

**'Make yourself at home': a study of how
childminders perceive their role and
status.**

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Initialisms used in this study

Initialisms	
CCF	Children Come First
EYC	Early Years Consultant
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
LA	Local Authority
NCMA	National Childminding Association
NEF	Nursery Education Funding
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
SMT	Senior Management Team

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Abstract

Childminding is an old-established yet under-researched form of childcare in England. Until the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948 it was also largely unregulated. In the last decade childminders have experienced changes in legislation and policy which have aligned them with those working in the rest of the childcare sector. As a consequence of these changes I believed that the role of the childminder has also changed.

The aim of this study is to explore how childminders perceive their role. A survey methodology was chosen to elicit their views using questionnaires distributed to all 434 childminders working in one Local Authority in the North of England. In addition 2 childminders were interviewed, providing in-depth information to accompany the data from the 201 questionnaire returns.

The study found the majority of childminders happy in their role, stating that the most satisfying aspect of their job was working with children and nurturing their development. In contrast, the most dissatisfying aspect of their job was reported to be the amount of paperwork they believed they had to complete. Nonetheless, contemporaneous with the increased amount of paperwork there was a perception of raised status amongst childminders. This may also be attributed to the recent move to professionalise the role of all childcare providers via the raising of formal qualification levels through funded training, and the formalising of professional standards and conditions.

It is hoped that this study into a group of individuals, undertaking a common role, will reinforce the importance of continued training opportunities and influence the training strategy for the childminding workforce within my Local Authority.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Why I chose to undertake a study about childminders

Prior to January 2007 my only professional contact with childminders was as they brought or collected children from the nursery school in which I was a class teacher. Away from school my personal contact with childminders was even less as my own children were cared for by family members. In January 2007 I started a new job as a Foundation Stage Advisory Teacher for a Local Authority (LA) in the North of England. Soon after starting I was asked to carry out a visit to a childminder to assess the suitability of her provision for 3-5 year olds so that she could receive Nursery Education Funding (NEF) (Kirklees Council, 2008). I had no experience of how a childminder provided childcare within a family home but was immediately impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the childminder whose entire home, in my professional opinion, was organised to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for the children in her care.

My LA requires that a qualified teacher conducts the NEF inspections so I have since been asked to carry out more NEF visits. I have also written and delivered training around the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) specifically for childminders. Recent structural and operational changes in the LA resulted in my job title and description being changed and my links with childminders put in doubt. However it was decided that it was important that there should be a named Early Years Consultant (EYC) for childminders and this forms part of my new role.

Since my first visit to the home of a childminder I have become increasingly interested in the childminder's role and how it has changed

following the introduction of The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008) – the statutory framework in England for all children aged birth to five. It is my belief that the introduction of the EYFS has had a significant impact on all early years providers including childminders as it is “mandatory for all schools and early years providers in OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education) registered settings attended by young children – that is children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday” (DCSF, 2008, p.7). During anecdotal conversations it became clear that what is expected of a childminder has changed recently and I wondered if this was a recent trend or whether childminding had undergone significant changes in the past, and what the impact any changes have had on childminders and their role.

The field and focus of my study

Following on from the above it was a straightforward process for me to locate my research in the field of childminding, a subject little-studied in England (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Moss, 1987; Mooney et al., 2001a; Owen, 2006). The study of childminding research by Moss (1987) remains a significant distinctive contribution to the field. He stated ‘After 20 years or more of childminding research in Britain there remain large and important gaps – in areas covered, methods used and disciplines deployed’ (p.31). He insists that this is not a criticism of individual researchers; rather that there is a need to acknowledge that research into childminders has been under-resourced and fragmented. Studies indicate that Moss’ statement remains true today (Mooney et al., 2001b; Owen, 2006). My interest lay in the role of the childminder, and whether the role had changed following new policies and legislation. This is potentially a vast topic, hence the focus of my study needed to be refined further.

Due to the lack of research there was plenty of scope for me to explore a unique aspect of childminding. It was vital that I chose to research not only a unique aspect of this field but also one in which I was really

interested; after all this research would be a huge part of my life for many years. Further, I wished to increase my knowledge and understanding in this field, in order to allow me to develop professionally, and enable me to contribute to working with the Senior Management Team (SMT), and childminders themselves in my LA. To help me define the focus of my study I returned to the work of Moss (1987) which provided an excellent starting point, as, at the end of his summary of research on childminders, “future directions for research” were identified (p.35-37). Here he discusses the three “most important” gaps in childminding research: 1) a national database of information on childminders, 2) developing measures of quality of service and 3) service development. In the first case, a national database is beyond my remit as an LA employee. Secondly, measures of quality of service are already being developed across my LA and nationally; there are currently accredited quality assurance schemes for childminders such as the Children Come First scheme operated by the National Childminding Association (NCMA), and childminder co-ordinators in my own LA undertake Quality Improvement Reviews with registered childminders (a full discussion of this is included in Chapter 4 of this study).

As an employee of the Local Authority it is part of my role to work on “the systematic development of services to improve the situation of childminders and the quality of care they provide” (Moss, 1987, p.35). However I am employed as an Early Years Consultant (EYC) by a Local Authority so my work with childminders is not without parameters as it is underpinned by local and national childcare policies. It is important to look at the changes in policy that have had a bearing on the profession so as to put the role of the childminder in the 21st Century into context. Although childminding has always existed it was largely unregulated until The Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act, 1948, when childminders were required to register with their Local Authority (Owen, 1988).

My research question

I believe my study consequently sits in the area of service development, the third 'gap'. Within the remit of a LA, I see service development as primarily focusing on training and support for registered childminders; these help individuals to develop professionally and hence childminders as a group to develop. The importance of training and support is well documented and is discussed in detail in the literature review of this study. However it is important that the development of the childminding 'service' is done in conjunction with the childminders rather than in isolation by LA officers, to ensure the development of the service is relevant for the childminders' needs. Previous studies sought the views of childminders on a range of issues (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al. 2001b; DfE, 2010). To establish a starting point for my own study, I compared the questions used and answers received. From this point I was able to build on previous findings and to develop my own study as one suitable for 2011, whilst including the best of previous works.

I identified one over-arching research question which I wanted to explore through this study: How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?

I decided that it was important to seek the views of the whole of the childminding workforce, rather than a sample group; consequently I explain in Chapter Three of this study why I elected to use a survey methodology as the most appropriate way of conducting my research. To elicit information from a group as large as this I chose to use questionnaires, and after much deliberation around the merits and restrictions of both paper-based and internet questionnaires I decided to produce these on paper and to mail them to prospective respondents. In addition to the questionnaire data, which gave me an overview of the opinions of childminders within my LA, I also felt that that the collection of

some deep-level interview data obtained through interviewing a small sample of childminders would add another dimension to the study. The interviewees had been in the role for some time so could offer an opinion on any perceived changes.

Is childminding a profession?

During my research the question arose as to what to call a childminder's role; is it a profession, a job or an occupation? I explored the literature to find a suitable definition of 'profession'. Recent studies have reflected on the terms 'professionalisation' and 'professionalism' in relation to all childcare staff and have stated the difficulties in defining these terms (Mooney et al., 2001b; Brock, 2006; Osgood, 2006; Greener, 2009; Martin, 2010; Miller, 2010); [the literature on these subjects is discussed in depth in Chapter Two of this study]. Others add that defining a 'profession' is equally difficult (Cogan, 1955; Cruess, et al., 2004; Evetts, 2006). Nevertheless it was imperative that I had a working definition to use before I wrote up the study, to ensure accuracy and consistency in the terms I used. Cruess et al., (2004) offer the following:

Profession: An occupation whose core element is work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills. It is a vocation in which knowledge of some department of science or learning or the practice of an art founded upon it is used in the service of others. Its members are governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their domain. These commitments form the basis of a social contract between a profession and society, which in return grants the profession a monopoly over the use of its knowledge base, the right to considerable autonomy in practice and the privilege of self-regulation. Professions and their members are accountable to those served and to society.

(p. 30)

This view of a traditional profession, which would include doctors, lawyers and teachers, does not wholly reflect the position of

childminders, hence I concluded that for the purpose of this study I would not call childminding a profession. However, I do believe that many childminders act professionally and are undergoing professionalisation through the raising of the levels of qualifications across the sector (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Mathers et al., 2011) and the introduction of legislation ensuring they work under the same curriculum as other early years providers (DCSF, 2008).

Moss (2006) proposes a re-envisioning of the childcare workforce through a “politics of occupational identity and values that moves beyond the dualistic ‘non-professional / professional’ divide” (p.30). I concur that an integrated early years workforce, such as those seen in Nordic countries (p.33), would be valuable, and certainly recent studies around professionalisation of the workforce are making moves towards Moss’ proposal, however this is beyond the scope of my study. For the purpose of this study and for the reasons stated above I will refer to childminding using the terms; job (which I define as work for pay), occupation (the job by which one earns a living) or career (the progression of ones working life) as appropriate.

The significance of my study in relation to previous research and literature.

Childminding has been under-researched. Moss (1987) states this and literature searches conducted by myself confirm that this is still the case today. This is not to criticise the work of the small number of English researchers who have contributed to the field studying childminders, reporting on the history of childminding and commenting on the changing numbers doing the job (Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Moss, 1987; Owen, 1988; Owen, 2000). The dearth of literature available made me question whether it would be feasible to undertake a study of childminders. However by searching beyond the United Kingdom I identified literature on family daycare (the term used for childminders) from the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Europe which addressed issues including training and support, and recruitment and retention.

In addition to the themes above I identified four previous national studies in which childminders were surveyed and their views elicited through the use of postal, face-to-face, or emailed questionnaires. The four studies were:

1. *Who Minds? A Study of Working Mothers and Childminding in Ethnic Minority Communities*. Community Relations Council (1975),
2. *Minder, Mother and Child*. Mayall, B. and Petrie, P. (1977),
3. *Who cares? Childminding in the 1990s*. Mooney, A., Knight, A., Moss, P. and Owen, C. (2001b)
4. *Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey*. The Department for Education (2010).

These four studies became central to my own research. By drawing together questions and themes from these studies conducted over a period of thirty-five years I was able to detect threads and identify patterns and changes whilst continually comparing their findings with the findings from my own study.

Although building on previous work, my study is unique in that it is focused on the childminding workforce in one Local Authority in England. Although the conclusions I make will not necessarily be generalizable between my participants and a group of childminders in another LA, the importance of my study is that it is *my study, now, in my LA* – I am not seeking to produce a “universal truth” (Denscombe, 2010, p.236). In addition, no other studies have sought the views of childminders on such a range of issues: training and support (both current provision and future needs); areas of and levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction; reasons for starting to childmind, intention to remain, and reasons for leaving and finally the opportunity to choose five words which they felt summarised their feelings in the role. Add to these views the data collected on length of service, previous jobs held and the numbers and ages of children minded and this is a comprehensive picture of the childminding workforce in one LA in the 21st Century.

Bounds of this research

As this study is specific to one LA, there is the limitation that no comparisons can be made between the findings of my research and similar, contemporaneous studies, as no such studies exist.

Nonetheless, I have where appropriate, highlighted the similarities and differences between previous studies (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b; DfE, 2010) and my own.

As this study focuses solely on the views of childminders, those of their customers, namely parents and children are not solicited. Although their opinions would have been very interesting to include, as was the case in previous studies (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b) such an inclusion would have proved too onerous for this study.

I also focused on English educational and social policies and legislation as this is the policy context in which the childminders in this study work. However I have included some literature from USA, Canada, Australia and Europe to support my discussions.

Due to the predominately female workforce and the discussions around the 'mothering' nature of this role, this study could have drawn on the wealth of feminist literature available. However I made the decision to focus on the views of all childminders whatever their gender, as my respondents were not exclusively female. I felt that focusing on feminist issues would have added nothing to my study, and further the questions used were not gender-specific.

Structure of this thesis

Thus far I have introduced my research question, the rationale for undertaking this study, the significance of this work in relation to previous studies and the boundaries of the research.

The following chapters of this thesis are as follows:

In Chapter 2 I engage critically with the relevant literature on pertinent issues. Firstly I explore the literature on childminding research, including some of an international nature and the history of, and policies affecting, childminders. Secondly the recruitment of childminders and their reasons for starting the job are compared, and in addition the fluctuating numbers of childminders are stated and discussed.

Subsequently the ways childminders have been portrayed in existing literature are explored. Recent discussions around the professionalisation of the role of all childcare workers are included. Childminders have traditionally been lone-workers; this brings both benefits and challenges to this group. To whom do they turn for support?

The falling number of childminders (www.ofsted.gov.uk <accessed 25th May 2011>) is an indication that their retention is an issue both nationally and locally; training is identified in the literature as a key factor influencing retention in the role (Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Doherty et al., 2006). The literature around these issues is discussed.

