parents of babies; knowing that parents of babies need to have

communication about their baby's day in care especially around the routines of feeding and nappy changing whereas when the children are older the staff lack the confidence to talk to parents about how their children are learning and developing? One parent made a comment which I felt to be revealing in regard to the confidence of the staff, "I think all nurseries should have a qualified teacher who is there every morning to greet the children ..."*(Parents of Amy)*

The comments in the exit questionnaire (three out of three responded) from the parents about Tiny Feet Nursery are more positive,

Always been happy with the nursery. Georgina has always enjoyed herself and I have been happy with care. Very professional. Varied activity programme. I am certain that nursery had a positive effect on Georgina and contributed to her outgoing and sociable personality. *(Mother of Georgina)*

The care Martin received in the two years was excellent. It has helped Martin to develop his personality and give him confidence to become very sociable, independent and happy child. Very open, approachable staff. Big family style approach. Close and personal care for the children. Very flexible. Safe. *(Mother of Martin)*

There is a marked difference in these reflective accounts of experience especially when compared to the parents' views when they first chose a setting for their children.

What does the second nursery do that the first does not? Over the years that I have been carrying out the observations there has been very little movement of staff within the second of the nurseries. The Tiny Feet Nursery offers a more family style

of care, so that all of the children are in the same room. Is this the reason why the parents are more positive about the service they have been offered?

Having analysed the views of parents I will now report on the observations of children that were carried out in the two day nurseries over a period of time as well as the observations of Simon, the baby being cared for at home by his mother.

4.4 Analysis of child observations

When I first started the observations of the children in February 2004 I considered using an existing analytical framework to assist with my analysis of the observations. When I carried out the first observation I used the Thomas Coram Research Unit Group (TCRU) Care Observation checklist (Thomas Coram Research Unit, 2002, Research on Ratios, Group Size and Staff Qualifications and Training in Early Years and Childcare Settings, DfES, 2002. Appendix B, p. 207).

This checklist asks questions in four areas;

- Core questions – Children’s Activities
- General questions about children’s activities and interactions
- Physical environment questions (indoor and outdoor)
- Dealing with distress and discipline

The framework consists of 61 questions where the researcher has to score on a range of 5 to 1, where 5 is a definite Yes and 1 is a definite No as an answer. An

example of the core questions asked in relation to Children's Activities is as follows;

Children's Activities – Core Questions

Do adults give appropriate help as and when needed?

Score 5 if: Adults are consistently throughout the observation to children's needs. They can be seen watching children, and intervening when necessary. For example, they demonstrate the use of equipment, toys, puzzles etc, help children with their feeding as required, help infants sit, stand etc.

When I used this framework of questions I found that it interfered in my observations and that I was concentrating more on answering the questions than conducting observations of the children and their responses to the adults who were or were not interacting with them. I found that in order to use this framework I had to respond to it whilst I was in the setting as it would negate the value of the observations if the checklist was completed once the observation was concluded. As my observations of the children were intended from the start to be longitudinal to continue using this framework would detract from my reflective accounts of the children's time spent in out of home care settings. (See Appendix 2 for a full example of the framework)

Another reason for deciding not to use this framework was that I had decided that my study was qualitative as opposed to quantitative and by using the framework I would be generating data that was numerical. Another reason was that I was observing a small cohort of children in different rooms and therefore it would be impossible to use any of the data to make comparisons. When this framework was

used by the TCRU it was with a larger cohort in the Research on Ratios, Group Size and Staff Qualifications and Training in Early Years and Childcare Settings (DfES, 2002. Appendix B, p. 207) study and therefore the basis of the studies were not the same.

I then considered the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-E) (Sylva, 2006), and Infant/ Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS-R) (Harms, 2003) (See Appendix 1) to evaluate whether these would be of value in my interpretation of the data gathered. These frameworks are less to do with individual children and more to do with evaluating the environment in which the children are involved. Again I found that these did not meet the needs of my study. I wanted to know about the children as individuals and how they reacted and responded to out of home settings. I felt that within my narrative observations I was able to reflect on how the environment affected the individual children and that this reflection better suited the needs of my study.

Table 4.1 First edition of the Framework developed

A STRONG CHILD

When answering the following questions give evidence/examples of what it looks like in individual setting.

Have babies/children formed attachments with adults?
Are feeding/sleep routines individual to babies?
Do babies/children have 1:1 contact time?
How are babies/children encouraged to explore & investigate?
How do adults respond to babies/children's actions, expressions & gestures?
How does setting give 'personal space' to babies/children?
Meeting diverse needs
Do babies/children with special needs have continuity of carer?
How is the environment adapted for babies/children with special needs?

A HEALTHY CHILD

When answering the following questions give evidence/examples of what it looks like in individual setting.

Are babies/children free to express feelings of joy/grief/frustration/fear?
Are experiences of primary caregivers respected?
Do practitioners have non authoritarian beliefs?
Is physical environment clean/safe/uncluttered?
Are resources age appropriate?
Are babies/children able to explore through movement?
Are babies/children encouraged to be independent?
Do babies/children experience their environment from different levels/perspectives?
Do babies/children explore through their senses?
Are babies/children offered a balanced diet?
Is the environment conducive for babies/children to rest & sleep?
Do adults respond with affection when babies/children are distressed?
Do adults; Nudge & bug? Use pet names? Have shared rituals?

Meeting diverse needs
Are special diets catered for?
Are babies/children given small steps by which to judge progress?
Are all children included at meal times?
Is the environment adapted for babies/children with disabilities?
Are adults aware of developmentally appropriate behaviour of babies/children?

A COMPETENT LEARNER

When answering the following questions give evidence/examples of what it looks like in individual setting.

Do babies/children explore through; Touch/sight/sound/taste/smell/movement?
Do adults repeat activities for babies/children?
Are babies/children active or passive learners?
Are babies/children encouraged to be curious?
Do adults respond to the cues of the play of babies/children?
Are babies/children able to express themselves through the “hundred languages of children”?
Are babies/children given opportunities to imitate?
Do adults give babies/children time to persevere?
Do adults encourage babies/children to mark make in a variety of ways?
Do adults provide opportunities for children to match, sort, classify & categorise?
Do babies/children have opportunities to engage with role play?
Meeting diverse needs
Are there positive images visible in the setting & present in the whole environment?
Are there resources to meet babies/children individual needs?
Do resources reflect the diversity of the community?
Are there symbols & pictures to reflect babies/children’s home experiences?

A SKILFUL COMMUNICATOR

When answering the following questions give evidence/examples of what it looks like in individual setting.

Do babies/children make eye contact/touch/vocalise with other babies/children & adults?

Do adults have good relationships with parents/carers? How is this evidenced?
Does the environment encourage a variety of 'conversations' to take place?
Do adults model language by echoing?
Do adults respond to babies/children's own language by interpreting it?
Do adults create situations for babies/children to communicate?
Do adults role-model language for babies/children whilst playing etc?
Do adults make themselves available to communicate with babies/children?
Do adults use language/songs/stories to communicate with babies/children?
Do adults 'attempt' to understand babies/children's language?
Do adults respond to babies/children's interests?
Do adults give babies/children choices?
Meeting diverse needs
Are adults aware that babies/children communicate in a variety of ways-gesture/singing/facial expression?
Do adults adapt to babies/children's needs on demand?
Do adults give babies/children time to respond?

Having concluded that already recognized frameworks did not suit the needs of my study I decided to look at how I could use the Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002) to analyse my observations. As part of the analysis of the case studies I developed a system using Birth to Three Matters (DfES 2002) to evaluate the observations against the national document to see whether it meets the needs of practitioners. I developed the system by selecting the major themes in Birth to Three Matters (DfES 2002) to ask questions. I decided to use the major themes of Birth to Three Matters (DfES 2002) because at the time this was the core national document which all settings were using. It was also a document which I had been using with practitioners with some mixed success. I, therefore, decided to use the framework in order to challenge my own misgivings to see if it could answer my research questions with particular reference to the role of the adults' contribution to the experiences of children, parents and practitioners. As my development of the initial framework illustrates I concluded that the framework needed adapting to include other national documents so that the final Framework was a more holistic model enabling me to thoroughly analyse the observations of Tim.

I then took the observations of Amy and put them into the question framework. I examined the remaining extracts to see if there were any recurring themes. I found that most of the extracts that remained were around adult involvement and interaction. I returned to Birth to Three Matters (DfES 2002) to see if I was correct in this interpretation. I discovered that although the Framework is consistently

referring to the role of the adult it does not appear to ask questions of the adults

such as:

- How does the child separate from their main carer?
- How is the child dependent on the adult?
- How does the child react to strange adults in the room?
- How does the child show their need for the adult?
- How do the adult's actions affect the child?

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

A STRONG CHILD

<p>Have babies/children formed attachments with adults?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Whilst still supported by the adult Amy bounces up and down and moves in time with the music that is playing ➤ Amy then becomes obsessed with the adults face and she enjoys playing with her nose, ears etc – Amy then gives the adult kisses ➤ At all times during this observation Amy never ventures far from whichever adult is sitting on the floor. ➤ When I enter the room Amy is sitting on an adult’s knee- she is holding a mirror toy and looking at her face ➤ She watches whilst the adult interacts with other children ➤ She leaves the adult to go to the baby brick carrier. She selects a brick and takes it back to the adult ➤ Amy likes the contact of the adults – she doesn’t cling but she is happiest when either touching them or interacting with them either through their play or through eye contact ➤ She gives the adult love and cuddles. Amy goes to the adult to be picked up ➤ Although Amy now has independence it was interesting to note that she still prefers to have the interaction with adults. This contact is not “clingy” – it’s as if this is her security and that once she has contact she feels safe and secure. She is happy within the environment. ➤ When one of the adults is not paying attention to her Amy taps her on the shoulder until she pays attention ➤ Amy then points to the adult and goes for a cuddle – she sits between the adult’s legs and begins to nestle in – she seems more comfortable and content when she is in close proximity to the adult ➤ With her dummy in she snuggles into the adult, twisting the dummy in her mouth in the way seen on other observations. She holds on to the adult. The adult then asks Amy to take her dummy out so that she can talk.
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Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>➤ Amy is enjoying being with the adult and the others</p>
Are feeding/sleep routines individual to babies?	
Do babies/children have 1:1 contact time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At this time she has 1:1 interaction with the adult who is also seated on the floor with her ➤ Amy then holds hands with the adults and they dance together ➤ An adult takes Amy down from the table and she sits on the floor – when the adult is not 1:1 with her she whimpers ➤ When her mother is leaving Amy goes to sit on the adult’s knee
How are babies/children encouraged to explore & investigate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult encourages her to use push along toy to aid with her walking. She does this but she still needs adult support or the closeness of the adult ➤ Amy reaches for other toys. The adult spins a toy and Amy looks at it spinning round ➤ Amy asks for her dummy and responds with a smile when the adult gives it to her. The adult asks Amy if she is going to get down and play now. Amy responds with an emphatic No! ➤ In order to encourage her the adult asks her to go and find things (these things are obviously her favourites) but Amy does not want to leave the adult ➤ Amy remains where she is and it is obvious that she is content and happy to stay near the adult whilst looking round the room
How do adults respond to babies/children’s actions, expressions & gestures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy is very sociable and she succeeds in gaining the attention of any adult who walks into the room – she smiles at them and also waves first with one hand and then with both ➤ It appears that she enjoys being the centre of attention and as she smiles and responds to all of the adults she always gets a response. She smiles and waves and therefore gains all of the adults’ attention.

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

<p>How does setting give 'personal space' to babies/children?</p>	
<p>Meeting diverse needs</p>	
<p>Do babies/children with special needs have continuity of carer?</p>	
<p>How is the environment adapted for babies/children with special needs?</p>	

A HEALTHY CHILD

<p>Are babies/children free to express feelings of joy/grief/frustration/fear?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult then gets up from the table and this prompts Amy to move. Another child is obstructing her when she is following the adult and Amy cries (not a proper cry) until he moves. She then proceeds to follow the adult "grizzling" as she walks ➤ Amy is not pleased when an adult moves her toys whilst they are having snack – the adult responds to this by getting a chair and placing it next to Amy and then placing Buzz on the chair so that they are also having their snack – Amy then puts Jess there herself – she is quite happy with this arrangement ➤ A boy approaches and appears to want to take the doll – there is no possibility of this as Amy
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Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>makes clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy gets very excited – she accidentally knocks another child over but she loves/comforts him and then goes to sit down ➤ The adult prompts her with words that she responds by doing actions – washes & tickle toes – the adult informs me that these are things that she has been doing at home with her mother ➤ As Amy’s mother has requested that she wants to stop her using the dummy the adult tries to distract her by giving her a juice
Are experiences of primary caregivers respected?	
Do practitioners have non authoritarian beliefs?	
Is physical environment clean/safe/uncluttered?	
Are resources age appropriate?	
Are babies/children able to explore through movement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She crawls away from the adult to the chairs and tables. She pulls herself up on the furniture ➤ When she has finished snack Amy is on the floor again and pulls herself up on the table. She moves from the table to the chair eventually using the chair as a walker. ➤ She goes to the brick walker, stands up with it and pushes it and walks. She pushes the walker for the length of the room, lets go and stands unaided. Amy then crawls over to sit with an adult
Are babies/children encouraged to be independent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy stands with the adult and the adult begins to encourage her to walk to her – ➤ Although Amy still remains near the adult she appears more independent and adventurous and isn’t looking for adult physical and eye contact as she has previously done ➤ Amy walks over to the safety gate which separates the baby room and the toddler room – the adults tell me that she has been having some visits next door. Evidently she likes it for most of

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>the time and they also tell me that the gradual visits next door will begin properly when she returns from her holidays (she goes away at the end of this week)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy then places herself in front of the gate and sits looking through to the next room for 10 minutes. ➤ When it is snack time in the toddler room and one of the adults is going through the gate they hold it open and ask Amy if she would like to go in. Amy gives her answer by crawling through and joining the others for their snack. ➤ When she has finished her snack and has got down from the table Amy returns to the gate to look back into the baby room – as if reassuring herself that those loved adults are still there. They acknowledge her. She stays here for a while as if deciding which way to go – the options are entirely hers ➤ Amy goes out but in her own time – she stands in the doorway looking out but then goes back into the room ➤ This was an interesting observation. Amy has become much more confident. She no longer stays close to the adults. ➤ she helps in the action by unfastening and taking the shoes off – very independent skills are developing ➤ As she is standing up she looks round the room from another perspective – the adult is supporting her
<p>Do babies/children experience their environment from different levels/perspectives?</p>	
<p>Do babies/children explore through their senses?</p>	
<p>Are babies/children offered a balanced diet?</p>	

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

Is the environment conducive for babies/children to rest & sleep?	
Do adults respond with affection when babies/children are distressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She takes a topple and cries for a short while although unharmed. The adult gives her her dummy.
Do adults; Nudge & bug? Use pet names? Have shared rituals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As the adult asks for a kiss and Amy does not respond the adult blows her a kiss and Amy responds by blowing a kiss back ➤ This obviously a routine as Amy and the adult laugh together as she keeps on asking for one more and holding her finger up ➤ She then tries to pull the adults hood over her head
Meeting diverse needs	
Are special diets catered for?	
Are babies/children given small steps by which to judge progress?	
Are all children included at meal times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adults are very welcoming to her and make a fuss of her as they sit her at the table with the others- drawing the other children's attention to her presence. When she is sitting at the table she looks around but appears very content. An adult stays close to her giving her support. She eats her cake and looks around her. She eats well and properly
Is the environment adapted for babies/children with disabilities?	