Finally future issues, and the future of childminding, arising from the literature are discussed, as are recent developments towards addressing them. Some of the points raised are included in my own conclusions in the final chapter of this study.

In Chapter 3 I consider and justify the methodology and methods selected in order to answer my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' I explain how and why I decided on this research question and where I see my research sitting. Following this I critically examine the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms before exploring the 'third paradigm' – mixed methods research (MMR). I explain why I believe that MMR is the paradigm in which my study sits before discussing the range of research methodologies and methods available and why a survey methodology using questionnaires and deep-level interviews were employed.

The ethical consent process I undertook is examined, including the rationale for completing an 'Unforeseen Events Report Form' following a change to my original research plan.

In Chapter 4 I discuss how I planned and conducted the fieldwork. Firstly I explain the process behind the selection of the questions used in my questionnaire. Questions used in previous studies are compared and contrasted, as are some of their findings; these discussions are grouped under four headings: personal, career, support and training, and views of the role.

Following this I discuss the drafting of the questionnaire and the subsequent consultation with colleagues, before describing how it was piloted in a neighbouring Local Authority. The rationale for the method of distribution of the questionnaires is explained, together with the response rate, subsequent reminders and total number of responses received. Finally I discuss my intention to use focus groups to elicit further information and why I decided that deep-level interviews with a small number of childminders was more appropriate for this study.

In chapter 5 I present and discuss my findings from the questionnaires and interviews. The results are discussed under four headings: personal questions, career questions, support and training questions, and questions on the views of the role. The data is displayed using graphs and tables, in conjunction with a narrative explaining the results, and comparing my findings with those from previous studies (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b; DfE, 2010).

Further training requirements identified by respondents are brought together to be shared with the Senior Management Team within my LA, and issues to be considered whilst planning future training are acknowledged. Although the majority of childminders state they are happy in their role, there are aspects with which they are satisfied and dissatisfied. Finally the results of a question asking respondents to select five words that best described how they feel in their role are discussed.

In my concluding chapter I return to my research question, summarising my findings. I draw out implications emerging through my study which may affect my current and future work with childminders, and identify recommendations for the future.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

Introduction

To support the exploration of my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' I turned to literature covering a range of pertinent issues. Studies show there has been very little research into childminding in England and consequently gaps have been identified, one of which is service development. This is where I see my research positioned.

In this chapter I will examine the literature and discuss it under six headings:

- Childminding research literature – international studies and studies in England are discussed. In addition the history of childminding and policies affecting the role are explored.
- Recruitment and reasons for becoming a childminder – studies have identified the reasons childminders gave for starting in the role. Numbers of childminders since official records began are discussed as is movement into and out of the sector.
- The role of the childminder – public and personal views of the childminding role are discussed under this heading as are studies into the effects of childminding. The recent move to professionalise the role is also explored.
- Lone working and support – childminders work alone in their own homes and with little support from LAs. The recent development of networks has provided this much-needed support.
- Retention and training – studies into retention of the childminding workforce are often linked with discussions around training, so they have been examined together. The changes in numbers of childminders are considered and the reasons given for leaving are discussed under six sub-headings offered by Baldock et al., (2005): changing demographics

and employment opportunities, nature of the work, increase in other forms of provision, regulation, support and other reasons childminders give for leaving.

- Further issues / Future of childminding – an examination of further issues from the literature are explored before a brief discussion into the future expectations of the role.

Childminding Research Literature

One of the foremost issues identified in the literature on childminding is that there has been very little research in England and subsequently there is a dearth of literature (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Moss, 1987; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Ferri, 1992; Mooney et al., 2001a; Buell et al., 2002; Statham and Mooney, 2003). Thirty years ago Jackson and Jackson (1979) reported that the area of childminding was relatively ignored stating that influential post-war British education reports including Newsom (1963), Plowden (1967) and Bullock (1975) “have been the focus of our thinking and the ground plan of our policies”; yet childminding has “remained invisible” throughout (p.15). Mayall and Petrie (1977) had also argued that “Childminding is an old-established, under-documented and under-researched form of pre-school care for the children of working mothers.” (p.17) Whilst acknowledging the substantial research conducted by the above authors, Mooney et al., (2001a) claim “there has been little recent research in this area” (p.254) which I also found to be the case when conducting a literature search for this study.

International Perspectives

Due to the scarcity of literature from England on the subject of childminding I have turned my attention to material based on research from the United States (US); Owen (2000) asserts that in both the US and the UK childminding “is a distinctive child care service which

operates along broadly similar lines” and in the United States she claims “there is now a sizeable body of work” (p.147). The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) (2010) defines a childminder as “A person who is registered to look after one or more children to whom they are not related on domestic premises for reward” (p.2). Childminders are also referred to as home-based carers or family day care [for example in the United States of America] and according to Jones and Osgood (2007) this form of childcare has developed as a formal service at different rates and ways within countries in Central and Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Statham and Mooney, 2003). Literature from these countries is drawn on to support discussions in this study.

Childminding Studies in England

In 1987 Moss claimed that “After 20 years or more of childminding research in Britain there remain large and important gaps – in areas covered, methods used and disciplines deployed” (p.31). Furthermore, Moss also said there was a need to acknowledge that research into childminders had been under-resourced and fragmented. Nearly twenty-five years later, in reviewing the literature for this study, this remains true.

Moss identified the “most important” gaps in childminding research including: a national database of information on childminders; the development of indicators to measure quality of service; the development of the “service” provided by childminders (ibid, p.35-37). Subsequently conclusions reached at the end of Moss’ study provided the starting point for the work of Mooney et al (2001a; 2001b).

As only a limited amount of research has been undertaken with childminders it was important that my study built upon their findings where applicable. Four studies conducted in the last 35 years had elicited the views of childminders using questionnaires or interviews:

1. The Community Relations Council (1975) conducted research with a total of 186 childminders in Manchester, Leicester, Lambeth and Slough.
2. Mayall and Petrie (1977) interviewed 39 childminders across four London Boroughs.
3. Mooney et al. (2001b) was a national study of a cross-section of 1000 childminders carried out using questionnaires through a postal survey. These were followed up by 30 case studies.
4. The Department for Education (DfE) (2010) was the most recent provider survey conducted by the British Market Research Bureau forming part of a series of surveys questioning childcare and early years providers (including childminders). The surveys which were originally commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 1998 and were conducted in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Each survey used a series of pre-determined questions and collected data by the use of telephone interviews from childminders in England. The numbers surveyed fluctuated (849 in 2009; 850 in 2008; 845 in 2007; 723 in 2006).

The DCSF (latterly the Department for Education (DfE)) stated that the original rationale for conducting the surveys was the need to collect:

robust information on the key characteristics of childcare provision in the early years and childcare sector, as well as information on its workforce and the costs of childcare that is available, to monitor what provision is available and to inform policy development in this area.

(DCSF, 2009, p.9)

These studies varied greatly in numbers and geographic location of the respondents; two were national studies (Mooney et al. 2001b; DfE, 2010) and the other two (Community Relations Council, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977) focused on distinct localities. However there were many

similarities and many questions were common to more than one of the studies. From this I identified underlying trends which formed the basis of my research, determined a direction for my further studies and provided opportunities for comparison with my findings. These studies and their links to mine are discussed in depth in Chapter 4 of this study.

History and Policy

Sue Owen, currently Director of the Well-being department at the National Children's Bureau and previously Director of their Early Childhood Unit has contributed extensively to the literature on childminders (1988; 2000; 2006; 2007).

Her work (1988) provides a legislative history of childminding in England in which she explains the difficulties encountered when researching the history of childminding as the subject was "rarely written about" (p.368) and claiming "the care of young children by people other than their mothers was, and is, common and thought unworthy of mention" (p.368). Owen goes on to suggest that isolated descriptions of care beyond the family "do not add up to a history" (p.368). Auerbach and Woodill (1992) support Owen's contention, saying family day care has "little documented evidence of its existence (is) available for historical analysis"... .. "precisely because of its relative informality" (p.10). Historically childminding was an unregulated arrangement between parent and childminder, no formal recording of these arrangements was required; consequently little written evidence exists. This is explored in depth later in this chapter.

The Industrial Revolution in the UK and the growth of manufacturing industries led to women being employed out of the home for the first time, increasing the need for daily minders for their children (Owen, 1988; Kontos, 1992; Peters and Pence, 1992). Although the practice of daily minding was unwelcome it was also considered unobjectionable when compared to the practice of baby-farming (Owen, 1988). Baby-farming was the term used in England to describe the practice of

permanently 'giving away' a baby to a 'dry nurse', [a person who cared for a child without breast feeding them]. Payment was made to the nurses who were largely women with no qualifications at all who neglected children in their care. Sadly but predictably, the baby rarely survived and the connection between baby-farming and infant mortality was common knowledge (ibid, p.369). Reports of infanticide in the Victorian era are intertwined with accounts of baby-farming (Rose, 1986). Unfortunately daily minders were often confused with these "notorious baby farmers" and "became associated with their dubious practices" (op cit, p.364). Baby-farming has a very well-documented legislative history. The efforts of politicians, doctors and social reformers eventually ensured that laws were passed to define and outlaw infanticide, and made the practice of baby-farming illegal. The culmination of this was *The Infant Life Protection Bill (1871)*; records are documented in *Hansard*, *The British Medical Journal* and in the work of Rose (1986). It is through these records that glimpses of childminding at the time are evident. Although social reformers, doctors and politicians supported *The Infant Life Protection Bill (1871)* there were also those who resented the regulation encompassed within it, seeing it as an unwelcome intrusion into what were essentially private family arrangements (Owen, 1988). Despite a number of high-profile trials and subsequent executions the 1871 Bill failed to have the hoped-for impact and additional Infant Life Protection Acts were passed in 1890 and 1897. The latter of these was prompted by the infamous baby-farmer Mrs Dyer who inspired a popular ballad of the time (Rose, 1986, p.161).

Baby-farming practices were indeed abhorrent but reading accounts such as those about Mrs Dyer would seem to indicate that she suffered from serious mental health issues. I wondered how many other women were in this situation - unable to work out of the home due to caring for their own children, disturbed, poor and with no welfare state to support them so turning to daily minding or the more lucrative baby-farming to make a living. I was surprised to discover in Mayall and Petrie's study

(1977) that at least six of the thirty-nine childminders took up childminding due to “boredom, loneliness and / or depression”. In fact two childminders had been “advised” by their physician to undertake the role as an “antidote” to their depression (p.28). The view that mothers had the necessary skills and knowledge to look after other peoples children just because they had their own is evident way beyond the Victorian era (Community Relations Council, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977).

Following concerns about baby-farming, and the protection of children from unscrupulous minders, in the last decades of the 19th Century, there was little further attention paid, or legislation passed, that affected childcarers in general, and childminders in particular, for many years. This is because it was believed that mothers of young children should not work and were actively discouraged from doing so well beyond the 1948 Act (Summerfield, 1984). Attitudes changed out of necessity during the Second World War, when women were needed to supplement the workforce whilst men were away fighting (ibid). Childcare provision was increased during the war years, but when the war ended so did much of the state-funded childcare, justified by a Ministry of Health circular in 1945 stating that young children should be at home with their mother (Summerfield, 1984; Randall, 1995; Cameron et al., 2002; Owen, 2006).

The Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act 1948

This seminal Act was the first legislation requiring childminders to register with their Local Authority, albeit only if minding three or more children. It also provided details of minimum standards for those caring for other people’s children for which they were paid. It was drafted following several tragic fires in the 1940s where children died whilst the childminder was out shopping (Jackson and Jackson, 1979). In the

introductory note the rationale for the Act and those encompassed by it are defined thus:

The purpose of this Act, which applies in Scotland as well as in England and Wales, is to ensure that children are well cared for when at nurseries... ..or when in the care of a child-minder. Child-minders are not within the Act unless they receive into their homes for reward children under the age of five who are to be looked after by the day or for up to six days at a time: but, although the class of child-minders is thus defined by the Act... .. there is no penal sanction for their not registering unless the number of children exceeds two, the children come from more than one household, and the child-minder is not a relative of the children.

(Morrison et al., 1948, p.117)

The Act was overwhelmingly concerned with children's health, and inspections to be undertaken by health visitors and fire officers were delegated to local health authorities; registration could be refused if the inspector believed that the person or premises were unfit for the purpose of childminding. Prior to this legislation it was impossible to ascertain how many childminders were in business, and in 1949 the first numbers appeared in official records (Jackson and Jackson, 1979). Raven and Robb (1980) claim that the Act indicated that "the law recognised the existence of childminding" (p14). It is my assertion that childminders were not regulated as strictly as nurseries, only having to register if minding three or more children; consequently, as reported by Jackson and Jackson (1979) many childminders remained unregistered. With limited numbers of staff available within the health authorities to conduct inspections there was little incentive or capacity to regulate this.

The Health Services and Public Health Act 1968

Jackson and Jackson (1979) state that twenty years after the introduction of the 1948 Act it was reported that yet more children in the care of childminders were killed in house fires whilst the minder was shopping; a newspaper campaign ensued detailing gross inadequacies

in facilities and physical care provided by some childminders (p.28). Consequently a committee was established and an independent report was produced by Simon Yudkin - *0-5: Report on the Care of Pre-School Children* (1967). This in turn resulted in a specific section being included in the 1968 Act tightening up the law regarding the registration of childminders. The Act required anyone other than a relative who looked after a child for more than two hours a day, and who was paid for it, to register with their LA. The concepts of 'fit person' and 'fit premises', first mentioned in the 1948 Act, were still the conditions of registration; these difficult-to-define notions were interpreted locally resulting in some variance (NCMA, 1985; Department of Health, 1991). These original criteria seem very basic in comparison with the rules and regulations with which current childcare providers have to comply (DCSF, 2008). Nevertheless they are significant as they denote the start of registration and regulation of childminders.

The first nationwide study of childminding in England: *Childminder: A Study in Action Research* was the culmination of fourteen years work by Jackson and Jackson (1979). As part of their data-gathering the authors enquired into the list of registered minders held by a Local Authority whilst questioning the court officer into the likelihood of illegal unregistered minders. He replied:

Childminders? We know there's illegal ones but we don't go out of our way to look for them. We just administer the 1948 Act. This job was inflicted on us under the new regulations. There were ten health visitors and a doctor to do it, now there's just me, one man ... The educational side doesn't come into it at all ... that's not in the Act.

Court officer speaking to researchers in
Huddersfield (after 1968 Act). (p.40)

This 14 year study started with 'Dawnwatch', carried out by seven members of a research team concurrently, the week before Christmas 1973, in locations across England. Their remit was:

Get up before dawn, be in a working-class area of any city you choose in Britain, see and feel it wake up. Take notes. Above all watch for working parents, toddlers, babies and backstreet childminders.

Ibid, (p.12)

The researchers chose Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Islington London, Handsworth Birmingham and at the back of the Arsenal Football Ground, London. Their report paints a bleak picture of young children being 'delivered' to childminders, very early on cold miserable mornings, by parents or siblings described as the less-prosperous members of society. The minders taking charge of these children were caring for large numbers, in less than adequate conditions, for low wages. This dismal picture of childminding in the late 1970s characterises the perception offered by other studies of the time (Stewart-Prince, 1967; Mahon, 1970; Jackson, 1972; Jackson, 1974; Bruner, 1980; and Bryant, Harris and Newton, 1980; Mayall and Petrie, 1983) highlighting the poor public image of childminders which has existed for as long as the role - a disagreeable by-product of women's paid labour outside the home erroneously associated with baby-farmers in the Victorian era (Owen, 2007). The 1968 Act was drafted as a result of the deaths of children, either through wilful murder or neglect whilst in the care of minders, the public outcry to which served to perpetuate the negative perception of those who cared for other people's children in their own homes (Yudkin, 1967). The horrific events leading to the above legislation were perpetrated by a minority, yet the reputations of all minders were tarnished (Owen, 1988; Owen, 2006) – a legacy that has been difficult to overcome.

Furthermore, Jackson and Jackson discuss provision in early childhood, questioning why childminding has “remained invisible”. They assert that society has regarded “provision in early childhood and its links to a huge education system that succeeds it” in an “odd” way (p.15). They support their claim by identifying “three assumptions commonly made that have blinkered our view” (p.15):

1. Firstly, at the time of writing their report it was believed that education was delivered through institutions. From this stance it followed that the expansion of early years provision required more nursery classes and schools - an expensive solution unlikely to happen. Later studies (Tizard, 1976; Bruner, 1980; Bryant, Harris and Newton, 1980; and Hughes et al., 1980) also suggested the superiority of nursery provision over that of a childminder. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter alongside the literature regarding the role of the childminder.

2. The second assumption was that society believed that ‘professionals’ should provide for young children; in the early 1970s this meant nursery nurses and nursery teachers. Training for both groups carried a cost implication limiting the number that could be offered training. Furthermore they claimed the number of professionals employed at the time of their study only met the needs of a small percentage of under-fives in the country (Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Randall, 1995). At that time some playgroups were open but for short periods each day (usually around 2 hours) at times which did not meet the needs of working families (Jackson and Jackson, 1979). In my view this has changed significantly in the last twenty years with the expansion of private day nurseries opening from 7.30 a.m. until 6.00 p.m. five days per week, and pre-schools offering morning or afternoon places. Alongside the expansion of daycare provision there has been a drive to increase the qualifications of and professionalise the childcare workforce (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Pugh, 2010; Mathers et al., 2011).

3. The third assumption Jackson and Jackson claimed “has stood behind official documents, behind our priorities and such provision as we have made for young children, is that we are all middle class now” (Jackson and Jackson, p.18). The authors argued that the evidence from their Dawnwatch contradicted this view. They believed that working class mothers who wished to work were disapproved of, and government policies aimed to ‘discourage’ this practice (Ministry of Health circular 221/45) (ibid, p.18). This claim is supported by others (Baldock et al., 2005). Furthermore, during this period priority was given to finding employment for men returning from the war. Paradoxically day nurseries, opened to allow women to work during the war, closed down and it would be decades before this trend was reversed (Randall, 1995). A subsequent circular issued by the Ministry of Health in 1951 asserted that day-nursery provision was not a cost to be incurred by the state just so mothers could return to work – day-nursery provision after the war was only funded by government to support children with special needs and the children of mothers unable to undertake the full care of their children. The work of John Bowlby (1953) contributed to this argument “The mother of young children is not free, or at least should not be free, to earn” (p.100). Yudkin and Holme (1963) claimed that children under the age of three years should not be minded as this may adversely affect the mother-child relationship. Pringle (1980) argued that claims such as these are ideological excuses used to justify the lack of funding and support for childcare providers.

Jackson and Jackson claim that the aforementioned three assumptions have narrowed societies’ vision as to the variety of childcare possibilities, suggesting that to meet the needs of more young children and their families there is a need to look beyond institutions, and that the view of professionals in early years education and care should be widened beyond teachers and nursery nurses. Randall (1995) stated that in 1988 only 35-40% of 3-5 year olds were catered for by publicly funded childcare, much less than other European countries (p.329). Jackson and Jackson describe childminding as a “largely unknown, self-help,

working class system” (p.19), yet childminders at the time of the study cared for more children than the state did, working “chiefly in areas of great need, and at negligible direct cost to society”. Jackson and Jackson question if childminding could be “a clue towards breaking the cycle of deprivation” (p.28).

It is evident from the literature that childminding has in the past been mistakenly regarded by local authority officials as a disagreeable activity undertaken by and for a minority of working-class women: officials assured the research team in the Jackson and Jackson study “that childminding was very minor, not a problem at all and that unregistered minding did not exist” (Jackson and Jackson, 1979, p.33). Furthermore, these opinions were supported at a seminar comprising twenty five “teachers, social workers, parents and officials” whose views concurred with the official line. Jackson and Jackson set out to examine the reasons why childminding appeared to be uncommon in Huddersfield whilst in Manchester a mere 25 miles away it was widespread (ibid, p.34). Although there may have been localised differences in demand for childcare places I am surprised that childminding did not exist to broadly the same degree in all regions. Jackson and Jackson (1979) showed the eagerness of officials to deny the extent to which childminders, both legal and illegal, provided much-needed day-care for young children and their families stating that childminding was far more prevalent than official records showed; the findings of “Dawnwatch suggested that there was a social underbelly to all our cities not articulated in official statements or recorded in academic reports” (Jackson and Jackson, p.43). Childminding, was at best ignored and at worst considered to be a damaging experience that young children of poor parents had to endure:

The disturbing truth was that no more than half a dozen of these children were looked after in safe and comfortable conditions with the kind of care that might help them develop physically and mentally. At least an equal number suffered serious neglect and harsh treatment, if not actual cruelty. And most of the rest spent their days in the typical emptiness of life with childminders who work for a pittance, without support or supervision. Day after day they sit passively on a sofa, without conversation, toys, books, visits or stimulation of any kind.

(Jackson and Jackson, 1979, p.95)

Subsequent research by Moss and Melhuish (1991) challenged the view that daycare provision was harmful for children, saying there was no evidence of this. Nevertheless, Jackson and Jackson claimed most families aspired to one of the scarce places in local authority daycare, nursery school or class.

However, despite documenting appalling conditions that some minded children endured, Jackson and Jackson identified the key potential of the role of the childminder, if given support and training, as a central part of a team providing childcare. At the end of their study they recommended a “Charter for childminders” (p.241), discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Cameron, Mooney and Moss (2002) suggest the period between 1980 – 1997 was one of parental choice, where it was for the family to decide whether or not the woman should go out to work; this “neutral stance” (p.574) they claim, allowed the state to avoid its responsibility to provide childcare support for employed or non-employed women. However, it was in this period that the regulation of childminders, and daycare, was addressed again by an Act of Parliament.

Children Act 1989

In 1991 The Children Act 1989 was implemented by a Conservative Government. The Act sought to unite a series of fragmented laws into one covering a single rationalised childcare system (Bull et al., 1994).

Owen (2007) claims this was seen by many as an end to the historically marginalised role of services for young children, but Baldock et al., (2005) argue that these laws did not amount to a coherent policy, possibly because as Bull et al., suggest, the Act still regarded 'care' and 'education' as two distinct and 'separable' elements (p.8).

Part X (*Child Minding and Day Care for Young Children* (Department of Health, 1991) of the Act strengthened the system of regulation for childminders, linking conditions of regulation to issues affecting 'quality', including a limit on the number of children to be minded, records of children and parents details to be kept, and equipment to be maintained and safe for use. The Act stated; "registration has to be a positive process, there to help the setting up of good quality services" (ibid, para 4.9). The guidance accompanying the Act gave local authorities "power to provide facilities such as training, advice, guidance and counselling" and enabled them "to helpchildminders raise their standards" (Moss, 1996, p.111).

In 1996 Moss and Candappa summarised that the Children Act was preceded by a long history of "low levels of private and public investment in day care services" (p.142) which they concluded continues to date, with poor pay and training for many day-care workers. Moss and Candappa (1996) claimed that without a "major injection of resources" the impact of the Act had been "constrained" (p.142). Randall, (1995) argued that underfunding had limited the implementation of the Act and questioned the existence of a child-care policy by previous governments:

To talk of a child-care *policy* begs the question whether there has actually been one. There has been a policy in the sense of a retrospectively apparent sequence of government decisions, non-decisions, action and inaction that has significantly helped to determine the nature of child daycare provision. But government attention has rarely been focused squarely on the issue of childcare itself.

(Randall, 1995, p.332)

Cameron et al., (2002) reinforce this view stating that until 1997 public policy had been indifferent to childcare. However a change of government in 1997 saw a radical change in policies and funding, including grants to encourage the development of private daycare providers (Cameron et al., 2002; McDowell, 2005). Despite the long overdue attention to childcare services, Greener (2009) claimed it was an “agency approach” to the delivery of childcare as a cheaper alternative to state-run provision (p.307).

Since 1997 there have been major policy developments in the field of childcare and early years provision, the government department responsible for childcare legislation changing many times (figure 2.1) (Mooney et al., 2001b; Sylva and Pugh, 2005; Vallendar, 2006; Hohmann, 2007; Pugh, 2010).

Year	Event
1991	Under the Children Act 1989 the responsibility for day care services was transferred from the Department of Health (DoH) to the Department for Education (DfE).
1995	Department for Education (DfE) becomes Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).
2001	Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) becomes the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
2001	Responsibility for regulation of childcare provision was transferred from Local Authority Social Services Departments to a national agency, the Early Years Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). National standards for early years providers, including childminders, were introduced - including them within a framework of regulation that is both national and part of the education system.
2003	<i>Every Child Matters</i> policy initiative introduced.
2006	<i>Childcare Act, 2006</i>
2008	DfES became the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).
2008	<i>Early Years Foundation Stage</i> is implemented (DCSF, 2008c).
2010	The Coalition Government rename the DCSF - it becomes the Department for Education.