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

Are adults aware of developmentally appropriate behaviour of babies/children?	A COMPETENT LEARNER	
Do babies/children explore through; Touch/sight/sound/ taste/smell/ movement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As she sits on the floor she reaches around for toys ➤ When she is given the pasta Amy sits and looks at it with her hands at her side, she is not touching it – she gets a spoon and starts to move the pasta with the spoon, she scoops some up and puts it into her mouth. She tastes it and decides that she doesn't like it so she spits it out 	
Do adults repeat activities for babies/children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy repeats this, puts dots on the paper and then carries on until the pot is empty. The adult refills the pot and Amy carries on emptying it. She throws the paper onto the floor ➤ She again crawls to the resources and the adult encourages her to post the shapes through the holes. She opens the doors and puts some of the shapes inside the cupboard. She repeats the opening and closing of the doors ➤ Amy asks the adult for one more song – the adult sings again and Amy starts swaying to the tune 	
Are babies/children active or passive learners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She picks up a ball and gives it the adult who hides it in one of the cupboards, Amy knows that it is somewhere but this is beyond her understanding and as she can't find it she turns her attention to pressing the buttons and posting other things in the holes 	
Are babies/children encouraged to be curious?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ . The adult engages her attention with brick tower building. Amy proceeds to build a 3 brick tower. When she has done this she laughs as a response ➤ As she continues to build with the bricks she makes sounds and claps herself ➤ She returns to the adult who asks Amy where the other bricks are, Amy goes to get them 	

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

<p>Do adults respond to the cues of the play of babies/children?</p>	
<p>Are babies/children able to express themselves through the “hundred languages of children”?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Whilst still supported by the adult Amy bounces up and down and moves in time with the music that is playing ➤ Amy sits and bounces up and down when she hears the singing from next door
<p>Are babies/children given opportunities to imitate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy is interested in the toys when an adult shakes a toy she also shakes a toy ➤ Amy pushes the toy up and down following the lead of the adult ➤ When the adult asks her to say Amy she echoes and responds ➤ The adult role models and Amy copies her ➤ When the adults make facial expressions, Amy responds by mimicking ➤ The adult models building towers with bricks and Amy copies her. She then asks the adult for more and she begins to echo the adult counting ➤ Amy now starts to play with her T shirt and then she copies the adult by picking up some bricks and banging them together. The adult starts to sing and Amy begins to sway in time and banging the bricks together
<p>Do adults give babies/children time to persevere?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When the adult has finished with the book Amy looks at it on her own – turning the pages and looking at the pictures. She looks up from the book when the adult is speaking. She returns to the book ➤ Amy is content and interested – she talks to herself ➤ She then plays with all of the shoes, fastening & unfastening them. She passes the shoes to the adult but returns to her activity of fastening and unfastening the Velcro. At one point she tries to put the shoes on but she returns to the original activity. During this period Amy occasionally looks around. She gets up and puts the shoes on the soft play steps and kneels

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>in front of them and resumes the fastening and unfastening. Another child comes over and takes one but Amy is not perturbed. The shoe is returned to her and she resumes her activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She showed good concentration levels as well as good hand to eye coordination. She spent a considerable time engaged with the shoes
<p>Do adults encourage babies/children to mark make in a variety of ways?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She reaches for the pot. She swaps crayons and then puts them back. An adult takes her to the table and straps her into the chair. Amy begins to bang on the table ➤ The adult has put crayons in pots on the table. Amy points to the pots. The adults gives Amy some paper which she throws onto the floor ➤ Amy puts the crayon onto the paper and then into her mouth ➤ Amy begins to make marks on the paper into her mouth ➤ Amy returns to marking on the paper. She reaches for the pot and looks in to select a crayon. She shows the adult the crayon. Amy repeats this, puts dots on the paper and then carries on until the pot is empty ➤ When she gets her drink she drinks and then tips it up to spill water onto the table. As the water is on the table she begins to play with it tracing patterns with her fingers ➤ The adult takes the cup away and then returns it and Amy repeats the tipping out of the water – when the adult takes the cup away she does draw Amy’s attention to the water and how to splash and draw in it. As she asks for her drink the adult gives it back to her and she gives it back to the adult ➤ She then uses the crayons to make dot marks on the paper ➤ Amy now turns her attention to what the adult is doing – drawing. She asks to do some drawing but the adult does not hear her – Amy does not move to go and get the paper herself, she waits until she has got the adult’s attention. Amy now moves from the snack table to go and draw at another table Amy selects the crayons that she wants to use and begins to make marks on the paper. She constantly changes the crayons so that she is using different colours. As she is drawing she says, “Mummy & Daddy” indicating that this is what she is drawing. The adult informs me that Amy frequently describes what she is drawing and that these drawings are often of her parents. Amy is very precise in her mark making – she is drawing

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>circles – in fact there is a pre drawn shape on the paper but Amy is not interested in this she is drawing in the space where there are no other marks – she is creating her own picture. The circles that she is drawing are not only precise but also very small – she has excellent control of the tools that she is using and she knows what she is producing – these are not just random marks, they have meaning and can be interpreted. She again tells the adult that she has drawn her parents. Amy now decides to turn the paper over so that only her drawing is evident. Amy now draws a spiral</p>
<p>Do adults provide opportunities for children to match, sort, classify & categorise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy then holds the bucket up to her face and stares hard into the bottom ➤ She carries on putting things in and out of the bucket, there is a look of real concentration on her face as she is engaged with this activity ➤ Amy now leaves her space between the adult's legs and goes to the posting fridge alongside some other children. One boy puts things in and closes the door, Amy opens it takes the object out, puts it back and then closes the door. Amy then opens the door again takes things out and puts them into her bucket – she then tries to put the bucket in but soon recognises that it won't fit
<p>Do babies/children have opportunities to engage with role play?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy then carries on with her baby play – she is quite sophisticated in this play as she pats the back, looks at the nappy etc to see if it needs changing ➤ When she is playing with the toy phone she appears to hold it to her ear as if she is talking on the phone
<p>Meeting diverse needs</p>	
<p>Are there positive images visible in the setting & present in the whole environment?</p>	
<p>Are there resources to meet babies/children</p>	

individual needs?	
Do resources reflect the diversity of the community?	
Are there symbols & pictures to reflect babies/children's home experiences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In single words Amy tells the adult about the toys that she has bought in from home – Jess & Buzz.

A SKILFUL COMMUNICATOR

Do babies/children make eye contact/touch/recognize with other babies/children & adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She makes good eye contact with the adult next to her and also with me on the other side of the room ➤ Amy rolls onto her front and engages in eye contact with me ➤ She crawls over, leans over and then engages in eye contact again ➤ For 3 minutes she continues with this eye contact as we mirror one another's movements ➤ Amy holds on to the adult ➤ When she can't get to the adult easily Amy whimpers ➤ Amy returns to the adult – just to touch her ➤ When she loses contact with the adult and she also loses her dummy Amy begins to cry. She settles once more when she locates the dummy ➤ Another boy comes in from outside to ask her if she wants to go out – he holds out his hand to her. ➤ Amy turns to the adult and makes eye contact with her ➤ I notice that whenever the adult talks to her Amy makes good, strong eye contact ➤ Amy looks at her very intently, listening carefully ➤ During this episode Amy “talks & babbles” excitedly – her face shows how happy and
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Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>content she is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She talks to the adult who is sitting alongside her and supporting her in her play ➤ Amy engages with the other children at the table – she bangs the table and then starts to babble to them. The other children join in with this and they bang in unison – when they start they stop together and when they stop they start together
<p>Do adults have good relationships with parents/carers? How is this evidenced?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult prompts her with words that she responds by doing actions – washes & tickle toes – the adult informs me that these are things that she has been doing at home with her mother
<p>Does the environment encourage a variety of ‘conversations’ to take place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As she is playing Amy points and makes noises and crawls for the toys that she wants ➤ She has a phone in her hand. She looks at it intently and talks to herself ➤ The adult prompts her with words that she responds by doing actions – washes & tickle toes – the adult informs me that these are things that she has been doing at home with her mother ➤ Amy starts to gesture and point to indicate that she wants her dummy ➤ Amy then “shouts” at the adult and another adult gives her the dummy ➤ Her use of gesture and expression for communication is excellent ➤ Amy does a lot of pointing to indicate what she wants. She also uses facial expressions ➤ Amy then goes to stand next to the coats and she points to a Noddy bag and smiles. She does the same when she walks down the row and spots a Bob the Builder bag – I say “Is it Bob the Builder?” and she starts to sway as if she is remembering the song ➤ She continues to point and then babbles when she points to herself ➤ Amy now uses her hand on and off her mouth to make a sound ➤ She begins to point again, laughs and giggles ➤ Amy then turns her attention to the painting and starts to point at them ➤ Amy then says UP and holds her hands in the air

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy then starts to wave goodbye ➤ Through all of this episode Amy points and babbles – her babbling is expressive and she makes herself understood without problem
Do adults model language by echoing?	
Do adults respond to babies/children's own language by interpreting it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She now begins to point to all of the other children in turn and the adult supplies the names
Do adults create situations for babies/children to communicate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When another child comes into the room she talks and babbles ➤ Amy points to another child and smiles ➤ Amy points to another child holding a toy and laughs ➤ Amy has good communication skills with the adult. This was shown when, through expression and gesture, she indicates where she has left one of the shapes ➤ All the time Amy communicates through her facial expression ➤ She is more babbly and vocal ➤ This is then followed by the adult engaging Amy in a real conversation whilst she puts the dummy away I Amy's pocket. Amy really becomes involved in this conversation – she is not bothered by the dummy and its removal has encouraged her to talk as the adult rightly recognises it would do ➤ The adult then starts making animal noises and asks the children "What sound does Make?" Amy responds with the appropriate woof, meow and moo sounds
Do adults role-model language for babies/children whilst playing etc?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult is talking about cats to another child and says meow – Amy echoes this sound so the adult turns to her to ask what sound a dog makes – Amy responds with Woof ➤ The adults are sitting at the table saying all of the names of the people in the room. Amy babbles with them and tries to copy the names as they are said. She says all of the adult names and then says hers very clearly when she is asked the names of those that she cannot say Amy responds with a "yes"

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

<p>Do adults make themselves available to communicate with babies/children?</p>	<p>She is very playful in the moments when she is with Amy.</p>
<p>Do adults use language/songs/stories to communicate with babies/children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ As the adults sing wind the bobbin up and twinkle, twinkle Amy attempts to do the actions ➤ When the singing starts next door Amy starts to join in with the actions. She also twists her dummy in her mouth as mentioned on previous observations ➤ The adult asks Amy if she wants to go on the see saw. Amy replies with a nod and moves away towards the see saw. As she gets there she looks at the adult asking for help to get on. When the adult has helped her Amy begins to rock back and forth and asks for "Row, row your boat". When this is sung she asks for a new song. When the adult is singing Amy rocks in time to the tune. She is very happy with this activity and asks for more – she nods when the adult says the right song. She smiles and at the end of the song she responds to the adult by doing the scream ending to the song. I notice that when the singing stops so does Amy's rocking ➤ The adult asks Amy where her toes are (the subject of the rhyme) and Amy points to her feet ➤ The adult sings again and Amy nods her head up and down. She claps and asks for more. Now Amy starts to wave her hands in time. Amy shows that she knows the rhyme well because she anticipates the ending
<p>Do adults 'attempt' to understand babies/children's language?</p> <p>Do adults respond to babies/children's interests?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy asks for the bubbles and she goes off to find them She sits down on the floor with an adult and they begin to pull the wand out of the large bubble bottle. Amy notices when it dribbles on her legs and she rubs it until it dries. Amy holds the wand up and tries to blow as she has seen the adult do. She then puts the wand back into the bottle.