Figure 2.1 Changes in the field of childcare and early years provision

The Labour Government (1997-2010) introduced a number of policies and legislation which affected the childcare market. Baldock et al., (2005) summarised these as comprising five major elements (figure 2.2):

1. Tackling poverty – childcare was seen as a strategy for tackling poverty by enabling parents to go out to work.
2. Promoting partnership between a range of agencies including private and voluntary childcare providers.
3. Encouraging expansion and experiment - existing provision was to be consolidated; included in this are childminders who would be encouraged to join networks.
4. Central role of education – although daycare and education were still separate it was hoped that fragmentation of the services would be eliminated. The transfer of regulation from local authorities to OfSTED in 2001 was the greatest change in this area.
5. Better regulation – from 1948 regulation had been the only positive action taken by governments. Separating regulation from support in 1999 by passing regulation to OfSTED (from 2001) and making support the responsibility of local authorities was a key change in England.

Figure 2.2 Five Major Policy elements implemented by the Labour Government (adapted from Baldock et al., 2005, p.12)

Baldock et al., (2005) pointed out that it must be remembered that policies do not develop in isolation from the real world, but are subject to “dominant viewpoints” (2005, p.6). Furthermore, “Early years policy can be described as a social construct because its nature and content is dependent at any point in time on the social and cultural context within which it is made and implemented” (ibid, p.7). In other words ideas of what constitute best practice in childcare can change with the passage of

time; policies that seem inappropriate now may have been perceived as appropriate at the time of implementation.

Recruitment and reasons for becoming a childminder

Studies reported in the 1970s and early 1980s (Jackson, 1973; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Jackson and Jackson, 1979, Raven, 1981) did nothing to dispel the public perception of childminding as a less than adequate form of childcare used by parents out of necessity rather than choice (Owen, 2000). Therefore, the reasons for becoming a childminder are worthy of consideration.

Who chooses to become a childminder, and why?

Studies show the majority of childminders in England are women (Community Relations Council, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Taylor et al., 1999; Mooney et al., 2001b; Rolfe, 2006; DfE, 2010) with Rolfe (2006) asserting that low pay is a barrier to men joining the childcare sector. Historically, childminding has been a way to care for one's own children whilst contributing to household finances; as Mayall and Petrie (1977) state "Childminding is still with us as one of the ways in which women can supplement their income without leaving their own home" (p.17). Mooney et al., (2001a; and 2001b) conducted a postal survey of 1000 childminders. They found that many (95%) of the 497 respondents had children of their own and that 75% of these had a child under the age of five when they started minding. Interestingly Todd and Deery-Schmitt (1996) report that higher levels of stress were experienced by childminders when minding their own children too. When questioned, 75% of respondents to the study by Mooney et al., (2001b) stated that their reason for becoming a childminder was to enable them to stay home with their own children, or work from home; other studies also reported this (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Gelder, 1993). In my view many take up childminding primarily to enable them to look after their own children; this influences society's view of their role.

This is exacerbated as women are considered capable of looking after other peoples' children because they have their own, hence no special qualifications are needed (Ferri, 1992; Nelson, 1994; Randall, 1995; Taylor et al., 1999; Mooney et al., 2001b). This commonly held belief fails to recognise that to be an effective early years practitioner there is a range of special attributes / qualities which are essential and that parents look for when choosing childcare (Mooney et al., 2001b). Amongst these is the ability to develop respectful and reciprocal relationships with children (David, 2003; Nutbrown and Page, 2008; Page, 2011); and an ability to display what Page (2011) describes as "professional love" (p.312). These are not formal qualifications but are nevertheless vital and desirable.

Many of the other reasons for starting to childmind reported in studies are of a similar genre - including caring for other family members, helping out friends or relations, providing company for own child, and needing money (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Mooney et al., 2001a; and 2001b).

Studies indicate that starting to childmind because of an interest in working with children was a reason given by fewer respondents; Mayall and Petrie (1983) reported 17% choosing this and Mooney et al., (2001b) reported 15.4%.

Childminder numbers

Contrary to official views that it formed a small part of the childcare workforce (Jackson and Jackson, 1979), childminding actually was the childcare arrangement for many families (ibid; Summerfield, 1984). It was not until The Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act, (1948) that childminders were required to register with their Local Authority. Due to the changing numbers in the role at any one time it is virtually impossible to quantify the exact number of childminders within England and even more so in one LA. Jackson and Jackson (1979) stated that in

1973 there were 30,333 registered in England and they estimated a similar number of unregistered minders. However, it was not until figures were collected by government departments that more accurate figures became available. However, it was still virtually impossible to determine the number of unregistered childminders.

In her 2006 work, Owen includes a table showing the number of registered childminders in England for the period 1949 – 2005. Data for this was obtained up to 1973 from Jackson and Jackson (1979), and for subsequent years from the government department responsible for the collection of these figures (Department of Health up to 1998, Department for Education and Employment until 2001, and latterly OfSTED). I have added data to this from OfSTED for the period 2006 – 2011 (figure 2.3).

Data collected between 1978-81 was considered by the DHSS to be “unreliable due to the introduction of a new survey form” (Owen, 2006, p.287) hence the gaps in the data. Since 2001 OfSTED has also collected national statistics, the first being published in 2003. The National Audit Office found that the increase in numbers during 2001-2002 was reversed the following year (2002-2003) as childminders who were no longer actively minding were removed by OfSTED (NAO 2004).

Year	Number of registered childminders	Year	Number of registered childminders
1949	271	1981	n/a
1950	415	1982	44,145
1951	468	1983	47,192
1952	560	1984	53,041
1953	638	1985	58,390
1954	715	1986	64,160
1955	777	1987	69,244
1956	881	1988	74,588
1957	949	1989	83,904
1958	1138	1990	93,074
1959	1313	1991	106,004
1960	1531	1992	109,200
1961	1780	1993	87,200
1962	2201	1994	96,010
1963	2597	1995	97,100
1964	2994	1996	102,600
1965	3393	1997	98,500
1966	3887	1998	92,200
1967	5037	1999	82,200
1968	5802	2000	n/a
1969	18,168	2001	n/a
1970	25,595	2002	n/a
1971	n/a	2003	68,200
1972	29,191	2004	72,400
1973	30,333	2005	70,200
1974	30,200	2006	71,600
1975	29,469	2007	69,925
1976	31,309	2008	64,648
1977	33,513	2009	60,915
1978	n/a	2010	57,732
1979	n/a	2011	57,228
1980	n/a		

Figure 2.3 Number of registered childminders in England 1949-2011

Movement in the sector

In this chapter I look at recruitment and retention separately, although they are often linked together in literature (Moss, 1987; Fischer and Eheart, 1991; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Helburn et al., 2002; Doherty et al., 2006). I believe them to be two separate issues for the childminding profession and therefore worthy of individual attention. Official figures (figure 2.3) show a fall in the overall number of registered childminders from 102,600 in 1996 to 57,228 in 2011; but it must be remembered that although many childminders leave the profession there are also many who join. These changes were not visible in the data until 2009 when statistics provided by OfSTED began to include data on 'movement in childcare', showing quarterly changes in numbers listed as 'leavers' and 'joiners'. The table below shows these figures to date (figure 2.4).

Dates	Leavers	Joiners	Overall change
Sept. 2009 – Dec. 2009	2713	1993	- 720
Dec. 2009 – March 2010	2678	1807	- 871
March 2010 – June 2010	2402	1874	- 528
June 2010 – Sept. 2010	2632	2138	- 494
Sept. 2010 – Dec. 2010	1751	1923	+ 172
Dec. 2010 – March 2011	1637	1983	+ 346

Figure 2.4 Movement in childminding workforce (Source www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/registered-childcare-providers-and-places-england)

The figures show considerable movement in and out of the sector within each quarter, with the data for the last two quarters showing an overall

increase in the number of registered childminders. An answer to why there is such movement and pace of change within childminding numbers can be found by investigating reasons why people take up childminding in the first place.

Career or short-term job

Mooney, Moss and Owen's study (2001) found the average length of service of childminders was 6 years, suggesting that family circumstances influenced length of service. Jackson and Jackson (1979) identified two different 'types' of minder – "stable ones who do the job for a long time and intermittent ones who move in and out of it" (p.164). Likewise Mooney et al., (2001a) suggested childminders who viewed minding as their long-term career and those for whom childminding was a "passing phase in their employment" (p.259), adding that only 50% of the childminders in their study saw minding as a long-term career. At the end of her study of 30 childminders Ferri (1992) hypothesised that in the future childminding was likely to be taken up for shorter periods by women whilst their own children were young (p.198), so there is some evidence that though some childminders take on the role for a short time, there are nearly as many who continue in this role for much longer.

The role of the childminder

Much of the debate around the role concerns whether they are seen as a "mother substitute" (Mayall and Petrie, 1977, p.44) or a childcare worker in a recognised occupation. Moss (1987) challenges the view that childminders are undertaking solely a parental role. The role of childminder has been defined by what has been written about them; this has influenced how they are seen by both the public and minders themselves (Mooney et al., 2001b). Mooney et al., (2001a) report "childminders expressed their dissatisfaction with the poor image childminding had, often commenting that any national publicity was

usually negative” (p.261). Brannen et al., (2009) state that childcare has always been undervalued.

Public perceptions

For as long as the role of the childminder has existed it has been associated with reports of bad practice, neglect and uncaring women looking after other people’s children purely for monetary gain which Vincent and Ball (2001) claim is still the view of some parents (p.643).

As previously discussed, many women begin childminding because they have their own young children; this provides a solution to their own childcare needs and an opportunity to earn. The *Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey 2009* (DfE, 2010) found that 66% of childminders held a formal qualification and the majority of these (83%) were qualified to level 3 or below. Studies reported similar findings in other countries including Germany (Gelder, 2003) and New Zealand, (Everiss and Dalli, 2003). However Mayall and Petrie (1977), Ferri (1992), Nelson (1994), Taylor et al., (1999), and Griffin (2006) found that many childminders believed they were qualified to childmind because they were mothers themselves, perpetuating the view that the only skills required to be a childminder are those of a mother and that a childminder is a mother substitute. Mooney et al., (2001b) elucidate that “gender and poor work are linked through a rationale that understands care work as something essentially female, at which women are naturally competent, needing little or no aptitude or training” (p.68). The caring role assumed by women in society is often seen as negative, linking women’s employment to the poorer paid caring services. But childminders in a study conducted by Cameron et al., (2002) were adamant that being a parent themselves was vital for their role - parental and caring characteristics were an asset not a drawback.

Studies into the effects of childminding

Mayall and Petrie (1977) portray a very negative view of childminding, criticising its effect on the language and development of minded children; other studies supported this: (Stewart-Prince, 1967; Mahon, 1970; Jackson, 1971; Jackson, 1974; Bruner 1980, Bryant, Harris and Newton 1980). However, Robb and Raven (1982) challenge the critics claiming that because children with language difficulties and developmental problems can be found with childminders does not mean that being childminded caused the problems (p.5). Raven and Robb, (1980) also contested Mayall and Petrie's study sample, stating it too small to base any conclusions on (despite it being the largest tested sample at the time) and the lack of a control group. Thus Raven and Robb (1980) conducted similar research with the inclusion of a control group. All children in the study sample were at Nursery School or class part-time, but half the group were cared for (and had been for some time) by a childminder. Raven and Robb found no difference between the two groups in language competency or social behaviour. However it must be noted that this was not an exact replica of Mayall and Petrie's work as children in their 1977 study attended no other form of pre-school provision. I contend it is impossible to isolate the influence of the childminder provision from their Nursery School or class experiences; therefore prohibiting accurate comparisons.

Studies by Tizard (1976), Bruner (1980), Bryant Harris and Newton (1980), and Hughes et al., (1980) implied that childminder provision was not comparable to nursery provision. I would argue that in the late 1970s and early 1980s this was comparing two completely different types of childcare. Historically nursery schools and classes were seen as providing 'education' for children aged 3-5, whilst childminders and day care groups provided 'care' for children 0-5 (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Pugh, 2010). The distinction between 'education' and 'care' was evident in the 1989 Children Act as discussed by Randall (1995), and Lloyd and Hallet (2010). Pringle (1980) claimed that childminders provided an

undervalued, distinct form of childcare. [Childminding is similar to familial care and undertaken in the childcare providers own home (Griffin, 2008, p.68)]. The introduction of the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000) and *Birth to Three Matters* (DfES, 2002) was instrumental in moving care and education forwards together. It was not until the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF, 2008c) was implemented that all early years providers were regulated by the same policies and procedures, thus childminders were for the first time faced with providing in the home a curriculum on a par with that provided in a nursery – however not all childminders welcomed this – an issue examined later in this study. Pugh (2010) emphasises the importance of the EYFS:

The EYFS creates, for the first time, a statutory commitment to play-based developmentally appropriate care and education for children between birth and 5 years of age, together with a regulatory framework aimed at raising quality in all settings and among all providers.

(p.14).

Childminders' views

According to Mayall and Petrie (1977) childminding was traditionally seen as a service for less affluent parents needing to go out to work, originating in mill towns in the north where mill workers' children were minded by local women, an opinion supported by Jackson and Jackson (1979). However, Mooney et al (2001a) report that this view changed, claiming that 56% of mothers and 59% of fathers in the Family Resources Survey (1999) (a national survey conducted each year for the Department of Social Security) who used a childminder were in professional or managerial jobs (p.253). Vincent and Ball (2006) report similar findings to Mooney et al., (2001a).

The dearth of research into childminding, and hence literature on this subject, has been discussed earlier in this chapter and as the majority of

previous studies have focused on the factual aspects of the role such as career length, training attended and services required (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b; DfE, 2010) it is unsurprising that the amount of research into the views of childminders is scarce. Mayall and Petrie (1977) did at least ask childminders what they liked and disliked about their job but little of their responses are recorded besides the satisfaction of 'helping children to achieve skills' and their dissatisfaction with 'issues with parents' (p.30). Mooney et al., (2001b) state that 89% of childminders in their study were satisfied in the role' the most satisfying aspect being 'working from home'. Mooney et al., (2001a) found 50% of childminders in their study viewed their role as a 'short-term job' with the other 50% seeing it as a career: respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with the poor image of childminding and negative publicity surrounding the role (p.261). In 2003 Korintus claimed that in Hungary childminders viewed their job as of low status - a view echoed in the UK (Mooney et al., 2001b; Greener, 2009).

In my view the perception that childminding is a low-status occupation may stem from the lack of formal qualifications required (DCSF, 2008). Mooney et al., (2001b) state that "Childminders generally still have low levels of education" and many previously worked in "less-skilled service-sector jobs".

Different views exist concerning the status of all childcare practitioners. Hargreaves and Hopper (2006) argue that raised status should be given to those with higher levels of formal qualifications, namely teachers, to avoid devaluing the "lengthy training and specialist expertise that are teaching's claim to specialist status" (p.172). Conversely Moylett and Abbott (1999) argue that if high status is given to early childhood as "a phase in its own right then we give high status to *all* our youngest children's edu-carers" (p.196).

These opinions occur in the discussions surrounding the professionalisation of the childcare workforce which I examine in the next section.

Professionalisation of the role

In a 1981 study by the National Childminding Association a childminder said “I think childminding is an art not an occupation” (p.1), twenty years later (Mooney et al., 2001b) stated that “childminders want to be regarded as professional childcare workers” (p.66); policy developments under the UK Labour Government (1997-2010) have gone some way to helping them achieve this.

Recently there has been a move towards the professionalisation of the role of all childcare practitioners (Mooney et al., 2001b; Greener, 2009; Martin, 2010). The term professionalisation refers to the formalising of professional standards and conditions, and the raising of qualification levels for sector workers ultimately creating a graduate-led workforce (Lloyd and Hallet, 2010; Mathers et al., 2011). The relationship between higher staff qualifications and the increased quality of early years provision is well-documented (Sylva et al., 2003; Taggart et al., 2003; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2006). According to Simpson (2010) there is a difference between a member of a profession (a definition of the term profession has been included in the introduction to this study) and a member of a workforce that is undergoing professionalisation. He asserted that through the process of professionalisation “the government is attempting to improve the position of those working within the sector” (p.271): it is through this process that the childcare workforce becomes “professional” (p.270). Conversely, Osgood (2006) argues that this process “could be used as a means of control and provide increased domination to those in power” (p.5).

Baldock et al., (2005) identify five major policy changes implemented by the Labour Government (1997-2010) (figure 2.2). These policies have been described as ‘anti-poverty policies’ as they promoted work for families enabling them to improve their circumstances and ultimately their children’s life chances (Duffy, 2010; Pugh, 2010). As more parents went out to work the demand for childcare places increased (DfE, 2010)

and financial support for parents was provided (Nursery Education Funding) to enable children aged 3 to 4 years to access twelve and a half hours (recently increased to fifteen hours) of free childcare and education in private, voluntary, independent (PVI) or maintained provision. This includes childminders who are accredited through the Children Come First (CCF) scheme and are working within an approved network.

Currently in my LA far fewer NEF childcare places are provided by childminders than by daycare settings but it is pertinent that childminders can now access the same funding streams as other private providers. In 1996 Nursery Education Vouchers were introduced by the Conservative government; these were used by parents towards the cost of childcare but could not be used with a childminder (Griffin, 2006, p.72). However in 2000 the Labour government replaced Nursery Education Vouchers with Nursery Education Funding; which childminders are eligible to receive (ibid).

Furthermore, under the Labour government funding was available for the entire childcare workforce to study for Level 3 NVQ qualifications. The introduction of the Early Years Professional Status for all those with a degree, or foundation degree (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2011) has furthered the professional status of all childcare workers (Owen and Haynes, 2006).

However Mooney et al., (2001b) suggest "the professionalisation of childminding has both positive and negative consequences on recruitment and retention" (p.61). In anecdotal conversations some childminders have welcomed the opportunity to work with the EYFS (DCSF, 2007) believing that this acknowledges that all early years providers are equal. Conversely childminders in the Mooney et al., (2001b) study stated that increased responsibility was one reason why they would leave the role, believing it to be a factor that would discourage prospective childminders altogether. Other reasons given for intending to leave were additional paperwork and book-keeping.

Mooney et al., (2001b) claimed that “childminding is moving towards a ‘professional’ service” but, they added, attendance on training courses does not lead to increased status or being able to charge more for their service.

In recent anecdotal conversations some childminders have echoed the findings of Mooney et al., (2001b) suggesting that they are being asked to be teachers for a lot less money; Miller and Cable (2008) support this, highlighting the disparity in training and pay between childcare staff and teachers.

Whilst acknowledging that the traditional definition of a profession used in this study currently excludes childminding, it is important to recognise that many childminders believe they act professionally and demonstrate professionalism in their day-to-day work (Griffin, 2006; Martin, 2010). Further, the more years spent in the role, the greater they perceive their level of experience and professionalism; others have reported high levels of commitment and enjoyment as indications of their professionalism (Martin et al., 2010). Brock (2006) described the characteristics displayed by a person behaving professionally as “dedication, standards of behaviour and a strong service ethic” (p.3). Defining professionalism in terms of the early years workforce has been the subject of much debate (Oberheumer, 2005; Brock, 2006; Osgood, 2006; Miller, 2010). Miller (2010) asserted that it is difficult to define an early years professional when the diversity of the roles, responsibilities and settings within which early years practitioners work, along with the “lack of a professional registration body and formal pay structures” are considered. A view supported by others (Osgood, 2006; Cable and Miller; 2008). Nevertheless, Simpson (2010) defined it thus: “Professionalism concerns the dispositions and orientations of professional groups and individual professionals to their status and work” (p.270), and Bromer and Henly, (2004) argued that one aspect of professionalism is an ability to translate child development theory and research into practice. Likewise Brock (2006) asserted:

being a professional working with young children... ..is not just about having qualifications, training, skill, knowledge and experience but also about attitudes and values, ideology and beliefs, having a code of ethics, autonomy to interpret the best for children and families, commitment, enjoyment and passion for working with children.

(p.2)

Moyles (2001) raised concerns around the use of the word 'passion', often used by early years practitioners when talking about their work. She claimed that the use of emotional language restricts "early years practice to a low-level operation in which children receive care" not education (p.82). In my experience I believe the opposite to be the case, and that it is vital that childcare practitioners show 'passion' in their work, seeking to provide appropriate and stimulating experiences for those in their care.

Miller (2010) claimed that defining professionalism in the early years was further complicated by the introduction of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS); [the Children's Workforce Development Council were charged by the Labour government with the development of this in 2006 (Miller and Cable, 2010)]. Miller (2010) stated that the "centrally defined role" Early Years Professional implies that the only professionals in the early years workforce are those with this qualification; she added that this is not the case as teachers are seen as professionals in this field and many have not gained EYPS, Nutbrown (2011) supported this view. Griffin (2008) emphasised that some childminders may have held professional status in their previous occupation.

Greener (2009) contended that "The combination of the greater demand for childcare and the new approach to state governance has led to an attempt in the UK to engineer the professionalization of the 'registered childminder', a co-production model of service provision between the state and the public" (p.307). He further claimed that childminders do not feel that they were being treated as professionals by parents or others employed in the business of childcare.

Amongst childminders there have been differences of opinion regarding the professional status of their occupation; some have advocated that they are professionals and should be regarded as such whilst others have stated the opposite (Griffin, 2008). In the late-1980s Virginia Bottomley, the Health Minister, addressed a National Childminding Association (NCMA) conference at which she stated that “childminders were not like professionals but “like aunties and grannies””. The NCMA conference audience showed their displeasure at this description (Griffin, 2008, p.65). However, Griffin added, “not all childminders have wanted to present themselves as professionals” (p.67).

From literature searches across “the fields of philosophy, sociology and education reflecting on professionalism in the disciplines of medicine, law, education and social work” (p.4) Brock (2006) identified seven dimensions of professionalism (figure 2.5). A comparison of these with the role of the childminder, as identified in the literature explored in this chapter, highlights specific areas where childminders would not be regarded as professional; namely education and training, autonomy, and reward.

Dimension of professionalism	Common factors and traits of the dimension
Knowledge	Specialist knowledge, unique expertise, experience
Education and training	Higher education, qualification, practical experience, obligation to engage in CPD
Skills	Competence and efficacy, task complexity, communication, judgment
Autonomy	Entry requirement, self-regulation and standards, voice in public policy, discretionary judgment
Values	Ideology, altruism, dedication, service to clients
Ethics	Codes of conduct, moral integrity, confidentiality, trustworthiness, responsibility
Reward	Influence, social status, power, vocation

Figure 2.5 Seven dimensions of professionalism (taken from Brock (2006) p.4)

In summary childminders and researchers alike are divided as to the professional status of childminders, with representatives from both parties in the professional and non-professional camps. One key reason given to dispute the professional status of childminding is the absence of expectations around training and qualifications both on entry to and during the undertaking of the role (Karlsson, 2004; Griffin, 2008). I envisage that these disparities will continue for some time.

Lone Working and Support

Childminders are by the nature of their job lone workers, caring for other peoples' children in their own homes. The autonomy of self-employment is described as an area of satisfaction by childminders (Cameron et al., 2002), and working as you please at home is given as a reason for starting the role (Mooney et al., 2001b). However working alone has drawbacks, as childminders may miss the support that colleagues can provide. In 1977 Mayall and Petrie suggested that childminders were professionally less well-prepared to deal with children with difficulties due to lack of training, and by lone working have no-one to talk to.

Mayall and Petrie (1977) further suggested that childminders were given "little encouragement or motivation to do the job well" (p.34). The National Childminding Association criticised local authorities, claiming that for childminders "Once registered, they (the local authority) don't want to know" (NCMA, 1981). The Children Act (1989) gave power to the LAs to provide training, advice and guidance to childminders but with little funding to support this and with no extra staff in the LAs to undertake the extra work the impact of the Act was limited (Randall, 1995; Moss and Candappa, 1996;). Training is discussed later in this chapter, alongside issues of retention.

Lack of support from LA representatives has been identified in studies as a recurrent cause of dissatisfaction (NCMA, 1981; Mooney et al., 2001b), with childminders turning to one another for informal mutual support.

The development of organised networks and regular meetings has gone some way toward improving the support of childminders by colleagues. Greener (2009) discussed Childminder Organisers (COs) who arrange local provision of childminding - an informal network where childminders meet, supporting one another and comparing aspects of their work, such as fees and vacancies. In the LA in which I work there are now 'lead childminders' who are linked to their local Sure Start Children's Centre, organising the use of the children's centre room for childminder support group meetings, encouraging attendance and mentoring new childminders in the area.

Sure Start Children's Centres are designed to offer children under five years of age and their families access to integrated early childhood services "when and where they need them". Many are accommodated in their own premises; others share premises or are based on several sites, with the defining feature being their unique way of getting public agencies to work together rather than a bricks and mortar presence.

(www.parliament.uk, 2010)

Interestingly, Mayall and Petrie (1977) suggested that 'children's centres' be set up with a range of services provided in one building - an innovative plan. However they suggested that childminders would be childcare workers using the facilities in these centres. Unfortunately this idea failed to recognise the unique home-based nature of childminding and the likelihood that parents wanting daycare would use a nursery.

Owen (2007) drew attention to the *Children Come First* networks, instigated by the NCMA. These networks, accredited by Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED), are open to those achieving quality assurance through the NCMA, and are generally seen as a forum for childminders wanting to develop their careers. Such a network operates in my LA and presently supports around 20 childminders. Some LA support is also provided, as dedicated Childminder Coordinators are employed to deliver the LA 'Challenge and Support Strategy'. "The Challenge and Support Strategy provides appropriate differentiated

levels of support and challenge to early years settings” (Kirklees Council, 2011) and is delivered to Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings by Childcare Coordinators and Early Years Consultants – this is discussed in the fieldwork section of this thesis.