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>She is very precise in her movements and she shows concentration in this her chosen activity. She is very happy and content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy rubs her leg when the bubbles dribble again. Another child begins to cry and you can see by the expression on her face that Amy is concerned and she also says his name. Amy continues to put the wand back in and out of the bubble – this is the purpose of the activity for Amy she isn't really interested in the bubbles, just putting the wand back and out of the bottle. She then crawls off to get a push up toy which she gives to the adult. She returns to the bottle and tries to screw the bottle cap back on. Another child comes to join in and Amy shows no reaction to this ➤ They then start to look at the book as the adult reads and turns the pages of the book. She responds to the adults questions about the book. She concentrates on the book and is not disturbed by the others around her ➤ Amy helps to turn the pages
<p>Do adults give babies/children choices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult asks Amy if she wants some. Amy says “yes” ➤ Amy asks for something and points, she rejects all that the adult offers her until she gets the tea pot ➤ The adult asks Amy if she has finished, Amy says, “yes”. The adult then says “Get your hands washed” and Amy replies, “yes” ➤ The adult asks her if she wants duck to sit at the table – Amy says “yes” and she goes off to find him. Amy has gone over to the other side of the room to look for duck. She brings him back to the table and starts to sit him on her chair. ➤ She stands by the side of the duck and begins to eat the pasta with a spoon ➤ The adult asks her if she would like a chair to sit on. Amy says, “No”. She starts to put the spoons into the tea pot ➤ Amy is then offered some choices the bubbles or a song. She chooses a song and goes to sit on the adult's knee. She bangs on the drum which is nearby. She continues this with another child ➤ The adults are good at offering Amy choices as it is obvious she knows what she wants.

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

	<p>➤ The adult then asks Amy if she would like to go and play. Amy says no and remains at the table</p>
<p>Meeting diverse needs</p> <p>Are adults aware that babies/children communicate in a variety of ways- gesture/singing/facial expression?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amy asks for “more” and points to the bowl ➤ She smiles at the adult and asks for “more” again – when she is given a piece she thinks the bowl is empty and she holds her hands up in a gesture to suggest that there is no more left ➤ In all of her vocal interactions Amy is very expressive. She uses facial and hand gestures alongside her talking ➤ She is able to make herself known through talk as well as facial expression and hand gestures.
<p>Do adults adapt to babies/children’s needs on demand?</p>	
<p>Do adults give babies/children time to respond?</p>	

Table 4.2 Framework 1, analysis of the observations of Amy

Having analysed my observations of Amy according to the Framework that I had developed I found that the highlighted areas showed the questions relevant to this research which remained unanswered, after the observations were included in the framework.

My conclusion of the Birth to Three Framework (DfES, 2002) was that the elements unanswered were within the document but they were implicit rather than explicit. For practitioners who are experienced and qualified this implicitness would be obvious but as many of the practitioners in the early years are young and frequently inexperienced I feel that many of its key messages will be missed as they search for ways to satisfy the inspection regime rather than searching for the ways in which they interact or provide an environment that is appropriate and challenging for young children.

When looking at the Key Times Framework (Manning-Morton & Thorp 2001) there are sections which are more specific in their questioning of the adult role. I feel that this is a missing element within Birth to Three Matters (DfES 2002); because there are fewer specifics within the document the adults are less likely to reflect on their role with children in their care. The Key Times Framework (Manning-Morton & Thorp 2001) was developed on behalf of The Camden Early Years Under Threes Group and provides the practitioner with examples to support their practice. The Framework has the following principles,

- Being involved in life's everyday experience
- Having close, caring relationships with responsive, familiar adults

- Experiencing a wide range of objects with many different properties
- Hands on investigation of the environment, materials and objects
- Interfacing with interesting and interested adults and children
- Feeling secure in a stable physical environment and a consistent psychological environment

(Manning-Morton & Thorp, 2001, Introduction)

These principles are then used as the basis of the document with examples of what they look like in practice and also raising questions for practitioners about their ethos and philosophy when caring for children under three.

Another document used within the analysis of the observations was Birth to Three, Supporting our youngest children (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005). This document is again in narrative format, unlike the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002) which consists of bullet points on cards, and because of this is able to offer the practitioner more depth to aid with their understanding in applying the principles to practice. Looking at the questions that I found to be implicit rather than explicit in Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002) there is a clearer explanation of the relationships that need to be developed within Birth to Three, Supporting our youngest children (Learning & Teaching in Scotland, 2005).

This document states:

It used to be thought that babies really only bonded with their mothers but we now know that babies can bond with a number of important or significant people. Babies can form an attachment with a variety of other including:

- Their mother and father
 - Their grandparents
 - Their brothers and sisters
 - Their foster carer
 - Those who care for them outside the home
- ...through practices that;

- Encourage parental; involvement, such as informal drop –ins, open evenings and events, displays and newsletters
... and through policies that:
 - Include well-thought-out key-person systems that provide continuity, someone for children and their parents to get to know well, and a back-up person in case that special person cannot be there....
- (Learning & Teaching in Scotland, 2005, pp.11-12)

This document also addresses the issues that the parents interviewed commented on in their exit questionnaires. In these questionnaires parents from Sunshines Nursery referred to the lack of communication between staff and parents and also were unsure of what the ‘key person’ system was and how it operated in this nursery.

As my research developed I evaluated the initial framework (Table 4.1) which I had developed using the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002). In my professional role I saw the need to develop an observation framework which covered the age range from 0-5 in preparation for the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfES, 2007) and so I used the Birth to Three elements of this to analyse observations of one child (Table 4.2). The framework that I used asked questions raised in five key documents: Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002), The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfES, 2000), The National Day Care Standards (DfES, 2003) and Every Child Matters (HM Government, 2003) and Key Elements of Effective Practice (DfES, 2005). The idea was to create a framework of questions which would encompass the care and learning for children aged 0-5 in a holistic way. I then refined this document just using the questions relating to children aged under three as the framework for the analysis of two of the

case studies within my research. The framework in Table 4.3 is an original outcome of this thesis

Table 4.3 The second edition of the Framework developed

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING OBSERVATIONS & PRACTICE

BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A healthy child

Are babies/children free to express feelings of joy/grief/frustration/fear?
Are experiences of primary caregivers respected?
Is physical environment clean/safe/uncluttered?
Are resources age appropriate?
Are babies/children able to explore through movement?
Are babies/children encouraged to be independent?
Do babies/children experience their environment from different levels/perspectives?
Do babies/children explore through their senses?
Are babies/children offered a balanced diet?
Is the environment conducive for babies/children to rest & sleep?
Do adults respond with affection when babies/children are distressed?

BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A Skilful Communicator

Do babies/children make eye contact/touch/ cogniz with other babies/children & adults?
Do adults have good relationships with parents/carers? How is this evidenced?
Does the environment encourage a variety of ‘conversations’ to take place?
Do adults model language by echoing?
Do adults respond to babies/children’s own language by interpreting it?
Do adults create situations for babies/children to communicate?
Do adults role-model language for babies/children whilst playing etc?
Do adults use language/songs/stories to communicate with babies/children?
Do adults ‘attempt’ to understand babies/children’s language?
Do adults respond to babies/children’s interests?
Do adults give babies/children choices?

BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A Competent Learner

Do babies/children explore through;-Touch/sight/sound/taste/smell/movement?
Do adults repeat activities for babies/children?
Are babies/children active or passive learners?

Are babies/children encouraged to be curious?
Do adults respond to the cues of the play of babies/children?
Are babies/children able to express themselves through the “hundred languages of children”?
Are babies/children given opportunities to imitate?
Do adults give babies/children time to persevere?
Do adults encourage babies/children to mark make in a variety of ways?
Do adults provide opportunities for children to match, sort, classify & categorise?
Do babies/children have opportunities to engage with role play?
BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A Strong Child
Have babies/children formed attachments with adults?
Are feeding/sleep routines individual to babies?
Do babies/children have 1:1 contact time?
How are babies/children encouraged to explore & investigate?
How do adults respond to babies/children’s actions, expressions & gestures?
How does setting give ‘personal space’ to babies/children?
PRINCIPLES – How are the principles evident in the practice & environment
Parents and families are central to the well-being of the child.
Relationships with other people (both adults and children) are of crucial importance in a child’s life.
A relationship with a ‘key person’ at home and in the setting is essential to young children’s well-being.
Babies and young children are social beings, they are competent learners from birth.
Learning is a shared process and children learn most effectively when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested.
Caring adults count more than resources and equipment.
Schedules and routines must flow with the child’s needs.
Children learn when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices, and respected as autonomous and competent learners.
Children learn by doing rather than by being told.
Young children are vulnerable. They learn to be independent by having someone they can depend upon.

Having developed a new analytical framework (Table 4.3) I used this to analyse observations of another child, ‘Tim’.

This analysis is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

Framework 2

BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A healthy child

Are babies/children free to express feelings of joy/grief/frustration/fear?

- He goes to the toilet and is obviously very proud when he tells me, “I did a wee on the toilet” – he is good levels of self esteem which indicates that the unsettling of today is transitory and that in fact he is secure.

Are experiences of primary caregivers respected?

Is physical environment clean/safe/uncluttered?

Are resources age appropriate?

- He walks round and gets to a house on the floor, he picks up a person, puts it into the house, opens the door, takes it out – opening and closing the gate – he then pushes it through the window
- Tim then gets something else to carry around – he really is a transporter
- The adult starts a game of bubble blowing – they are both really excited by this. Tim has a go at blowing the bubbles and he is very successful, much to everyone’s delight. Tim jumps up and down in excitement
- After this he goes back to the small world where he was playing and starts putting the figures in and out of the house. Whilst doing this he is moving round the table. He now sits down and begins to put pieces of furniture in and closes the door and then windows. He appears to be interested in putting in and closing /opening the doors and windows

Are babies/children able to explore through movement?

- Tim becomes very interested in picking the pasta out of the bowl. His pincer movement is very good and he is precise in his movements
- He puts one of the discs on his head and tries to balance it

- My first impressions are that he is a physically active child – more interested in movement and investigation than engaging in talk – he looks closely and explores his environment.
- He is a physically active child – more interested in movement and investigation than engaging in talk – he looks closely and explores his environment.
- When he first gets outside Tim does a run around the area
- Tim then picks up a ball which he kicks around – he shows good coordination as he kicks the ball
- Tim then turns his attention to getting in and out of the car
- After this Tim goes over to the ball pool and jumps in, he then goes through a series of getting and out of the pool – Tim is really enjoying this play; he is excited when he falls onto the balls. Prior to jumping in he swings his arms back and forth before leaping/diving into the pool. Now when he is preparing to dive in you can see that he is mouthing 1,2,3 jump to himself
- In the ball pool play Tim really challenges himself physically – he is confident in what he can do and is well coordinated
- He starts to put glue on his paper and then goes to gather up the spilt glitter. He has good pincer movement and good hand to eye coordination as he is doing this
- Tim is very animated outside and is playing and interacting with all of the other children. He becomes involved in a game with Amy
- During this game Tim shows that he has good coordination – he is also good at balancing
- A group of children, including Tim go over to where the mattresses are stacked and they are climbing and jumping on and off them. This is a similar gross motor play that Tim was engaged with on the last observation

Are babies/children encouraged to be independent?

- He goes over to the edge of the ball pool and then moves over to the bricks. He picks up some bricks and smiles
- He is independent and the routine of the nursery encourages him in this
- He is asked to go and find his shoes, so he goes round the room looking for them. When they are found the adult helps him to put them on

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<p>➤ He goes to the resource boxes to search for something to use in the sand – it is obvious that he knows exactly what he is looking for. He has it – a small metal scoop which he uses to scoop sand into an ice tray</p>
<p>Do babies/children experience their environment from different levels/perspectives?</p>
<p>Do babies/children explore through their senses?</p>
<p>Are babies/children offered a balanced diet?</p> <p>➤ When I enter the room the children are sitting at the table having their snack – banana. Tim is just going to go and get his chair. He sits down and eats well.</p>
<p>Is the environment conducive for babies/children to rest & sleep?</p>
<p>Do adults respond with affection when babies/children are distressed?</p> <p>➤ Tim bumps his head and so stops playing as he is a bit upset. Amy brings him his muslin. He snuggles in to the adult and soon stops crying</p> <p>➤ When I go into the room it is obvious that Tim is not very happy today. He is crying and asking for his mother.</p> <p>➤ He goes to the adult for a cuddle – the adult talks to him and comforts him and he is settled for a short while. When he appears settled he goes to the other end of the room to talk to the adult. She pacifies him some more and comes to sit with him at the table. I feel that the adult gives some Tim some excellent support and he is very responsive to this. I feel that the support is strong because she knows Tim and is therefore able to respond appropriately.</p>
<p>BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A Skilful Communicator</p>
<p>Do babies/children make eye contact/touch/recognize with other babies/children & adults?</p> <p>➤ Some of the other children have gone to play on the see saws and Tim stands and watches them closely</p> <p>➤ He stands up and looks at me intently – he maintains his gaze as he walks back towards the adult sitting at the painting</p> <p>➤ He makes good eye contact with the adult</p> <p>➤ When he gets out of the car Tim walks over to the climbing frame and stands facing another child on the other side. He bangs the tarpaulin sheet and stretches in – he bangs the tarpaulin and laughs. Tim runs about with another child making da, da, da noises – then there are 3 of them doing this. There is lots of laughter during this period</p>

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<p>➤ Tim then makes eye contact with me and stares for a few seconds. When he walks into the room he goes to stand near another child – it looks as though the two of them are having a conversation. They both look over to me and make sounds – these sounds get louder and louder, they are playing a game with one another and with me. Tim is very happy; he is smiling, enjoying this game and enjoying recognising with the other boy. The two of them stand for a while and shout at me</p> <p>➤ When it is snack time Tim is very sociable, he plays with his neighbour and shares his snack with her</p> <p>➤ He joins in when another child starts shouting</p> <p>➤ He goes to join some other children at a table and then leaves</p> <p>➤ Amy & Tim start to engage with one another. As the observation will show the two of them are very close – they do a lot together and they share jokes with one another. They both go into the ball pool and then they both climb out. Amy follows Tim until she crashes into someone else. Amy & Tim are now playing together and they return to the ball pool</p> <p>➤ The 2 of them continue to follow one another around as they play – they have moved on from parallel play to cooperative play – this is a real friendship</p> <p>➤ This observation has seen a change in Tim he is boisterous, interested, more social and he has moved on from parallel play to a definite social play – the social play and friendship between Tim & Amy is almost visible</p> <p>➤ Tim goes to find Amy and they cuddle and tickle one another</p> <p>➤ Amy and Tim now play hiding with the cloths and the muslin and they play peep boo with the adult</p> <p>➤ Tim is enjoying the social interactions and the physicality of the game – this is a game for boys there are no girls – they have left the area</p> <p>➤ It is obvious that Tim likes being with the other children and that he enjoys this type of play</p> <p>➤ Another child has now got the brush and Tim joins forces with another to try and get the brush back</p> <p>➤ During this observation Tim shows that he is a social child and he enjoys the activity or game if other children are involved. If he wants something he does not get aggressive but he is persistent</p> <p>Do adults have good relationships with parents/carers? How is this evidenced?</p> <p>Does the environment encourage a variety of ‘conversations’ to take place?</p> <p>➤ During this episode Tim does a lot of pointing</p>

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tim asks for more toast by pointing. ➤ As he is playing with the helter skelter Tim makes chattering noises as he describes what is happening to himself
<p>Do adults model language by echoing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When the adult speaks to him Tim echoes some of the words that she is saying – experimenting with the sounds ➤ The adult comments that Tim does a lot of echoing
<p>Do adults respond to babies/children’s own language by interpreting it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tim has a puzzled expression on his face as he is walking around – the adult recognises that he wants his blanket and points to show him where it is – once he has found this comfort he is all smiles. He goes to give the blanket to the adult and she makes it into a scarf for him – he is pleased by this interaction with the adult and especially pleased with the scarf effect and he turns round to show everyone. He begins to pull the comforter over his face – he is really enjoying this play with the adult – he asks her to tie it again when it comes undone. He walks away with the comforter over his head
<p>Do adults create situations for babies/children to communicate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult starts making animal sounds and Tim joins in with the SSSSS for snake ➤ As he does this he makes some babbling sounds ➤ As he is making these patterns Tim is making sounds ➤ Tim asks questions throughout the story
<p>Do adults role-model language for babies/children whilst playing etc?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The next time I can see that he is mouthing Ready, steady, go before he dives – copying the style of the adult
<p>Do adults use language/songs/stories to communicate with babies/children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult is carrying on with the sneezing game and sings ring a roses and when she gets to they all down, Tim does ➤ The adult is starting to sing and Tim joins in with the songs and the actions – he claps with the adult at the end of the songs. He does all of the actions to the wind the bobbin song ➤ Tim then claps and dances – indicating that he wants a song. Tim likes the singing and begins to dance around. He puts the hat on again – he appears to be fascinated by the singing and keeps on clapping

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He goes over to listen to a story being read. When the adult claps, Tim copies the actions ➤ He is looking closely at the book that is being read by the adult. He follows as she turns the pages. When the adult asks questions about the story he responds. He is really concentrating on the book and is not distracted or bothered by those others around him ➤ Tim now goes to pick up a book which he takes to the adult so that they can share it together- it is the Hungry Caterpillar – Tim is enjoying putting his fingers through the holes that the caterpillar has made. He is very interested in looking at the book. ➤ He goes away to get a book which he brings to me. He points at the pictures in the book and shares it with me
<p>Do adults ‘attempt’ to understand babies/children’s language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He “talks” with her
<p>Do adults respond to babies/children’s interests?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The adult tells him to put his hood up – she does it for him. Tim now starts a game as he pulls it down, the adult pulls back up and then Tim pulls it down – he then just goes through the motions by getting the adult to think that he is going to pull it down again. Tim then goes to an area where he thinks that the adult can’t see him. The other adult pulls it back up and then goes outside
<p>Do adults give babies/children choices?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tim makes choices – his are to use both the silver and the yellow paint ➤ He returns to the cutting and then says , ”I’ve had enough”

BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A Competent Learner

<p>Do babies/children explore through; -Touch/sight/sound/taste/smell/movement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The children are then given some pasta to play with as well as some utensils – bowls/spoons etc. Tim bangs the spoon in the bowl and laughs. He tries the pasta. Tim then plays with the bowls putting them in and out of each other. He feels the pasta between his fingers ➤ He has a taste of the glue
<p>Do adults repeat activities for babies/children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An adult is blowing bubbles and Tim sits watching. He is happy and content – he is very intent when watching

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<p>the bubbles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tim then goes off to play with the discs with the adult he likes it when she makes them roll across the room – he goes after the disks and then returns them to the adult for her to roll them again ➤ He puts the hat on over his face – he repeats this over and over ➤ He gets a cup and starts to put the pasta into the cup, then tips it out – he repeats this and then drops the cup. Now he picks up a bowl and repeats the actions.
<p>Are babies/children active or passive learners?</p>
<p>Are babies/children encouraged to be curious?</p>
<p>Do adults respond to the cues of the play of babies/children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He brings me a plate and then waits for me to give it back to him
<p>Are babies/children able to express themselves through the “hundred languages of children”?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When another child is playing on the drums, Tim goes over to join in
<p>Are babies/children given opportunities to imitate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Another child sneezes and the adult makes an ‘atchoo’ sound, Tim echoes the noise of the adult – he repeats the sound and laughs ➤ He then goes off with the adult to get the broom and then stands on the edge watching as the adult sweeps up ➤ Someone sneezes and Tim now starts to make ‘atchoo’ sounds with the appropriate actions. There are lots of smiles, he moves towards the adult and shakes his head in a mirror action of hers ➤ One child makes a banging sound with the teapot against the side of the tray. Tim does the same and then turns to filling the teapot with pasta and then shaking it like a rattle – he carries on filling the teapot with pasta. ➤ He takes one shoe off and jumps into the pool. He repeats this activity – jumping in and then getting out etc
<p>Do adults give babies/children time to persevere?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He concentrates and stays in the tray area for a while. ➤ He sustains this interest until the story has ended ➤ Tim has stayed at this activity for a sustained period

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tim is filling bottles etc using a funnel. He is really concentrating ➤ Tim shows high levels of concentration ➤ There is a look of concentration on his face – he has a purpose to his play.
<p>Do adults encourage babies/children to mark make in a variety of ways?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This is finger painting and it is interesting that Tim just uses his thumb in the paint. He really concentrates and watches his actions intently. He is alternating the thumbs as he puts them in the paint. He swirls his thumb around in the paint and on the paper to make patterns
<p>Do adults provide opportunities for children to match, sort, classify & categorise?</p>
<p>Do babies/children have opportunities to engage with role play?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He smiles and starts giving things to the adult. He comes over to me and gives me a fork and goes to feed me ➤ He goes to drink his “cup of tea” that the other child has given him ➤ He studies the phone for a while and then he “uses” the phone, holding it to his ears – he presses buttons that aren’t there on this phone, this suggests that he is using it as he would the phone at home – he is familiar with these actions so it is obviously a known routine
<p>BIRTH TO THREE MATTERS – A Strong Child</p> <p>Have babies/children formed attachments with adults?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When he reaches the adult he turns round so that she’ll pick him up. He snuggles in on her knee – he has a car in his hand, he drops it, climbs off the adult’s knee to pick it up ➤ He snuggles in to the adult, sitting on her knee ➤ When another child attempts to snuggle in with him and the adult he allows it
<p>Are feeding/sleep routines individual to babies?</p>
<p>Do babies/children have 1:1 contact time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He then goes to another adult for a cuddle

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

How are babies/children encouraged to explore & investigate?

- Tim is more interested in the glue itself rather than the process of gluing – he appears fascinated by the properties of the glue – the way in which it makes his fingers stick together and the way the paper gets stuck.
- He then goes over to the bottles- he is watching what happens when he turns them up and down – he follows the liquid as it moves in the bottle
- He sits down to take his shoes off – very carefully – he undoes the strips and then he gets a bucket and it looks as if he is trying to put them on his feet as if they were shoes
- He is looking at his hand when it is under the water
- When the adult shows the children the water falling through a hole in the tarpaulin, Tim is really interested and watches for a long time, bending down to see the water dripping through
- Tim leaves the area and starts to walk around the room – he finds some pasta pieces on the floor and he becomes very interested in crunching them under his feet – it is the sound of the crunching and the shattering of the pieces that appear to fascinate him – he goes round looking for more pieces. When he can't find them he begins to push them off the table so that he can continue crunching them. There is no recognising during this activity but there is concentration. He sustains this activity long after the others have given up on it

How do adults respond to babies/children's actions, expressions & gestures?

How does setting give 'personal space' to babies/children?

- He walks around the room and finds his comforter again
- He draws comfort from his blanket. He talks with the adult about his comforter – she wants him to return it to his bag, telling him that it may get lost. Tim is very reluctant to do this but is quite happy with the suggestion that he puts it into his drawer – is this because the drawer is closer than his bag? He goes to put it in his tray quite happily and goes to the bathroom

PRINCIPLES – How are the principles evident in the practice & environment

Parents and families are central to the well-being of the child.

Relationships with other people (both adults and children) are of crucial importance in a child's life.

- During this time he smiles and responds to the adults sitting at the table

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He moves and goes to stand next to the adult ➤ He is a content and happy child and appears to be very secure in the atmosphere of the nursery. He doesn't cling to any one adult but he is a social child who enjoys interacting with the adults in the room ➤ He responds well to the adult – he likes the company but he doesn't cling or worry when not involved with her
<p>A relationship with a key person at home and in the setting is essential to young children's well-being.</p>
<p>Babies and young children are social beings, they are competent learners from birth.</p>
<p>Learning is a shared process and children learn most effectively when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ During the painting activity there were some good examples of adult/child interaction to which Tim was very responsive ➤ He turns to the adult to offer her the pasta and then a bowl – the adult now joins him in the pasta play, she holds the bowl and he fills it. The adult now holds the plate flat for Tim so that he can put the pasta on it. The adult starts to drizzle the pasta in tray – Tim copies this action and carries on with it when the adult leaves the area ➤ <i>This is not a challenging activity and so Tim only concentrates and is interested for a few moments. There is concentration whilst he is doing the painting. He goes to wash his hands</i> ➤ Tim is still in the bathroom washing his hands so I position myself so that I can see what he is doing. He is soaping/washing the mirrors and then wiping them. He tells me what he is doing. He squeezes the water out of the cloth (paper towel) – in this activity he is completely absorbed and interested – there is real concentration. There is a purpose to what he is doing. He then pretends to lick the cloth to wipe the mirrors. He sustains this activity for at least 10 minutes – he washes his face and becomes more and more interested in the water and then in washing the floor where some of the water has spilled. The adult has to call him out as the floor is getting wet and this poses a risk – I was pleased that the adult let him sustain this interest if his until it became unsafe ➤ <i>Tim is very boisterous during this period of time – he starts banging the seats with another boy – he is not at all interested in the fact that they are all supposed to be singing. The adult is talking to another child who wants to sing a song to everyone. Other adults come into the area and it settles down a bit but there are several children who do not want to sit still – Tim is now standing looking out of the window. He sits down and starts bouncing up and down – he is constantly moving, he now turns his attention to looking at the pockets on his trousers. He returns to looking out of the window until he can go off into the rest of the</i>

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

<i>environment and play</i>
Caring adults count more than resources and equipment.
Schedules and routines must flow with the child's needs.
Children learn when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices, and respected as autonomous and competent learners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When he wants something Tim is confident enough to ask for what he wants ➤ Tim then indicates that he wants to get down from the table and the activity ➤ Tim indicates that he wants to do another painting by dipping his finger in the paint – he sits down at the table to do another picture ➤ Tim looks very confident, he knows what he wants and so off he goes to play with the other children ➤ He now returns to the adult to have his socks put back on – she explains that his feet will get cold but that he can keep his shoes off if he wants to. The adult then asks him to put his shoes on the side – he does this, but then he brings them back and then takes them away again to put away ➤ He turns to the water tray, pucks up some bubbles, blows them away and then returns to the sand. He has now got a big scoop and he tips it out on to his hand – he now takes the scoop with sand in into the bathroom where he adds water to it. He then tips it out into the sink. Tim sees that he has made the sink dirty so he tries to clean it
Children learn by doing rather than by being told.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tim wants to go round to the other side but he can't get through so he uses solving skills by pushing the tray to create a bigger space ➤ He takes the plate to the adult and then puts the pasta on and off the plate – he is now holding the plate as he does this but he isn't successful as the plate is not flat. He now takes another plate to the adult, returns to the tray and again tries to put the pasta on the plate but it keeps falling off ➤ Tim tries to put his own coat on – he succeeds with one arm and so decides to take it off again to have another go. He struggles getting the second arm in and he take sit off again – he does persevere and is quite happy to do so – it is the adult who asks him if he wants help – he finally succeeds with a little help
Young children are vulnerable. They learn to be independent by having someone they can depend upon.