Watson (2010) stated that the DCSF recommended the establishment of childminder networks to support childminders and improve quality.

Dawson et al., (2003) found that networks provided a significant contribution to the quality of childminder provision, increased status in the eyes of parents and other childminders and support which helped the retention of childminders. However, in my experience committed childminders are more likely to join a network, giving the impression that the network ‘retains’ them.

Retention and training

Figures show (figure 2.3) a substantial decline in the UK in the number of registered childminders since the mid-1990s. In 1992 numbers peaked at over 109,200, dropping to 87,200 the following year. By 1996 the numbers had risen again to 102,600. However since this time numbers have fallen to 57,228.

In their report Mooney et al., (2001a) described substantial movement into and out of active childminding. Discussions with key personnel from the Local Authority and NCMA produced anecdotal reasons for these changes at the time. Mooney et al., (2001a) claimed that childminders often gave a combination of reasons from the following categories for leaving the role:

- a) Changing demographics and employment opportunities
- b) Nature of the work
- c) Increase in other forms of provision
- d) Regulation
- e) Support

f) Other reasons

(ibid, p.60)

I will discuss each of these categories in turn with reference to the literature.

a) *Changing demographics and employment opportunities*

Mooney et al., (2001b) claimed that the number of women taking up childminding had fallen as more women were establishing careers before having children of their own and therefore could afford to pay for childcare themselves on return to work, rather than starting to childmind due to having their own children to care for. In addition, flexible working opportunities were more widely available than previously, and help with paying for childcare, for example through the payment of Child Tax Credits to parents (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, 2011) were all incentives for women to work out of the home. These reasons may go some way to providing an explanation why fewer women take up childminding because their own children are at home. Nevertheless, as the authors pointed out, others saw childminding as a career choice (Mooney et al., 2001a).

b) *Nature of the work*

The low-pay/low-status image of childminding makes it an unattractive career choice (Mooney et al., 2001b) adding further justification to why childminding has not been seen as a career; though it does not explain why childminders stop. Recent press articles claimed that pressures brought on by legislative changes are the reason (Gaunt, 2008; Murray, 2009) whilst some childminders expressed dissatisfaction because the EYFS was introduced as a statutory framework for all childcare providers (Gaunt, 2009; Woodhead, 2010). These particular dissatisfactions are obviously recent, however it is likely that other regulatory changes in the past (such as the need to be registered) have been responsible for the

fluctuation in childminder numbers as there have always been issues around staff turnover and substantial movement within the sector (Mooney et al., 2001a). Press articles reveal that the number of childminders judged by OfSTED as 'inadequate' rose from 2% in 2005 to 6% in 2008 (Higgs, 2008; Marley, 2008) it is of course possible, and desirable, that the childminders who left were some of those being judged by OfSTED as offering poor quality provision.

c) Increase in other forms of provision

Between 1988 and 1998 the number of working women in England rose from 36% to 50% of the population; this coincided with a growth in the number of daycare providers from 1700 to 7100 in the period from 1989-2000 (Mooney et al., 2001b). Childminders claimed that competition for business with private day nurseries, and consequently fewer children to mind, was their reason for leaving although no correlation was found between falling childminder numbers and a rise in other types of provision (ibid, p.62).

However on the 31st March 2011, 1,023,602 children were cared for by 26,243 daycare providers (DfE, 2011). This shows nearly a four-fold increase in the number of daycare providers in just over a decade and as the birth rate has not increased at a similar rate, would suggest that childminders had too few children to mind and subsequently left the role.

d) Regulation

Dissatisfaction with the requirement to be registered and the enforcement of regulation has already been mentioned. Mooney et al., (2001b) also found some childminders regarded the registration process too bureaucratic while others who had been childminding for many years disagreed with the changes in the ethos of their role. The expectations of OfSTED during the new inspection regime caused concern with some, although these fears were allayed by announcements from OfSTED that the "changeover would not result in draconian inspection regimes" (p.62).

This contrasts with the view of recent media reports claiming that pressures resulting from legislative changes are the reason childminders are leaving the job (Gaunt, 2008; Murray, 2009). Baldock et al., (2005) stated that between 1997 and 2000 there was a 20% reduction in the number of registered childminders which they partially attributed to stricter inspection regimes.

Conversely a study into former childminders by Mooney, Moss and Owen (2001) reported that tighter regulation or competition from other childcare providers was rarely mentioned as a reason for leaving.

e) Support and training

Although Mooney et al., (2001b) classed this category as support I have included training as they are often discussed and delivered simultaneously. In the USA, Canada and Australia a significant amount of work has been conducted around training and support for childminders and their impact on three key areas: reasons for becoming and staying a childminder; turnover of staff; and quality of provision (Moss, 1987; Fischer and Eheart, 1991; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Helburn et al., 2002; Wise and Sanson, 2003; Doherty et al., 2006).

From my experience I am unconvinced that the promise of support and training by an LA would attract potential childminders to the profession; however there is a growing body of evidence (Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Doherty et al., 2006) to show that support and training may be factors encouraging childminders to continue, therefore reducing staff turnover. This is important as high staff turnover undermines the quality of care for children (Todd and Deery-Schmitt, 1996). This can be explained another way - that those interested in making a career in childminding will be those most likely to attend training, so the intention to stay in the role encourages attendance at training courses rather than *vice versa*.

It is in the best interests of children who are cared for away from their home to keep a stable workforce. Mooney et al., (2001a) stated that in the interests of stability, a childminders' working conditions need to be improved and this must include training and support. The importance of appropriate and relevant training for childminders was highlighted by Taylor et al., (1999) who stated that little training for childminders was available at the time: in the opinion of the childminders I first worked with in 2007 the situation had not by then improved greatly. Although childminders attended 'start-up training' there was very little further training provided solely for them in my LA until the rollout of EYFS training in 2008. It is important to remember that childminders are unable to attend training during the day so it is vital that training opportunities are available in the evenings and on Saturdays.

Of course, not all childminders wish to attend training; they have 'very little economic incentive to invest in training''although these investments are crucial to children's development and wellbeing' (Helburn et al., 2002, p.534). And not all training is effective use of childminders time: Jackson and Jackson, (1979) reported that some early childminder training disappointingly had no long-term effect on the childminders daily practice.

Although the effects of training and support may encourage childminders to remain, the principal rationale for LAs investing time and money in such training and support for childcare providers is to raise the quality of provision for the benefit of children. This is reflected in the literature (Fosburg, 1981; Howes, 1983; Fischer and Eheart, 1991; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Mooney et al., 2001a; Raikes, 2005; Doherty et al., 2006). Moss (1987) identified many early studies such as Jackson and Jackson (1979) and Mayall and Petrie (1983) showing childminders in a negative light, highlighting poor quality practice. Owen (2000) reported that specific characteristics of childminding, namely a largely unregulated sector with little requirement for training and qualifications, links it to lower quality provision precluding the

classification of 'professional' (Karlsson, 2004; Griffin, 2008). This is unfair as, historically, little accessible and appropriate training has been provided for childminders. An NCMA study in 1981 asked respondents if they had attended any training adding "In 1978" (their previous survey) "it was not even considered appropriate to ask this question – an indication of the paucity of training available at the time" (p.6). Osgood (2006) takes the issue of training one stage further suggesting it should enable a "greater self-awareness and improved self-confidence" (p.11).

Training has been shown to be an important factor in raising both quality of provision and retention of the workforce. Childminders have often been criticised for lack of qualifications and training yet in reality none was provided for them to attend; training around Special Educational Needs (SEN) is a prime example of this. In 1977 Mayall and Petrie reported that childminders could not take care of children with special educational needs as they did not have appropriate training for this, and twenty seven years later a report for the National Audit Office (NAO) (2004) cited lack of training as a reason why childminders were unable to cater for disabled children. In my own LA training around SEN is only now being offered at a time convenient for childminders.

It is clear from the literature that many childminders want and require both support and training. Mooney et al., (2001b) reported that many new minders had left because of feelings of isolation during the first years in the job, and furthermore lack of support from the LA was identified as an area of dissatisfaction by others (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001). To address this issue networks have been established and have provided invaluable support to those who attend (Dawson et al., 2003; Owen, 2007; Watson, 2010). In my LA dedicated coordinators are employed solely to support the development of childminders. Although there are only five coordinators to support over 400 childminders, they all have the contact details of a coordinator to whom they can turn for advice and guidance.

f) Other reasons

Mooney, Moss and Owen (2001) found the main reasons given during interviews of 205 former childminders involved doing something else such as studying or training, or to take up another job, followed by family reasons including pregnancy or the birth of another child. In their Key Findings (p.1) they asserted that childminding “tends to be seen as a convenient or stop-gap form of employment, though one third did view it as a long-term career from the outset. The average length of time spent working as a childminder was six years.”

Further issues and the future of childminding

In the concluding chapter of their study Jackson and Jackson (1979) put together “A charter for childminders” a “blueprint” of recommendations for an Act to support childminders in the future. The overriding message in 1979 was that they considered it vital that the “fragmented, disorganized” and “illogical” system of care and education for children under five in this country, which had been “previously nourished on crumbs”, must now be prioritised (p.241). It is questionable how much has really changed since the charter was published, some thirty years later.

The importance of high quality provision for the youngest children is evident in Jackson and Jackson’s work, and supported in later studies (Sylva et al., 2003; Taggart et al., 2003; Sylva et al., 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2006). The policies of the former UK labour government went further towards ensuring this than any of their predecessors and were discussed earlier in this chapter.

The issue of pay is germane to this as it is important for those working as childminders that they receive adequate recompense for their work. A salaried service was suggested by Mooney et al., (2001b) whereby

childminders agree to become employees of the LA. However, this would not necessarily suit those who enjoy the self-employed status of their role. The National Audit Office (NAO) (2004) found that one of the two main threats to their sustainability, as perceived by childminders, was pay - particularly non-payment by parents. A salaried service could eliminate this concern, although given the current coalition government reduction in funding of many existing services (BBC, 2010) it seems unlikely.

The second threat to childminder sustainability is “unregistered childminders” (NAO, 2004, p.33). The number of these in the mid-1970s was estimated by Jackson and Jackson to be nearly as many as were registered, and they suggested that the key message in any Act should emphasise the benefits of registration rather than the penalties for those who remain unregistered. They claimed it important that local authorities know everyone who is minding and if minders see this as beneficial to them will be more likely to comply. Although some pre-registration training and local authority support has been forthcoming since the recommendations of Jackson and Jackson the emphasis has remained on the penalties for non-registration (Mooney et al., 2001). Nevertheless unregistered minders still exist (Bertram and Pascal, 2011) although there are no figures to confirm or deny if numbers rose following the implementation of the EYFS in 2008. Jackson and Jackson (1979) also recommended that properly maintained lists of registered childminders should be kept; this is no doubt easier since the advent of computerised records but the challenge remains to keep records populated and maintained.

Perhaps surprisingly Jackson and Jackson (1979) recommended a change in terminology from “childminder” to “day-care parent” claiming the former had “accumulated too many bad overtones”. This statement encapsulated the negativity that surrounded the role of the childminder, and Mooney et al., (2001b) questioned whether “the pervasive poverty of childminders’ training, pay and status [could ever] be eradicated?’ (p.68). Recent literature (NCMA, 2010) suggests that the image is changing for

the better. Research has documented the development and use of childminding to support 'children in need' (Dillon and Statham, 1998a; Dillon and Statham, 1998b; Statham et al., 2000; Moss et al., 2000; Mooney et al., 2001b) and in my LA some parents are being directed to childminders as the most suitable provider for their child and family (Bayram, 2007). The EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) emphasises the uniqueness of young children and consequently the importance of tuning into, and providing for, their individual needs. Professionals supporting children and families with additional needs are recognising that the familial type of care provided by childminders meets their needs appropriately.

As previously discussed, the regulatory framework of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) has resulted in childminders being inspected against the same set of criteria as daycare settings. It is recognised that defining the term 'quality' in childcare has been the subject of debate (Tanner et al., 2006; Penn, 2011). Although not a focus of this study it is important to mention Owen's (2000) argument that too often childminders have been inappropriately compared with group care. She asserted that it is imperative that the differences (between daycare and childminding) are recognised as the unique features of childminding are representative of quality. Jones and Osgood (2007) stated that the "quality" of care provided by a childminder is "inextricably linked with the identity of the carer" (p.289).

The remit of the National Childminding Association is to raise the profile of childminding nationally and to contribute the views of childminders to national debates and consultations such as the recent review of the EYFS (Tickell, 2011). Their recently published *Manifesto for Home-based Childcare* (2010) continues this work.

As discussed above, there has in the past been a lack of research and literature on the role of childminders. Previous studies have focused almost entirely on the factual aspects of the role. It is important to reiterate that childminders actual perceptions of their role have never

been sought in depth through any research studies. Furthermore childminders' levels of satisfaction and views of their status have been little investigated - this remains the case to date.

In the next chapter I will consider and justify the methodology and methods I selected to answer my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' I will critically examine research paradigms and discuss the range of methodologies and methods available; explaining why a survey methodology using questionnaires and deep-level interviews were employed.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Methods

Introduction

In this chapter I present a general discussion of research paradigms, methodologies and methods, leading to a detailed description in the next chapter of the specific methods I used.

As stated in my introduction, my knowledge of childminders comes from my Local Authority work, training and assessing the suitability of childminder provision for Nursery Education Funding (Kirklees Council, 2008): I have no personal experience of providing or using the services of a childminder. Anecdotal conversations with childminders at training sessions led me to believe that the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) and the demand from OfSTED for increased documentation and accountability has placed pressure on the way childminders work (OfSTED, 2010).

My interest in childminders developed as I worked with them, and I knew this was a group of people I wanted to understand in more depth – however I was unsure what to focus on. Clough and Nutbrown (2007) developed two simple tools that can help generate research questions; the “Russian doll principle” and the “Goldilocks test” (p.37). Using these tools I drafted and redrafted my research question onto a framework (figure 3.1), finally formulating a question which I felt encapsulated my research and led to a research study that was manageable within my time frame.

No.	Draft research question	Goldilocks test	Russian doll principle
1	A study of childminders	Too big	Too large and too vague – what exactly am I looking at – which childminders and where?
2	How has the role of the childminder changed in England	Too big	Intended to conduct a historical exploration of the development of the role with a survey of current childminders. This is too large.
3	How has the role of the childminder changed in England since The Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948	Too big	More specific time period but again need to specify which childminders I want to study – location, quantity etc. Still too large.
4	What is it like to be a childminder in the 21 st Century in England?	Too big	Why England? – because legislation and policies are specific to England. Why 21 st Century? – because want to know what it is like for current childminders. But how could I study all of England? Scope of this is too wide.
5	A study of childminders in one Local Authority	Too big	Better but still too vague – what is it about childminders am I interested in?
6	How has the recent introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) impacted on the work of childminders in one LA.?	Too small	This is better because it is a specific area to explore but is it possible to explore the impact on childminders of the introduction of the EYFS – can the impact of the EYFS be isolated from any other influences on their work? Is it too narrow an area?
7	How has the role of the childminder changed in one LA?	Just right?	This looks at the role of the childminder and so can include policy changes – but maybe still vague
8	How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?	Just right	This question will identify current issues for childminders.

Figure 3.1 Framework used to generate my research questions
(adapted from Clough and Nutbrown, 2007, p.42)

The simplicity of the completed framework belies the complexity of the thought process and time taken to arrive at it. I considered a two-part study comprising firstly the history of childminders, then a survey of current childminders, with the aim of bringing the two together later in the study.

However I considered the study too big, so decided to focus on the survey only. Finally I formulated my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' This question would facilitate the identification of current issues for childminders in the LA in which I worked.

My research and where it sits.

I see my study as an enquiry into an area of childcare about which little is known. According to the literature (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Moss, 1987; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Ferri, 1992; Mooney et al., 2001a; Buell et al., 2002; Statham and Mooney, 2003) there have been very few studies that have investigated the role of childminding.

I consider my research will extend my personal knowledge and understanding of this group, influencing my work with them in my role as a Local Authority Early Years Consultant providing training and support to all private, voluntary and independent childcare providers, including childminders. The major policy developments in the field of childcare and early years provision from 1997-2010 (Mooney et al., 2001b; Sylva and Pugh, 2005; Vallendar, 2006; Hohmann, 2007; Pugh, 2010) encouraged parents to return to work and raised the profile of daycare provision. At Local Authority level it was not until the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) that training for childminders on a par with that of daycare providers was offered. At this time my professional role was extended to include the provision of training and advice for childminders.

The scarcity of previous research into childminding has been identified in my review of the literature and as Moss (1987) states, previous studies

used “limited methodologies” (p.32). Preceding Moss’ work there were three main studies in the UK: the first two by Mayall and Petrie (1977, 1983). The first used interviews and systematic observations with 31 childminders and 28 mothers with whom they worked; the authors used the same methods to investigate 159 childminders and 15 day nurseries in their follow-up study of 1983; thirdly Jackson and Jackson (1987) reported a longitudinal study conducted with a small number of childminders in two towns in northern England: the methodology for this study included surveys, action research, evaluations and interviews. Subsequently a larger national study of a cross-section of 1000 childminders was carried out using questionnaires through a postal survey; and was reported by Mooney et al., (2001a) and Mooney et al., (2001b).

Since the Childcare Act (2006) Local Authorities have a statutory duty to publish and consult on a local Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) and my LA has just published their first full re-write since 2008 (Kirklees Council, 2011). CSAs are “local childcare market research and analysis documents” (p.3) which contain details about supply and demand of childcare places. However I believe that my study will be the first to explore the *views* of all childminders currently registered in one LA. This LA is situated in West Yorkshire and is made up of old mill towns and rural villages. This large metropolitan borough is divided up into seven localities varying from predominantly urban, suburbia to mixed and rural., with a population of 406,750 (ONS mid year estimate 2009) (Kirklees Council, 2011, p.11).

Sampling

After deciding that the focus of my study would be childminders in the Local Authority in which I work I considered what sample size to include. I originally considered studying a cross-section of childminders currently registered in the LA but struggled to classify them into groups as there are many variables: networked and non-networked, new and

experienced, young and old, with or without their own children and so on. I was interested in obtaining views from a variety of perspectives and did not want to exclude any group from taking part. Finally I made the decision to include all the registered childminders in my Local Authority (over 500 in total when I started to plan this study) because although grouped together when discussed at LA level, childminders are usually lone workers (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Owen, 1988); it was important to me to provide an opportunity to give their views.

Research Paradigms

To explore my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' I needed to decide what methodology and methods best suit my research whilst remembering Sikes' comment:

Decisions about which methodologies and procedures will be used in any research project are usually influenced by: what can actually be done, what is practical and feasible; by situational factors of various kinds; and by personal predilections and interests.

(2007, p.4)

When research methodologies and methods are discussed the term 'paradigm' is often used. Put simply a paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide action (Guba, 1990; Morgan, 2007; Sikes, 2007). Morgan (2007) developed his definition by describing four "versions" of paradigms and their defining characteristics: paradigms as world views – "all-encompassing perspectives on the world" including beliefs about morals, values and aesthetics; paradigms as epistemological stances – "ontology, epistemology, and methodology from philosophy of knowledge"; paradigms as shared beliefs in a research field – "shared beliefs about the nature of questions and answers in a research field"; and paradigms as model examples – "relies on specific exemplars of best or typical solutions to problems" (p.51). Morgan (2007) claims that the current dominant definition of 'paradigm' was the one that focused on epistemological stances from the philosophy of knowledge while

Sikes suggests; "In the recent past, the two main paradigms that have influenced educational research are the scientific, positivist, objective, quantitative paradigm and the interpretive, naturalistic, subjective, qualitative paradigm" (2007, p.6). Different research methodologies and consequently different research methods have each become allied to these two paradigms which are divided by different beliefs about the nature and purpose of research. In addition, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that epistemology should not dictate the research methods used. Nevertheless methods are associated with paradigms. Ercikan and Roth (2006) contend "The polar categorization of research in terms of the quantitative-qualitative distinction contributes to promoting research that emphasizes a certain type of data collection and certain construction modes" (p.15).

In the following section I will discuss in more detail these two established paradigms, the research methodologies and methods associated with them and the epistemological stances of both. Then I will consider the main areas of disagreement between the two in what Tashakkori and Teddlie describe as the "paradigm debate" (1998, p.3). Subsequently I will discuss the recent recognition of a third paradigm, why it has been welcomed by some researchers and finally where I position my own research.

The Quantitative Paradigm

According to Bryman (1988) quantitative research, also described as scientific, positivist and objective, is associated with the production of numerical data seen as reliable and consistent, which reflects the event being researched rather than the preferences of the researcher.

Research methodologies associated with the quantitative paradigm include surveys producing quantifiable data, experiments, testing and assessment, analysis of previously collected data, and quantitative content analysis (Bryman, 1988; Ercikan and Roth, 2006; Cohen et al, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Methods including structured observations,

tests and questionnaires are often used in quantitative research and it is claimed by Howe, (1988); Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004) that these demonstrate a scientific approach regarded to be founded on positivism, in so much as methods used in natural science research e.g. physics, are appropriate for use with social science research. Positivism is based on an assumption that the patterns and regularities, causes and consequences seen in the natural sciences also exist in the social sciences. It entails conviction that only observable phenomena can be classed as knowledge and that knowledge is arrived at through the accumulation of scientific facts (Denscombe, 2010).

The Qualitative Paradigm

Conversely methodologies associated with the qualitative research paradigm, also described as interpretative, naturalistic, and subjective research, reflect the stance that the researcher is crucial to the construction of the data and include participant observation, ethnography, phenomenology, life history and case study (Denscombe, 2010). In addition research methods include unstructured interviews (as opposed to the tightly structured survey interview), focus groups, observations, and the study of historical data such as diaries and autobiographies (Bryman, 1988; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Cohen et al, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Just as quantitative research is believed to be based on a positivist understanding of how knowledge of the social world should be generated, Howe (1988) contends qualitative research is seen to be based on a set of interpretive assumptions about the study of social reality. The interpretive approach to studying the social world seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans from the point of view of those being studied.

These two paradigms are described as being positioned at opposite ends of a continuum of philosophical beliefs covering the nature and purpose of research (Howe, 1988; Johnson et al., 2007); it is inevitable that disagreements between their supporters will occur. One of the main

areas of disagreement between the two paradigms focuses on the research methods used within each paradigm, and from this position issues arise around the validity of data, values of the researcher, generalisation, and replication.

Paradigms and Methods

It is claimed by Bryman, (1988; 1992), Mason, (2006), Morgan, (2007), Denscombe, (2010) that quantitative researchers consider their methods replicate those used in the natural sciences and therefore produce data which is quantifiable, reliable and consistent and that their research can test and validate theories that are already constructed. Data produced by qualitative research methods is not collected using systematic procedures and therefore cannot be checked by another researcher, nor can the data collection be replicated unlike the quantitative experiment which can be carried out by a number of people at different times but resulting in the same conclusions (Bryman, 1988; Bryman, 1992; Mason, 2006; Morgan, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). However the response of qualitative researchers is to ask if human beings and the complex society in which they live can be studied using the same tools or methods that are used when researching in the field of natural science (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Cohen et al, 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004) suggest that qualitative researchers ask how relevant the categories and theories are to the research participants of quantitative research; conversely qualitative research categories are based on participants own categories of meaning.

Researchers' values

Bryman, (1988) claims supporters of positivism and quantitative research take a particular stance in relation to the researcher's own values stating that the researcher must aim to be value-free so that their objectivity is unimpaired. But what does 'value-free' mean and is it possible to achieve this in social science research?

Anderson (1998) puts forward the following point about values when he says:

Values represent the intrinsic beliefs we hold as people, organizations, societies and cultures. Values are held close to our hearts and impact the decisions we make, the way we approach situations, the way we look at the world, and the way we process and reconstruct knowledge.

The positivist approach to research has claimed to be value free....The qualitative research community, and anyone involved in human science research, recognize that it is impossible to do value-free research. Values, like politics, are ever present and will impact on the research process. Rather than deny their existence, prudent researchers will attempt to understand and make explicit, their personal values while at the same time, seek to understand the values held by people, organizations or cultures being researched or supporting the research.

(p.167)

Anderson's (1998) view that value-free or value neutrality is impossible to sustain or even attain especially when using qualitative research methods, is supported by others (Macdonald, 1993; Carr, 1995; Boyd, 2000). It is important therefore that qualitative researchers make their values visible from the outset. However, others such as Greenbank, (2003), Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004), Denzin and Lincoln, (2005) claim it is impossible to keep values out of quantitative research as the researcher's values are reflected in the basic choices they make about their research including what they will research, the questions and methods they will use to acquire data and their interpretation of the data obtained.

Generalisation of Research Findings

A further area of discussion focuses on the generalisation of research findings. Bryman, (1988, 1992), Mason, (2006), Morgan, (2007) Denscombe, (2010) claim the strength of quantitative work is that their findings can be legitimately attributed to a wider population than the original sample because of techniques employed to select representative

samples for their original research. However, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004) criticise this stance suggesting instead that knowledge produced from quantitative research may be “too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations, contexts, and individuals” (, p.19). Generalisation is not a characteristic of qualitative research, as smaller sample sizes are generally used to enable rich, deep data to be collected. Furthermore some allege that claims about the use of generalisation from quantitative research are overstated (Bryman, 1988; Ercikan and Roth, 2006).