Table 4.4 Framework 2, analysis of the observations of Tim

Having used the framework (Table 4.2) to analyse the observations of Amy and the framework (Table 4.4) to analyse the observations of Tim, I then decided to analyse the observations of other children in different ways. I decided to use different methods to look at the rest of the observations because I wanted to maintain the narrative style. As referred to in the research methodology I wanted to, ‘... begin with individuals and set(s) out to understand their interpretations of the world around them.’ (Cohen et al, 2000, p.23). Also by conducting narrative style case studies I would be addressing,

... the paucity of evidence about processes and practices in ECEC for children from birth to three years. In particular, the field needs research information about toddlers in educare settings, as well as that exploring the impact of practitioner training on the experiences of children and parents. (David et al, 2003, p.9)

By analysing the observations I was able to be more reflective about the ways in which the children were accessing their environments, the ways in which the adults interacted with them and more importantly how they had developed over the period of time.

I decided to write the observations of the baby at home (Case Study Narrative 3. p. 246) and one of the girls (Case Study Narrative 4. p. 340) attending Sunshines Nursery as a diary. This has enabled me to be reflective about the ways in which the children have developed. As previously stated it is impossible to make generalisations because the children are individuals and I did not select the cohort, it was self selecting. For another case study (Case Study Narrative 2. p.228) at Sunshines I decided to use the observations as an overview of the experiences of

three boys in one day care setting. The final case study (Case Study Narrative 1. p.195) was using the observations of the three children observed at Tiny Feet Nursery. I felt that it was appropriate to do this case study in this way because of the unique environment where I was able to observe these children at the same time, there only being one room which the children access.

Some of the children had left the nursery before the age of three and I stopped the observations when the others reached three because observations after this age were not relevant to my research questions. I stopped observing Dan when his pattern of attendance at the nursery changed and it became impossible for me to continue because of my professional commitments.

The next section will discuss the findings from the interviews carried out with the staff in both of the settings used in this research.

4.5 Analysis of Staff interviews

Analysis of staff interviews are discussed under the following headings:

- Birth to Three Matters
- The 'key person'
- Qualifications and training
- Partnership with parents
- Advantages and disadvantages of working in childcare
- The practice of practitioners

When analysing the staff interviews I used the same approach as used when analysing the parent interviews. I transcribed the tape recorded interviews and then

applied a coding system for the responses so that I could cross reference between personal and setting reflections. The response from the staff to be interviewed was mixed and resulted in a poor response from Sunshines. Out of a total of twelve staff, excluding the manager, only three consented to be interviewed. At Tiny Feet, which is a smaller nursery, all staff that were not sick or on annual leave consented to be interviewed. Excluding the manager four (out of a possible seven) staff at this nursery were interviewed. The purpose of the interviews with the staff was to understand child care from their perspective and to see whether there were any commonalities between their responses and those of the parents.

Staff comments touched on a number of issues which were prompted by the questions asked in the interviews: their knowledge of Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002), their training and qualifications, their understanding of the 'key person' system and how it operates within their settings, their partnership with parents, the advantages and disadvantages of working in childcare and their practice.

4.5.i. Birth to Three Matters

I conducted the interviews with staff in 2004, two years after the introduction of the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002). It was interesting to see the responses that the staff gave about their understanding of it and the ways in which they were using it within their practice. Some of the practitioners commented on how they had found the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002) useful in helping them to understand children's learning and development,

Yes. It's made me more aware what stage they are at and what I should be doing. Like before we started putting it into place we would be cuddling and having the occasional playing, watching them crawl around but now we are actually making sure that we are covering all of the areas of learning. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

It's good because it gives you advice and helps you. I do use it; it gives you ideas of how they develop and what they should be doing. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

I think it's good because it helps us and it also helps to understand the learning of the children it helps us to see it through their eyes... It has a little bit. Like when I'm planning activities I seem to look through it to give me ideas for the children and things like that. You come up with ideas that you would never think of doing. *(Sunshines practitioner)*

I am aware of Birth to Three Matters. I have watched the video. To be honest with you I think it has its purpose, I think its there for reason. I think some of the things like the younger age groups is a bit hard to try. I think all the areas that they've got, The Healthy Child, The Strong Child I think they are all in place for a reason, I think there is a reason for it. *(Sunshines practitioner)*

This practitioner extended her response when asked if she would have found it to be a useful document during her training,

Yes it would have been very useful because when I was doing my NVQ there wasn't really anything around that I was ever shown which explains to you the ins and outs of the curriculum rather than how to achieve certain things for different things for different age groups like birth to three matters does.

Other practitioners recognised the help that the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002) gave them when they were planning for the children,

I think it is alright – it does help with our planning. I didn't know how much about doing observations but we have had to do it in our level 3. The packs have really helped *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

It has been a lot easier, planning in the rooms has been a lot easier because it gives you ideas about what to do if you're stuck on certain, like if you're stuck on the imaginative it gives you ideas so it does and it expands work of the child (*Sunshines practitioner*)

The remaining comments revealed that some of the practitioners were still at the level of understanding and knowing the document.

I think its good – I really didn't understand it at first but it has been broken down and I understand why it is in place now. I just find it hard to follow it – we've just got 0-2's and the over 2's is for the older children so I don't really see it working for the 2-3's but I see it with the under 2's. (*Tiny Feet Practitioner*)

It is here that I have started doing about it. It was when I was doing my placement here that I heard about it. I have not read all of it. (*Tiny Feet Practitioner*)

Yes but I could do with touching up on it. I could do with reading it. (*Sunshines practitioner*)

These responses show that the practitioners were aware of the document and that some thought it was an important introduction to the understanding of the learning and development that takes place in babies and young children. Many of the comments revealed that the adults have had their awareness of the importance of planning and observation raised. The comment about the relevancy of the Framework for children aged two to three is interesting as this has caused many problems for settings that I work with in my professional capacity. In order to comply with Ofsted Inspection outcomes settings must show that if they have a mixed age range that they are using the two documents, Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002) and The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfES,

2000). This has caused problems because the documents use a different language; the introduction of the new Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007) addresses this difficulty as with this document a setting will be able to use one framework to support their observations and planning for babies and young children from birth to five years of age. As the new document states in its introduction,

Recent years have seen significant developments in early years curriculum and standards. The EYFS builds on these and practitioners will recognise continuity with the principles, pedagogy and approach of the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*, the *Birth to Three Matters* framework, and the *National Standards for Under 8s Daycare and Childminding*. These three frameworks are replaced by the EYFS and will be repealed. (DfES, 2007, p, 7)

The practitioners obviously acknowledge the document's introduction to be of value and importance and yet when I asked the parents a similar question there was negativity in their responses.

My wife may know about it I deal in a totally different area. She deals with babies. (*Father of Ben*)

No not heard of. (*Mother of Harriet*)

I think maybe I've seen it somewhere. (*Mother of Josh*)

This suggests that although practitioners may value the document they have not made its value and importance known to parents.

4.5.ii. 'Key person'

In both settings there is a 'key person' system but the comments from the sample interviewed showed a difference in what the staff in each setting thought was the reason for having such a system. At Sunshines Nursery the three members of staff

interviewed all saw the main reason for having such a system to be for administrative purposes.

I think if you didn't have one (key worker system) when it come to doing your development chart there would be one person ending up all the time doing it. Basically it's just to share that work load out so that not just one person is doing it all the time. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

... we don't necessarily say that you P are the only person who can look after his children we don't work it like that its just basically to write up the stages of development folders and the observations we make it our point to make sure theirs is done and if we've got any queries you know about their development then we will be the ones to sort that but we don't say that is your child. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

So I do think it's important and also for the children because if you have 10 children and one member of staff says I'll do ? today and then someone might not have heard that and then the next day someone else will say I'll do an observation on ? and so on Tuesday and Wednesday you get to observations on ? and none on the other children. You need to know who you are focusing on and why. It just makes it easier all round for the team I think. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

This lack of understanding about the role of the 'key person' recognises the need for training around this issue. When one of these practitioners was asked if she felt the system was important she gave the following response.

If I'm honest no. Because I think the whole room works as a team, the staff work as a team they way they look after the children is all done as part of a team. So I don't see why staff should have to be split down with the children to do with the individual child. I think it would be better if it was just done as a team and everyone had. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

Perhaps this comment indicates why the 'key person' system in this nursery was not recognised by any of the parents interviewed and why some of these parents felt that there was a lack of communication between setting and home.

In Tiny Feet Nursery the responses from the staff indicated that they have a better understanding of the 'key person' system and that because of this they recognise the importance of parents' needs to form relationships with the staff. Also it is interesting to note that in these responses there is a consistency about how the 'key person' system works. The first practitioner commented about its use for administrative purposes, as well as recognising the importance of an in-depth knowledge of individual children,

Yes. We have all got children each. I have got three. We are doing different planning for them – so if any of the parents have got any problems they can come to us. It's when it comes to planning – its not like they are our children and all we do is change their nappies or only feed those children. It's much more to do with the paper work. It is important because you can know 3 children more in depth – if they have any problems then you can look into it further than when looking at 9 babies. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

The remaining comments make more mention of forming partnerships and relationships with parents,

Yes. In the baby room we have 4 each and we give parents a letter about us so that they know all about us and our training and if they have any problems or they want to ask anything we should know because they are our children. It is definitely a good system. Because you get to know the parents on a name basis. You get to talk to them. They talk to you. Some of the parents don't know how it works; we had one mother who thought I had to do his nappy or whatever because I was his key worker. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Yes. I have got 4 children and it's like if the parents want to speak to a certain member of staff, it is hard for them to get to know all of them. So if they have a problem they speak to us about it. It is good to have one and it does work. It is good to build up the relationships, like at the end of the day you can tell what sort of day their child has had. If they have got something to tell you they will make the time. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Yes. We get 4 each, sometimes more. Then if the parents have got any problems then they will come to us. Yes I think it is nice for the parents to interact with us, so that they know who to go to. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

4.5. iii. Qualifications and training

Out of the seven members of staff interviewed one was unqualified, two had NVQ 3, (NVQ's assess the skills that candidates demonstrate at work and are available at five levels, from level 1 for routine jobs, to level 5 for jobs with complex tasks and substantial responsibility), one had a Cache diploma, which is a two-year course leading to a nationally recognised qualification in childcare, and three had obtained their NVQ 2, two of whom were studying for their level three. One of the seven practitioners interviewed was a male who was unqualified. I asked each of the staff whether they felt that their training had given them a good understanding of child development. The responses from two of the staff showed that they felt the NVQ approach where they gained their qualification was a good thing, not because it meant that they gained a greater understanding of child development but because they did not want to learn in the classroom.

It has yes because I did it within a setting not sat in classroom, just read out of books. I actually did it in the nursery setting. You get more hands on experience whilst you are training not just reading how to do it out of a text books and just going into a nursery setting where it is done differently anyway. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

It has. I think there was a lot of written work to take in and in my opinion I thought a lot of learning about how children work is to actually do the practical side of it which is why I did a modern apprenticeship. I didn't want to sit in a classroom 5 days a week writing, there was a lot of written work but at the same time there was the practical side to it. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

Other practitioners mentioned the fact that they gained support from the settings where they were working and that this along with the college input gave them a better understanding of child development,

Yes. I have got that from both the nursery and the college. (*Tiny Feet Practitioner*)

The last comment recognises the difficulties that practitioners have trying to fit in training and assignments when they are working full time in a setting. When practitioners are training whilst in a setting the question of quality arises; in-setting training can only be as good as the setting. If practice is bad in a setting then the student is not being exposed to quality childcare practice.

Yes. Both the training and the nursery. It's good to be working in the nursery as you are training. I am doing my NVQ 3 now. I have been doing this since I was 16 I feel that it is dragging on a bit. It's once a week when we are going to college so we do an early shift in the nursery so I don't get home until 10.00pm. I work weekends as well so I have no time to do the college work. It's like fitting it in where I can. (*Tiny Feet Practitioner*)

One of the practitioners commented on the importance for her of the theoretical study that she did at college,

I think the cache route is better because the work that I'd do with the curriculum because I was in college 4 days a week – so I did more of the work but I did placements as well. (*Tiny Feet Practitioner*)

Linked to the practitioners' training is the question asked as to why they had chosen to go into childcare in the first place. Three of those interviewed gave the typical response that it was a liking of children that made them chose this as a career.

Well I had such a great experience in school with a great teacher. I am also the oldest I got used to having babies around I wanted to carry it on. When I was in primary school the teachers were just so kind I just wanted to do it.
(Tiny Feet Practitioner)

Because I enjoy being with young children. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Because I like working with children and I didn't want to work in an office.
(Tiny Feet Practitioner)

One responded that she 'fell' into child care because of her need to find a job,

To be honest it was lack of money and I needed to get into a job quickly. I was looking through a newspaper and I found one in another nursery and I realise that I am a big kid at heart and I really enjoyed it, so I stuck at it and I started on my qualification. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

I also asked what the practitioners felt were their greatest strengths in working with children. The responses ranged from comments about being patient to considering themselves like children and that this quality enabled them to interact and forge better relationships with the children in their care. Three of the practitioners related this to their own child-like qualities,

I'm like a big kid myself. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

I am bubbly with them. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Well I'm a big kid myself so I can relate to children. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

Others thought that an empathy with children was important but that patience was the ultimate strength needed to work with young children,

Patience is one. Being firm, when they have a tantrum being able to sit down with them and talking to them. I actually really get on well with the children so I reckon it is talking to them. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

I'm crazy. I think you have to be crazy to work with children you have to be weird. I must admit I do have quite a bit of patience and I think that helps a lot. But generally because I'm just happy. Obviously if a child sees someone around who's happy who's willing to sit down and play with them.
(Sunshines Practitioner)

One of the practitioners interviewed was male and his comments about his strengths are interesting in that he relates them to his gender,

When I worked in Stoke my supervisor said no one knew what to say to you when you first walked in. I said what I go to the toilet a few times a day like you I have to eat. I breathe, I sleep I do my hair in the morning, aftershave you know - there is such a stigma about being a guy I'm just myself I don't put on any barriers or false pretences. Whether that's strengths or not it is sort of. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

4.5. iv. Partnership with parents

Having asked the practitioners about the way in which they operated the 'key person' system, which revealed that many of them did not see the partnership with parents as having an influence on what they did within the setting, I asked them directly whether they felt that they had good partnerships with parents and what this was like in their setting. All of those interviewed were positive in their responses about parents and saw that it was important and that all felt that they have good relationships with parents.

I think it's really valuable to get to know the parents because if you know the child – it's like being an auntie or someone that they know. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Yes. It is nice here. You can conversations with them, not just about the child. They come in and ask you things. I was talking to a parent last night for about 10 minutes. It is nice when they come in and they know that we are caring. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Yes. A good partnership with parents is when a parent comes in you take the time out to go and greet them see how the child's been that's in the morning and

at the night time when they come to pick their child up you go and greet them again and also let them know how the child has been during the day. Not just let the parent come, drop the child off and go and at night time pick them up and go and not say anything. It is important. (*Sunshines Practitioner*)

The male practitioner did recognise that for him there were some additional problems that he had to overcome in order to build effective relationships with parents,

Some go, 'Oh my god a man doing a nappy, he cleans!'but if they've got a problem with that that is their problem. I just be myself and that tends to work. I don't change myself for anyone. There is only so much I can do to reassure them that everything is fine and hunky dory. I just let my work do the talking. (*Sunshines Practitioner*)

The practitioners also made comments about the lack of time that they felt that parents in general gave to showing an interest in their child's time in the nursery. In many ways these are very judgemental statements.

... its like if you send pictures home then its oh another one to stick on the wall and it just seems like you send pictures home and they don't really and its going to sound really nasty but its just like they don't care, its just another picture to stick on the wall. (*Sunshines Practitioner*)

Some of them are worried because they are going to get a parking ticket and grab them and go. (*Tiny Feet Practitioner*)

4.5. v. Advantages and disadvantages of working in childcare

When interviewing the staff I was interested in what they saw as the advantages and disadvantages of working in childcare. The hours for the practitioners are long and all of those interviewed work a shift pattern, working either 8.00 – 4.00 or 10.00 – 6.00. Those who commented on the hours said that they were not bothered by this

but they were concerned about the lack of pay for what is a hard, stressful and responsible job,

This sort of job isn't well paid which I totally disagree with. You sit on your arse, typing on a computer all day making web sites and get quadruple what I'm on. The pay. My friend is working in an office and she only went to college for a year and she is on £6 an hour. So it is a bit frustrating but because I like it so much I just cope with it. I am fine with the hours. We change the shift pattern so it is more even. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

The pay. The hours are fine. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

The pay- lack of pay. No I don't find the hours long, I was doing more at my other nursery. We all get stressed out but we all help each other. It is good that we all have got good working relationships – if I am stressed out somebody else will help me and take over what I am doing so that I can have a bit of a rest, chill out, have a cup of tea and get back. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

The lack of pay is recognised by one practitioner informing me that she had to supplement her nursery pay by working at weekends,

The pay is not good. The hours are long but they are everywhere. The good thing is that it is Monday to Friday, but it is bad pay which is why I work at week ends as well. It is not an easy job – people think it is easy but when you have got the planning it can get quite stressful. I do enjoy it. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

All of those interviewed talked about the team spirit within the nursery and as in the comment above, about the support that they get from their managers and colleagues. This latter point was more evident in the responses from the staff at Tiny Feet, where all of those interviewed stressed the importance in their working day of the support that they received from management. Perhaps this is why in this setting there is low staff turnover, which again leads to consistency for children and families,

Just how open we are. There is no atmosphere. It is a really nice place to work. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

The managers will do anything to help you. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

I like the fact that it is open planned and we all get on well really well. We all get on with the parents. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

The team work. It is really nice in here. You are really able to enjoy your work and the people that you are working with. You actually come in and you enjoy it. We all get on with each other. I get on with the manager and the staff. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Two of the staff from Sunshines Nursery talked about the friendliness of the staff, but the 'aside' comment from the first practitioner suggests that this is a fragile situation.

It's got a good team over there and it needs to be kept. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

It's a really nice and friendly setting all of the staff are friendly. *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

4.5.vi. Practice of practitioners

In the interviews I asked the practitioners about their practice of observing and planning for the children in their care. In my professional role these are the areas which most practitioners struggle with, many of them seeing this as an onerous part of their job and one which many of them think is unnecessary in their care of children. This lack of understanding about observation and planning is voiced more by those working with the younger children. One of the practitioners interviewed voiced this opinion explicitly when she said,

I think for the younger ones I don't think there's a point. The likes of the babies I don't see, I don't think there should be as much planning as there is. Just because a lot of the babies routines when so young like they are downstairs and in any nursery it's around them when they eat when they sleep its really hard to plan the physical development, the emotional development and trying to fit everything into their daily routine. I don't think there's any need to do it. Probably when they get to 12 months when they start exploring when they start to learn things then yes ... *(Sunshines Practitioner)*

This comment was made by one of the more qualified and experienced practitioners but was not representative of the comments from the rest of those interviewed.

No, because if we didn't have the planning the children could be doing the same activity over and over again. They don't have a variety then. If you go in on a morning and think what shall we have out today, what shall we do today you might think of the same ideas over and over and not have a variety but if you write the planning at least you know what you are getting out, you know what you are doing you are not struggling. We all do it between us. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

Another practitioner agreed with the above comment seeing the importance of planning and observing as an organisational tool rather than something that could be used to help babies and young children develop and feel more emotionally safe within their out of home environments.

...it is good to have planning so that you know what you are doing and you can do your observations and you know what you are doing the next day. But sometimes if we've not done it because we have been too busy ... *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

In their responses two of the practitioners, although recognising the importance of observing and planning for children, did refer to the difficulties that there are in managing these systems within their working day. In the private sector it is unusual

for staff to be given non contact time in order to observe and plan or to meet with colleagues to discuss children and what their next steps might be.

No, I can see the purpose its just annoying having to do it – if everyone is having a bad day, they are all screaming, it is hard to write up but I can see the purpose of it because you can see where the child is up to and any physical problems – it's good that everyone knows exactly where they are. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

We do try but we are so busy. We have got our own files for our children and when we have got a spare minute or we see something we just jot it down and then we can do an observation. We have them all in a file and if we see them doing something we try to take that a step further. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

I was interested in knowing the opinions and practice of those interviewed to see whether these had an impact on the children that I was observing. It was also interesting because I was conducting observations and I wondered whether the practitioners would be addressing any of the things that I observed in these particular children. Practitioners from Tiny Feet Nursery made more references to using the observations that they did to plan for the next steps in children's learning and development.

It is to see what they are good at and what they could improve on ... *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

... we observe and write it up as we are going along. We use them to look back to see where they have developed their learning and then you can put the learning into the activity. *(Tiny Feet Practitioner)*

The responses from the practitioners are interesting in that some of them are not able see that care and learning are inseparable; that babies and young children will

only learn and develop if they are emotionally safe and secure and if their physical needs are catered for.

4.6. Analysis of interviews with managers/proprietors

When interviewing the managers/proprietors of the two settings I applied the same method of coding as with the analysis of the parental and staff interviews. When I interviewed the managers/proprietors I wanted to ascertain their philosophy when applied to the ways in which a setting is run as well as the important issue of staffing.

Analysis of parent interviews are discussed under the following headings:

- Staffing issues
- Staff training
- Birth to Three Matters
- Partnership with parents
- Management role

Table 4.5 An over view of the issues that the managers discussed in the interviews.

Issue	Sunshines		Tiny Feet			
	Problem	Not a problem	Not mentioned	Problem	Not a problem	Not mentioned
Paper work	√			√ - But has strategies		
Being a proprietor/manager	√				√	
Time to be involved in child care	√				√ - Major part of role	
Giving time to staff training	√					√
Staff understanding roles	√ - Including her having to cover in kitchen etc				√	
Difficulty in recruiting	√			√ - Poor levels of applications		
Importance of 'key person'					√ - Rates seen as important	
Partnership with parents	√ - Bases this on the number of complaints				√ - Proactive to make sure they are involved	

4.6. i. Staffing issues

In the interviews with the managers the first question that I asked was related to what they were looking for in their staff teams. It was interesting that both of those interviewed did not put qualifications as one their high priorities. Their first priority was the more abstract quality of how staff form relationships with children.

Someone who is comfortable with children first of all. We don't always have to have a qualified member of staff which sometimes makes the recruiting a lot easier. People who are comfortable, who can string a sentence together when they are speaking to you, who can communicate – we just take it from there. *(Tiny Feet manager)*

To me is somebody who's got that natural ability with children, to me it doesn't matter as much that they've got the qualifications as well as the experience its when you see that natural link with the children and the way the children are with the member of staff. *(Sunshines manager)*

As both of the managers felt that a natural disposition was an important ingredient when employing staff I asked whether they carried out observations of practitioners with the children before offering them a position.

It depends how quickly we need to take on a member of staff. It depends when they can start. We actually have 2 members of staff who came to work to do supply first of all before they came to work with us on a full time basis. This was very useful. What you get on an application form is not always what you get turning up at the door. *(Tiny Feet manager)*

Part of the interview process I ask the candidate to go into the room and spend time in the room which is also a good thing to see if they have got that natural ability to work with children It's a technique I've bought in because I have interviewed people in the past who were brilliant at interview but not very good with the children. So I bought that in- it's been a good learning role for me. *(Sunshines manager)*

As the responses indicate the managers prefer the luxury of being able to see the practitioners working with the children before employing them but because there is a shortage of available practitioners they are not always able to do this.

We have had some dreadful applications. It is very, very difficult to get staff. We have previously had a high turnover of staff but not now. We have quite a settled staff at the moment *(Tiny Feet manager)*

When discussing the staff within their settings the managers reveal the difficulty in overseeing the setting as a whole and monitoring what is happening within the rooms as far as planning, observation and interaction are concerned. One manager is reflective about how she should be monitoring what is going on in the rooms but because of her other duties and responsibilities she finds it impossible to implement this.

... language in the baby room doesn't get picked up I'm not saying that they don't talk to babies but I want more so I have moved the staff round.
(*Sunshines manager*)

When I've got the time to do it then that is what I would like to do. To find out what is going on because sometimes I feel that I don't know what is going on because I don't get that time to spend in the rooms. (*Sunshines manager*)

The other manager had different reflections about how she monitors both the practice and the setting.

We have formal and informal staff meetings so if we see something going wrong in an area we usually talk about it there and then as to why that happened. Where did it go wrong, that was a good idea how can we extend that the next time? We will do it either there and then or put it down for the next staff meeting. We have individual area meetings and meetings with every one together. (*Tiny Feet manager*)

Yes. The deputy takes the responsibility for the over 2's and we will review it all. We will have a word before we do the planning. We review as it is getting done at the end of each topic and the same with the under 2's planning, we sit and talk about it so that I know what we are all doing. All of the staff are involved in the planning. (*Tiny Feet manager*)

This manager placed a value on the way the nursery is structured which enables her to monitor practice more effectively,

But with being so open plan it is hard to miss anything. If you don't see what is going on you can hear it. (*Tiny Feet manager*)

This last comment about the opportunity to observe, orally as well as visually, what is going on in the nursery is another reason why having all of the children in the same environment as opposed to age related rooms is an illustration of meeting everyone's needs: the manager can monitor the setting easily, the children have fewer transitions, the parents are able to form longer relationships with the staff team, the children are able to maintain relationships with siblings who may also attend the setting and the children are exposed to activities and resources which challenge them.

4.6. ii. Staff training

I asked the managers for their opinions on the quality of the training that staff had received in order to gain their qualifications. Their responses link strongly to what they look for in a prospective team member. The manager from Tiny Feet Nursery made the following response,

I think the standard of training (and it makes me seem about 50) is disgraceful compared to when I did my NNEB. They don't seem to understand the basics of looking after a child. Sometimes they don't know what basic needs are. What do you do when a child cries? Giving them too much to eat or not giving them anything to eat. Or running over to them the minute they cry, they don't know the difference between any of the cries.

In her response this manager also reflected upon the standard of applications that she received as she felt that applicants showed poor standards of literacy. She also

commented on the way in which colleges prepare students for their work with young children and that she has to retrain them in order for them to have good practice,

Answering questions for the children, not letting them speak. Sitting doing their work for them – we keep telling them it doesn't matter what it looks like; it is the children's work. When a new member of staff comes in for their induction or a new student they get told what they can or can't do. The first thing is to let the children speak for themselves, let them do what they can do. We try to pass this on to staff so that they know what their roles are.

Both managers felt that they had to retrain the practitioners when they were in the setting. This again raises the question about where NVQ students are accessing their placements, if they are in a poor quality setting then they learn bad practice and according to one response,

I don't think they are given very much support. I think the lecturers have to get them through the course and if they can get their exams at the end of it, I think the lecturers feel that they have done their job. (*Tiny Feet manager*)

4.6. iii. *Birth to Three Matters*

As a follow on to asking the managers about the quality of staff qualifications I asked them whether their staff were acquainted with the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002). One of the managers felt that in her setting the practitioners were offering the principles of the Framework before it was published because it reflected the ethos and philosophy of the setting. The other manager, however, revealed that in her setting there was not this level of understanding and that they needed more training,

...it's like the Birth to Three Matters we're following it and I think for the staff to attend a training course on it would be more beneficial than getting it

third hand from me. The files are there which they use but probably not as much as they should do but it's also because they all don't fully understand and in all probability I myself don't understand (*Sunshines manager*)

4.6. iv. Partnership with parents

When talking to the manager/proprietors about their relationships with parents there was a distinct difference in what they were doing to forge relationships with parents and also the ways in which they were proactive in making these relationships more meaningful. At Sunshines Nursery the manager admitted that they should be doing more than they were to develop this partnership.

I think it's alright but I think it could be improved I think the records, yes we've got the daily diaries and yes they do ask what has been going on. Send out newsletters more to let them know what is going on in the nursery, maybe arrange some open days to look at the files and more fundraising – so that parents get involved really. Maybe to invite them to come in as a parent helper but a lot of them are working parents. But everybody seems happy but I'm sure there's more that can be done. (*Manager of Sunshines Nursery*)

This manager appears to be basing her development in this area on whether or not she has had any complaints from the parents. This is interesting when looking at the comments that three of the parents from this setting made on the exit questionnaire.

No meetings with manager, it did say there would be two meetings a year to meet with parents to discuss issues. Poor communication between staff and parents. Communication between staff and parents was non-existent (*Parents of Amy*)

...give more feedback on the child's progress and also daily activities. (*Parents of Tim*)

... improve developmental communication (*Parents of Mark*)

The manager/proprietor at Tiny Feet Nursery, however, obviously viewed this as something important although her response does suggest that she feels that parents themselves do not make the time for this relationship to develop,

I think we have a very good partnership with parents. Parents can pop in before the baby is starting. We can do home visits with them. We have an open door policy. We had a far higher take up of home visits when we first opened now the parents once they have got a place, they come to drop off on the nearly the first day they are going to work. So we don't have the home visits on the go that we did before *(Manager of Tiny Feet Nursery)*

The reference here to home visits before the child attends the setting is interesting in that not many private nurseries use this practice. When I questioned her further on this, her response again shows the importance that she attaches to forming relationships with parents and giving time to enable this to happen.

It is more relaxed with the parents; you got more accurate information from them as well. A home visit could be a 5 minute visits or it could be as long as they want. It depends on the length of time the parents have got to spend. If they are coming into the nursery to talk to you we try to put the time in so that we can give them as long as they want. It is more difficult if they pop in on spec. We get lots of information from the parents. We are putting a format together where the key worker is known in advance and the key worker would then take over the initial visit. *(Manager of Tiny Feet Nursery)*

The manager's confidence in these relationships was confirmed by one of the exit questionnaires, where Martin's mother made the following comments, "...very open. Approachable staff. 'Big family' style approach. Close and personal care for the children." *(Mother of Martin)* and "Nursery staff are very supportive, flexible and approachable. I am given positive as well as negative feedback which is important for consistency ..." *(Mother of Melanie)*

As the manager of Tiny Feet Nursery acknowledges the 'key person' system also has an impact on the relationships that settings have with parents. The responses from the managers about the 'key person' system highlight the difference in practice between the two nurseries, in particular the importance that they have towards including parents and forming relationships

Previously we took on everyone and then we would scatter them out- give them that responsibility and that was solely because we weren't happy with the staff. We are happy with the staff now – we are happy to give them responsibility, we weren't to begin with. When there is a vacancy in whatever age group we will have a look as to who has got the vacancy, what skills the staff have got – do we think they are going to be recognising the parents, is there anything that could rub them up the wrong way, whether there is any problem or issue with the children – if it means children with special needs, going to meetings such as child protection it would probably go to a more experienced member of staff. It is working. It was difficult to begin with when we weren't too sure of the staff. People ended up with a lot of children and others didn't, we had to explain to the staff why they didn't have children in their group. It is evening out now. *(Manager of Tiny Feet Nursery)*

This response shows how the manager is aware of the skills of her team and how she effectively uses these skills to ensure that the children in their care are safe and secure. The other nursery, however, is more ambivalent about the 'key person' system.

Yes we do. We generally split – in the baby room for instance there are 3 members of staff, they sat down and did it between themselves. Obviously there are some children who bond better with some people more than others and that's the method that's being done. Generally the numbers are such that each member of staff seems to know what is going on and know all of the children anyway – it is a key worker system in that they do their observations and their records but it's not worked that those are your children. They work within the room with all of the children. *(Manager of Sunshines Nursery)*

These differences in how the two settings form relationships with parents and how they establish relationships with the children is reflected in the parents' reflections of their experiences with out of home care. In my professional work with a range of settings I frequently meet settings who say that they do not operate a 'key person' system because they feel that this means that practitioners only form relationships with 'their' children. This is contrary to all research which focuses on the importance of children forming close relationships and attachments.

4.6. v. *Management role*

In the interviews with the managers/proprietors I asked them how they saw their role within the nursery. I felt this was important because it is the philosophy and ethos that people in these positions hold that has one of the greatest influences on the way in which staff engage with children and their families and is therefore core to the experiences and perceptions of all those involved. I have quoted their responses in full as I feel that they reveal the differences between the two nurseries.

General dogsbody don't know really its as a manager I want to give staff lots of training opportunities which is what we've talked about recently because a lot of them are not taking up training and I've told them now that they are going to take on training to keep their morale up. Try and – at the minute I don't feel I do much as a manager because I'm either in here doing paper work when I've got a spare minute or I'm in the kitchen cooking. I feel there should be more input in the room with the staff to find out how they are feeling and finding out the issues that they got because they are rushing about all of the time but then again I also want to build the nursery up because it is my nursery I'm not just the manager in a setting it makes it harder because I see things I don't like seeing like the dust, the cleanliness side really in the nursery because of the situation that I am in having to run around and doing everything whereas ,managers employed in a nursery have the role as a manger to sort out staffing to sort out training and making sure that the planning is being done properly and making sure that its not just

being wrote on paper and not being carried out. I'd like to take the role as a manager and not as a nursery owner. (*Manager of Sunshines Nursery*)

It's to care for children, enhance their development as much as possible with what we have available here and to build up a comfortable relationship with the children. Obviously with the staff – we all work very similar. The paper work does impinge on my role. The telephone ringing it takes you away from the children. I try to do paper work on very quiet days or first or last thing in the day. (*Manager of Tiny Feet Nursery*)

It is apparent from these comments that the manager of Sunshines is not giving herself the opportunity to impose her ethos and philosophy upon the setting and the staff because of outside pressures, whereas the manager of Tiny Feet is aware that these obstacles have to be dealt with at times that do not impinge on the children, the staff or the setting in general.

The two settings involved in the study were similar in that they were both run by proprietor/managers but very different in the ways in which they operated; Sunshines had multiple rooms whereas the care in Tiny Feet was offered in one large area. The responses from those interviewed highlighted these differences. In contrast to the settings the parent interview and case study of Simon is a 'stand-alone' study.

4.7 Interview with Mother of Simon who was cared for at home

The last interview that I carried out was with the mother who was caring for her child in the home. This interview is analysed separately because the circumstances are completely different and the questions were necessarily different.

This interview with Ruth took place 3 weeks before the birth of her third child. She already has a son aged 4 and a daughter aged 2½. The interview took place in Ruth's home on July 19th 2004.

4.7.i. *Childminders, day nurseries and playgroups*

As Ruth already had two children it was important to establish how she had cared for them when they were born. When her first child was born Ruth had returned to work and initially accessed care for him through a childminder. Her comments about how this felt were interesting in that she commented on the difficulties involved in selecting someone to care for your child in their home.

It just seemed to me such a personal thing and that when I actually came to think about childminders I was overwhelmed by the fact that you almost had to interview the childminder and I'm not very comfortable with that sort of thing because I find it very hard to sort of well to be critical of people really when I appreciate there are different ways of doing things and I sort of vaguely knew what I was looking for but at that time wouldn't have known how to probe that through questions, so I wasn't really comfortable with going through the whole interview process of childminders so I think I assumed that I would go to private day nursery ...

Following on from this Ruth had her decision questioned when a colleague recommended a childminder. This information meant that Ruth could go into the childminder's home without these initial worries,

... one of my colleagues said that their child was leaving the childminder and a very local childminder close to where we used to live. I decided that I felt comfortable enough to go and talk to her about it and just basically when I went in just felt like that she was able to tell me much more than I was needing to ask her, she gave me a lot of information to start with.

Having decided to go through with this 'interview' process Ruth was able to come to a decision without pressure,

She showed me things; she showed me pictures of the children, the whole, basically had a guided tour of the house, where everything was. It just made me feel, she put me at ease really and made me actually, I suppose she was selling to me but basically in a way that made me feel I was under no pressure whatsoever and I didn't feel like, I almost felt like I had to grab her because I felt like she was not desperately wanting to have me because there would be other people that she could find so she wasn't desperate for children and that made me feel a bit better, the fact that she wasn't pushing me to make any decision at all, she left it open she gave me sort of a 2/3 week window to make a decision to go back and have another look and I actually went back when she had the children with her and took Luke and he just looked so settled with the whole thing.

When I asked Ruth if this had been a joint decision between herself and her husband she commented that if they had been going to look at day nurseries Nick would have been involved but he felt that with a childminder it was much more of a personal issue and that it was Ruth who needed to build up these relationships, especially as his job means that he works shift patterns. Ruth herself later commented on this personal aspect when I asked her about the advantages or disadvantages of using a childminder.

I think the pros are that, very much that personal relationship and the fact that you do basically get the ins and outs of everything that has gone on in the day. You can see the sort of relationship building with the childminder and especially when they are that much younger that was really important, it was obviously that thing of going back to work in the first place and knowing that Luke was happy with somebody and they would be the person that got to know him and his bits and what he liked and everything and the way he liked to do things.

The only disadvantage that Ruth felt with using a childminder was the breaking of this relationship. For Ruth this problem did not arise because when her son was two,

a time when she felt that he needed more than the childminder could offer, they moved areas and she was on maternity leave expecting her daughter. This meant that when they moved her son was able to access a day nursery and when she returned to work when her daughter was nine months old she also began to attend.

This meant that Ruth had used both a day nursery and a child minder and I was interested in her reasons for choosing a day nursery and how she felt this experience compared with the childminder. Her responses show that choice is sometimes a luxury; she was moving areas in November and was looking for places for both children and frequently her choice was restricted by the availability of places.

Having found some places to visit I asked her about the criteria that she employed and also her reflections of the different nurseries. Her first response referred to the appearance of the setting,

One of the ones I went to was a very new nursery that was set up and that I didn't take to really. The staff were very, very young obviously all new – beautiful place, beautiful set up, very well resourced and the person who showed me round, she was probably the manager was very good at sort of selling but I wasn't convinced that what I was seeing matched up with what I was being told and although to be fair it was early stages, they were setting up.

As Ruth developed her response she made references to the staff and their interactions with the children, which is reminiscent of the responses from the other parents interviewed,

There were just things like they didn't stop talking when I went in the room, they were all chatting amongst themselves and the children were playing, I thought well if they are not going to do that when I go in and you know have any expectations that that was what you might do when there was a parent

coming round or that they weren't necessarily going to be doing that when I wasn't there and when the children were there.

When she visited the next nursery the official regime had an impact on her decision,

So I wasn't really happy with that and the other one I went to see I just felt that I was being given too many rules really of how I would be expected to behave. The things like the pick up times mattered, the payment – all those things were what came across to me rather than actually getting me to feel for the nursery and then make those decisions afterwards. So I just felt that the priorities were slightly different.

In making her final decision Ruth weighed all of these disadvantages and ultimately felt that she did not have much of a choice, her dislike of factors in other settings made her select the 'best of the bunch'.

So the one we went for in the end just seemed to balance those things really; there were those things to discuss but I was given as long as I wanted really to look round, ask questions and just felt that the children looked as if they were engaged all the time, they were focused and it was a really happy atmosphere. So I didn't really have a huge range of choice that one stood out for me.

In her reflections about the effectiveness for her children Ruth stated that,

I think it was a great setting. There are always things that perhaps you would do differently or that you would ask to have different but given that they were catering for the needs of so many different children, so many different families, there wasn't a huge turnover of staff, there was consistency, Luke loved it and he is a really fussy child in terms of, he would let me know if there was – he isn't backwards in coming forwards if he doesn't like something. The fact that he enjoyed it, you know they were both upset when they left. I feel that it was a very positive experience for them and it was definitely the right choice to make at the time.

Having had the experiences of a childminder and a day nursery for her first two children Ruth decided not to return to work when Simon was born. Having made

this decision her daughter, Millie, left the day nursery to start at a local playgroup, whilst Luke had started to attend the local maintained nursery school. Ruth made the following comments about Millie's time in the playgroup,

She's just started she does a couple of afternoons. I love that. I think that's my favourite set up really. I think it's because she has a bit of both really, I have the time at home with her but the playgroup has got a very good reputation that she goes to and its fantastic, its only a church hall, but its all set up and with access to all the things that you have in nursery apart from outdoor play, that's the only thing they can't do but she's only there for two and a half hours and she absolutely loves it. She's only been there a few weeks and I thought she might have difficulties because she's been at home with me for 5 months but I thought she might struggle with me and going somewhere new but they do have this parent and toddler group there that she's been going to with me so she's used to being in the place and she's seen the staff and now she's sort of progressed up to being there on her own.

When reflecting on all of these child care experiences I asked Ruth what she felt to have been the best combination and why,

Yes (the part time playgroup sessions with the rest of time spent within the home) I think so; I think it allows for the best of both worlds really. I say that Luke really needed more than the childminder in the home but private day nursery which was basically 8.00 -5.30 I felt was too long and so to have a bit of both and to have access to group situations and all the resources and all the things that are there in that setting for short periods of time and at her age is ideal ... In terms of functioning with their peers and all the things about independence and her actually experiencing that life is different from being just with me and that she has to negotiate things and that she has to put up with things that she wouldn't choose to do but she actually, I think those have been the real benefits of it that they've actually grown up in a different way than they would have with me and that that hasn't undermined anything that I've done.

Ruth goes on further to relate the benefits of this mixed system to the benefits that it has given her children when they have started to attend full time school in the

maintained sector and also the exposure to the approaches of different people, which she feels gives her children a more flexible approach to the adults that they come into contact with.

It's just been a different way and I think in terms of them being ready to go to school that flexibility of being able to adapt to different situations, different people's expectations and ways of managing them and the opportunities they get – I mean even the way people discuss things or approach things completely different from how I would and I just think the benefits of that must be huge.

These comments did not mean that Ruth had negative feelings about her use of the childminder, on the contrary she felt that she could not replicate the experiences that she had had with Luke's childminder,

Childminder but only a certain type of childminder, I wouldn't have just gone to the childminder for the sake of it. If I hadn't have been happy with it I think I would have preferred day nurseries better than a childminder I wasn't a 100 % happy with so to have the luxury of a fantastic childminder was great.

4.7. ii 'Key person'

In the reflections that Ruth had about the day nursery I asked her if she could comment on the 'key person' system within that particular nursery and if as far as she was concerned it was effective and beneficial in building relationships with those adults who were caring for her children. It was apparent from her response that this was an ineffective system and that as a parent it gave her no advantages in building these relationships.

I don't think it was the strongest key worker system I have ever seen. I think, I knew who the key worker was but I don't feel that there was an awful lot that I gained from having that person as Luke's or Millie's key worker.

As Ruth reflects further on the 'key person' system she does acknowledge that the system worked for Millie mainly because she was younger at the time of entry to the nursery. Again this is reminiscent of the way in which the other parents' felt about their experiences in general within the nurseries; everything was alright when their children were younger but as they grew older these relationships broke down or failed to be important.

Millie's probably was because she was that much younger and there was a lot more discussion with the key worker about where she was up to and how she was doing and things that had happened. Luke, it became a little bit obsolete as he got slightly older because they all really knew what was going on and I suppose I have seen key worker systems where it is a lot more stronger in a sense that parents have been sought out to be told things or to be updated. I didn't ever feel that I had that sort of relationship with the key worker to get that many benefits from it. If I needed I would have just asked somebody in the room and they would have given me the information.

Again it seems that the 'key person' system is only being operated as lip service and that all the research about children and parents building relationships with carers is being ignored.

Practitioners need to be able to:-

Understand attachment and the importance of a child being special to at least one significant person in order to promote resilience. (David et al, 2003, p.138)

4.7.iii. Choices

I asked Ruth about her decision to return to work. It was clear that one of the reasons for staying at home with Simon was that with his birth she would have the needs of three children accessing different sessions at different sites which meant

that her life as a mother was now being ruled by logistics and that to return to work would entail accessing different forms of childcare.

Yes. Definitely, definitely I mean to say once Millie's in school the thought of perhaps doing half days or a few hours a day would be possible because it would only be childcare for one but I'm not very keen on using the after school clubs and all that, all the bitty things you know that – I'd much rather keep a level of stability. I think the more people that there are it just gets very confusing ... I think the logistics of it being a third and the fact that my flexibility of decision making isn't just round the baby is going to be a big impact.

Another of Ruth's concerns about accessing childcare once two of her children were in full time school revolved around the growing 'social' life of the older children.

This is an issue that many parents confront as their children get older and are beginning to access more extra curricular activities outside of the normal school day.

Luke is now doing swimming lessons after school – all those sort of things. Now my availability and my flexibility to do what I would have done with one baby is different. I think the fact that I'm not working gives me an awful lot of flexibility that I wouldn't have had. I mean Millie and I go to parent toddler groups and I would aim to continue with that and whilst she's at playgroup there will be all sorts of other groups like baby massage. So I'm hoping that there would be the baby in the morning, 2 in the afternoon and 3 of them after school, so the idea would be that I try to put some things in for each of them at those times. But being realistic it is going to be completely different

It is apparent that Ruth and her husband had considered the needs of all of their children within their plans, particularly ensuring that they had continuity of care and not to involve multiple carers. Within this decision it was important for me to ask Ruth questions about her personal feelings within this new stage of her life. She

expressed her feelings as a 'juggling' act where she has to place her children's individual needs at the forefront,

I think I have to come much more aware of the realism of these choices and the fact that these choices are no longer made on the perfect scenario and I think for me its going to be – there's going to be a lot more juggling, a lot more trying to be conscious of what each of them are receiving, when they are receiving it and from who and how.

It is only when she has dealt with the children that she reflects upon the impact upon her personally,

I think obviously my energy levels will be quite so high in terms of being able actually to spend time doing things with them. It really is something I haven't really thought about, my perspective because I feel that I do know that this very much a sort of stage in my life and I don't have to spend it being forever and once the baby is in sort of playgroup or nursery class, I feel that that will be my time to sort of go back and do – I mean I have been off for 6 months already and I can't believe its been that long – its actually only another 4 or 5 times what I've just done then it will all be out of my control and into full time education. I'm quite happy just to take it as a chunk really and not have too many expectations of how that is going to pan out. I am looking forward to it.

This is in line with the thoughts of Brazleton and Greenspan when they write,

If they have a caregiver at home and pick well, they have a greater likelihood, if they can afford it, of having the same caregiver being with them for a number of years. In day care, by design, the caregivers change each year. (Brazleton and Greenspan, 2000, p.26)

This question of Ruth's personal feelings about stopping work was something that I returned to throughout my visits to her home over the three years that I was observing her son. One of the responses to this question was in the October after Simon's second birthday. There had been a few months when Simon had been difficult to please and was beginning to impose his agenda and so it was a good

time to ask Ruth to reflect back on the choices that she had made on this occasion in light of what she had done when the other two were born,

It is difficult to say – but I am a different person to what I was then- I couldn't have done it then and if I had I wouldn't have done it like this. I don't have to worry about the things that I did then like who am I – I couldn't have done it then and it wouldn't have been right and I was ready to go back to work when I did. It sounds weird. I was still trying to be 2 things then but now I don't feel I need to because I am that bit older and I can see the importance of what I am doing now and that it won't be for ever. I don't regret it because when I went back to work after Luke I needed to, I wasn't enjoying my days – but when he was in for 3 days I was enjoying the 4 days that I had with him. At that time it was right. I don't know whether if I just had one at this age I could do it still- but because I have the three of them I don't feel that I could do it. I enjoy it and the time with the other two because I have spent the day with him I don't worry when I spend time with the other two.

This comment highlights the difficulties that parents have to overcome when making childcare choices, not just for their children but for themselves. It is revealing that for Ruth the state of total motherhood was one which she had to grow into and that having had this opportunity her choices were easier and satisfying.

4.8 Attachment and Emotional Well-being

As the study progressed the influence of adults upon children's emotional wellbeing and cognitive development became apparent. Adults in the settings needed to more aware of the importance of forming attachments with young children and the way in which these attachments have an impact on children's emotional well-being.

Children need to have experiences which enable them to establish emotional security,

The strength or otherwise of our emotional health will influence the level of tolerance to minor and major upsets and our ability to overcome them, as

well as the type of strategies we will bring into play. (Robinson, 2008, p. 102)

The importance of emotional stability is reflected in Maslow's (1943) 'hierarchy of needs' which shows that if young children do not feel safe physically and psychologically they do not progress.

When I went into the day nurseries to observe the children I was not able to be consistent in the timing of the visits. I wanted to observe the children in a variety of situations and with a variety of adults and so as a consequence I was not able to comment specifically on the attachments that individual children formed with their key person. The issue of when I made my visits could also have had an impact on my observations of children and their 'key person'. I usually made my visits during the morning for professional and logistical reasons. Although on some occasions the children's sleep patterns impacted on my observations the majority of the children were awake during the morning. In her study Yeon Lee (2006 p. 141) found that,

The whole group dynamic was quite different in the morning hours and in the afternoon hours. Usually, during the morning hours, most of the infants were awake and active; thus, caregivers were busy meeting the infants' needs and interests. On the other hand, during the afternoon hours, most of the infants had their own naptime according to their own schedule and condition; thus, in-depth one-on-one interactions were possible and encouraged.

I was able to note that all children were spoken to in affectionate terms and that in Tiny Feet Nursery the children were always consulted when they were having their nappies changed or when they were lifted or moved to another location. The adults in both of the nurseries were aware of their importance in the lives of the children

but perhaps the adults in Sunshines Nursery, who showed a lack of understanding about the key person system were not fully aware of how,

... important it is for adults to support infants from the beginning – to promote a robust sense of confidence, a sense of self – which provides the wherewithal to become ‘strong’ (Robinson, 2008. p. 115)

All babies and young children need to form relationships for development, ‘All learning ... begins with nurturing care, from which children learn trust, warmth, intimacy, empathy, and attachment to those around them.’ (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000. p. 145)

Manning-Morton looked closely at the professionalism of practitioners caring for children under three who were considered to have lower levels of professionalism because they were attending to many of the personal caring needs of young children. Manning-Morton worked with practitioners to enable them to see the importance of their role because,

... it is the quality of relationships between practitioners and children that is the cornerstone of good practice. But although receiving largely positive responses from adults helps babies and young children to develop a positive sense of self, they also need high levels of continuity, consistency and constancy in their experiences and relationships in order for that sense of self to be integrated and sustained. (Manning-Morton, 2006. p. 47)

This is also evidenced in the work of Elfer and Dearnley (2007 p. 268) when they state that,

Finally, there may be a culture in nurseries where status derives from not being with the children but in attending to more administrative or organisational tasks. Direct work with children, particularly babies and very

young children, may be seen as lower status, particularly as it involves much physical care such as nappy changing.

In this work Elfer and Dearnley looked at the ways in which the cultural organisation could be structured to support practitioners to come to terms with some of the emotional detachment that some of them may consider as being 'professional' by not becoming too emotionally involved with the children in their care. Their CPD model sought,

...to engage practitioners in a thoughtful and participatory exchange on the tensions in managing personal responsiveness to children within professional parameters. (ibid, p.271)

When looking at the two nurseries in this study it is clear that within Tiny Feet Nursery the practitioners acknowledged that they could support each other at times of emotional stress and that they felt that the manager was able to support them in relationships with children thus this staff team had a good working 'key person' model. Sunshines Nursery, on the other hand, had no such clear philosophy or ethos and so the staff team did not feel supported at critical times and so did not feel that they could, '... openly about the difficulties of emotionally close professional worth with children.' (ibid, p. 271) In their conclusions Elfer and Dearnley state,

Senior management must be committed if the organisational structures are to support reflective practice in a systematic and ongoing way. It needs to be recognised that resources have to be allocated for the time and facilitation for staff to think about and process the individual feelings evoked by their emotional work with the children. This involves an attitudinal shift too, seeing reflective practice as an entitlement of staff, both legitimate and necessary, if changes in professional practice are to be facilitated and sustained. (ibid, p. 278)

In a study to look at how prospective nursery nurses first learn to use emotion in their work Colley (2006, p.15) concluded that,

... emotional labour carries costs for the nursery nurse, not because children consume her emotional resources, but because her emotional labour power is controlled and exploited for profit by employers.

She suggests that,

Further research is also needed to explore how girls originally learn about attachment, what they have learned about it, and how their experiences influence their development as caregivers. It would also be useful to research other aspects of emotional labour in childcare, such as interactions with parents, which are central to the work of qualified nursery nurses, but in which these trainees were only marginally involved.

In a context where policy makers have now opened up vocational pathways from the age of 14 (Department for Education and Skills, 2005), there is an urgent need for those involved in occupations like childcare, and in education and training for them, to think more critically about learning to labour with feeling – and for more research to understand both the processes of such learning and its consequences in subsequent employment. (ibid, p.27)

As the case studies of the children show all of the children involved in this study did form relationships with adults, some more strongly than others and that there was no evidence to suggest that the children were emotionally insecure. The case study of Mark does show, however, that when he forms attachments to two adults in particular there is an improvement in his behaviours as well as in his learning and development. There was also evidence in the observations that at Sunshines Nursery the adults consulted with Amy about her move to the next room.

The need for adults working with young children in nurseries to have empathy and to look beyond attention to caring for their physical needs has long been recognized as the study by Hopkins (1988,p. 110) shows when she writes,

The basic training of nursery nurses must develop beyond the physical care of children to include understanding of their needs for attachment, dependency and emotional expression.

4.9 Conclusion

The analysis of the findings of this research has highlighted many common factors. It appears from the interviews with parents whose children attended Sunshines Day Nursery that the ages of the staff and the care offered whilst their children were still very young was of the highest importance when choosing the setting, and this as a result was the service they received. Interestingly it is Ruth, the mother caring for her baby at home, who highlighted this difference when reflecting on the 'key person' system in the nursery when her daughter was nine months and her son was two years old. Relationships between nursery and family are stronger when the children are younger. This relationships difference was not evident in Tiny Feet Day Nursery because all of the children are cared for in the same environment.

From the interviews and reflections of the parents who accessed out of home care, none of those involved in the research expressed negative outcomes for their children. Is this because to do so would indirectly put the burden of guilt back on to the parents for having made the decision in the first place?

The case studies of the children will be presented in the next chapter and although there are incidences where my observations raise questions about some of the practice, especially in relation recognising individual children's needs and challenge to their learning, there is no evidence that being in daycare over this period of time has had any impact on these particular children's behaviour, emotional development, social interaction or attachment.