As discussed, replication of research resulting in the same outcomes is seen as a strength of quantitative research and a weakness of qualitative research; however Bryman (1988) states that replications are comparatively rare in social sciences and their “prominence in the natural sciences is often exaggerated” (p.38).

Validity of Data

Arguments have continued in the research community around the validity of data of the opposing paradigm, centred on some of the areas discussed above (Ball and Gerwitz, 1997; Tooley, 1997). Moreover, debates around relativism and the nature of knowledge and reality have always taken place and are documented in the works of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, and “many of the deepest divisions fuelling today’s paradigm differences have been with us since these ancient times” (Johnson and Gray, 2010, p.72). Bryman (1992) agrees that many of the central themes at the heart of the qualitative/quantitative debate are centuries old, however the ‘debate’ itself began in the 1960’s. Until the increased interest in qualitative research in the 1960s the dominant discourse in what has been described by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) as the “paradigm wars” was the quantitative research paradigm.

The Paradigm Debate

From the 1960s researchers positioned themselves, and their work, in either the quantitative or qualitative 'camp' based on their divergent assumptions about the nature and purpose of social science research as argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2005):

By the 1960s, battle lines were drawn within the quantitative and qualitative camps. Quantitative scholars relegated qualitative research to a subordinate status in the scientific arena. In response, qualitative researchers extolled the humanist virtues of their subjective, interpretive approach to the study of human group life.

(p. 2)

There has been a great deal written about the importance of situating research in either a qualitative or quantitative research paradigm; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) discuss how graduates felt the need to pledge allegiance to one research paradigm or another to get a job in academia (p.14), but Schwandt (2000) states that the distinction between the two paradigms is no longer meaningful. Biesta (2010) argues: "research in itself can be neither qualitative nor quantitative; only data can properly be said to be qualitative or quantitative" (p.98). Ercikan and Roth (2006) describe the separation of the two paradigms as "polarisation" adding that this limits research inquiry; this is supported by Mason (2006). Ercikan and Roth (2006) question whether it is possible to separate the two paradigms in research, as aspects of both are present in the material world because phenomena can be both quantitative and qualitative at same time, and further suggest that instead of focusing on differences researchers should focus on the "construction of good research questions and conducting of good research" (p.15); this is supported by others (Howe, 1988; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Different questions require different methods to answer them so it is important to get the right method for the question

(Bryman, 1992; Mason, 2006; Morgan, 2007; Sikes, 2007). As Denscombe (2010) states:

Rather than argue about one form or the best form of knowledge at the expense of another, why not respect multiple forms of knowledge and examine when they overlap, how they can be combined or integrated, and when they should be kept separate.

(p.204)

The Third Paradigm

A third paradigm has evolved: mixed methods research (MMR) (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2008). The term mixed methods research describes a range of research elements that may be combined in one research study. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define it as a “class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (p.17), others define it similarly (Howe, 1988; Johnson et al., 2007; Wheeldon, 2010) . Howe (1988) describes those who firmly believe that quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and methods should not be mixed as supporters of the “incompatibility thesis” (p.10). He continues that incompatibilists (including Smith, 1983; and Guba, 1987) would explain that researchers cannot mix paradigms due to their beliefs in “reality, truth, the relationship with the investigator and the object of investigation”.

Conversely, Johnson et al., (2007) claim pragmatists argue that it is possible to keep the quantitative and qualitative paradigms separate but it is also possible to combine the two. They continue by stating that pragmatism is the philosophical position that underpins mixed methods research.

Denscombe (2010) defines pragmatism as “an approach that takes the research problem as its fundamental concern” (p.324), Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) support this view, as do Johnson and Onwuegbuzie

(2004) in their comprehensive list of the characteristics of pragmatism; it “rejects traditional dualisms (e.g. rationalism vs. empiricism, subjectivism vs. objectivism) and generally prefers more moderate and commonsense versions of philosophical dualisms based on how well they work in solving problems” (p.18). They add that critics of pragmatism claim that it may only effect “incremental change rather than more fundamental, structural, or revolutionary change in society” later concluding that philosophical debates will not end because of pragmatism. As Johnson (2008) states; philosophy is important for research but should be used as a “partner for MMR not its dictator” (p.206).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that quantitative and qualitative research are both useful and important and that ultimately all social science research “represents an attempt to provide warranted assertions about human beings and the environments in which they live and evolve” (p.15). They describe MMR as an expansive and creative not restrictive form of research and Ercikan and Roth (2006) purport that it allows the researcher to think innovatively.

Howe (1988) contends that the quantitative/qualitative distinction is utilised most “accurately and most deceptively at the level of design and analysis” (p.11) as researchers mix the two even when they position themselves in one research paradigm. He adds that it is difficult to imagine any study with no qualitative elements, “quantitative and qualitative methods are inextricably intertwined” (p.12). Furthermore Howe (1988) declares that researchers should not let a paradigm determine the amount of work that can be done in an inquiry.

Cresswell (2010) argues that MMR is more than the collection of two independent strands of quantitative and qualitative data but that it involves the “connection, integration, or linking of these two strands” (p.51). The suggestion that researchers could combine qualitative and quantitative methods in their work has, according to Morgan (2007), provoked much discussion with some seeing the idea as worthy but preferring to let others be the “standard bearers” (Mason, 2006, p.10). It

is likely that some of the criticism levelled at MMR has occurred because researchers have been unclear about their reasons for positioning their work within this paradigm. Bryman (2006) found that researchers gave reasons that did not always tally up with their practice; he attributed this to researchers not fully thinking through their rationales. Critics of MMR may classify it as “anything goes” or lack of rigour (Seale et al., 2004; Freshwater, 2007). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) claim that there are two major categories of MMR - mixed-model in which qualitative and quantitative approaches are mixed *within* or *across* the stages of the research process; and mixed method - where a qualitative and a quantitative phase are included in a research study. Included in both these categories are a range of combinations of research methods.

MMR is not new, as Sikes (2007) states; “educational research projects frequently make use of procedures that have come to be associated with both paradigms” (p.7). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) agree with this. It is however a “new movement, or discourse, or research paradigm” (Johnson et al., 2007, p.113) that has emerged in the last twenty years (Greene, 2008; Denscombe, 2010).

I suggest it is likely that the debate will continue but I also believe there will always be those who establish themselves and their research at one end or the other of the qualitative/quantitative continuum. Others do not see this as a dichotomy, even suggesting that it is an invention (Howe, 1988). Howe states that both quantitative and qualitative data is needed to reflect the complexity of the situations being studied. He concludes that researchers must get over the “problem of resistance so as to make educational research serve a democratic society” (p.255). I believe it important to select the most appropriate research methodologies and methods to answer the research questions as in my view that is the *raison d'être* for research.

The paradigm position of my research

As discussed above, many believe that value neutrality in qualitative research (Macdonald, 1993; Carr, 1995; Boyd, 2000) and quantitative research (Greenbank, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) is impossible because researchers' values are reflected in the choices they make about their research. So when considering the paradigm debate above, arguments from both sides reflected my views.

Whilst respecting the opinions of those who believe it vital to keep the quantitative and qualitative paradigms in research separate, I contend that being able to combine the two, where appropriate, in mixed methods research allows access to a wider range of research tools; according to Johnson et al., (2007) and Denscombe (2010) this is the view of a pragmatist. My research problem was to discover 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' Following consideration of the arguments above I considered that a MMR approach would be most suitable to address my study. This study uses an 'across-stage mixed-model design' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.20) as it includes a qualitative phase (my interviews) and a quantitative phase (my survey - which also produced some qualitative data). In my survey I also use a 'within-stage mixed model design' (ibid) as my questionnaire included questions designed to collect quantitative data, for example rating scale questions, and questions designed to collect qualitative data, for example open-ended questions.

Research Styles

I examined a variety of research styles, or methodologies, including experiments, action research, case study, ethnography, historical and documentary research, phenomenology, grounded theory and surveys as variously discussed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and Denscombe (2010). I explored the principles, rationales and purposes of these research styles in some detail during the draft stage of this thesis.

However, mindful that the choice of research strategy “depends on identifying one that works best for the particular research project in mind” (Denscombe, 2010, p.4), I employed a survey research style, discounting the others.

Surveys

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) surveys gather data at a particular point in time so that the researcher can “describe the nature of conditions and provide a summary” or identify “standards against which existing conditions can be compared” or determine “the relationships that exist between specific events” (p.206). Surveys allow the researcher to obtain a breadth of information relating to a group of people and hence are not suitable to acquire in-depth data or to look at individuals. As my research requires the eliciting of views from childminders across an LA a survey approach is most fitting. A variety of different survey modes exist; postal, internet, telephone, group administered, face-to-face or interview, and observational (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010). Each mode has strengths and weaknesses, and consequently some modes are more appropriate than others. Telephone surveys allow an instant response to questions, but are labour intensive and more suitable for smaller cohort numbers than I would use. This is also the case for group administered surveys. Face-to-face or interview surveys allow the researcher and the respondent opportunities to corroborate responses and therefore validate answers, but again this is labour intensive and more appropriate for use with smaller numbers. Observational surveys can provide detailed factual records of specific behaviours, events and settings, focusing on what people actually do; however this does not meet my requirements.

None of the above survey modes were appropriate for my study although the two remaining types - postal and internet are both apt. Both involve the use of ‘self-completion’ questionnaires, the difference being the method used to distribute and collect them.

Surveys and questionnaires

Questionnaires are the most appropriate method to collect data to address the research questions for my survey as they facilitate the collection of data from the large number of participants I wanted to include.

The use of questionnaires with such a large group of possible respondents raised a number of issues aside from ethical ones. Primarily, the cost of production and distribution of around 500 questionnaires was vast. As an LA employee I discussed with my line manager including my questionnaire in a mail-out by the Family Information Service (FIS). However as Sikes (2007) suggests it is important to consider the question of social power; as a local authority officer I was concerned that childminders may assume my questionnaire had originated from the LA, possibly influencing their response or pressurising them to complete the questionnaire. Careful consideration of the design and wording of the questionnaire and covering letter was required to avoid any allegation of bias or impartiality (Foddy, 2004; Sikes, 2007). A further issue arising was the amount of time required for the filling and emptying of envelopes and collation of answers. I recognised that this was a huge undertaking but believed it manageable within my timeframe.

Another option was to send questionnaires electronically as an email attachment or a link to a web-based version: these options were dependent on childminders being computer-literate and having access to the internet. In my LA all childminders and daycare providers have been provided with laptops and internet access, although there have been difficulties with internet access in some areas. It is difficult to predict to what extent childminders are confident in using computers and their applications: nonetheless this would be by far the most cost-efficient method of distribution and was worthy of consideration. Using e-mail to distribute the questionnaires and reminders is economical, saving money on consumables and postage (Mehta and Sivadas, 1995; Jones and Pitt,

1999), but there is an increased cost in researcher time for the development of the web-based questionnaire (Watt, 1997; Fricker and Schonlau, 2002).

Response to questionnaires

A further potential issue is a poor return of completed questionnaires, both paper-based (postal) and electronic, resulting in insufficient data from which to draw conclusions. Discussing postal distribution Cohen et al., (2007) suggest a 40% response rate is *possible* from an original mailing and that a further 20% may follow after a first reminder, a second increases the response rate by a further 10% and a third by just 5%. I am self-funding this study and the cost of the initial mail-out could prohibit me from sending reminders.

Research into response rates from questionnaires distributed via internet or post has produced mixed findings. Truell et al., (2002) reported similar response rates between postal and those sent as an email attachment however a much higher response was achieved from a web-based version. Conversely others (Shermis and Lombard, 1999; Fricker and Schonlau, 2002) found that the response rate for emailed questionnaires was far lower than for the same mailed paper questionnaire.

The possibility of a low number of returns was a risk I was prepared to take to give all childminders in my LA the opportunity to participate; further consideration would have to be given to the impact of low numbers should this occur, on the validity of my study.

To summarise: in terms of cost and response rates there appears to be little difference in the literature to support the distribution of questionnaires by one method or another. Truell et al., (2002) found that the response speed of questionnaire returns was much faster through internet-based surveys but Fricker and Schonlau (2002) dispute this. Others have focused on the technological drawbacks of using computers including software, hardware and network speeds and the resulting

frustrations of respondents when faced with technical problems (Zhang, 1999; Schleyler and Forrest, 2000; Fricker and Schonlau, 2002).

It is important to take into account the personal preferences and capabilities of respondents and the researcher. Although my Information Technology (IT) skills are adequate for my job I am not capable of designing a web-based questionnaire so would have to attach a simple questionnaire to an email if I were to pursue the route of electronic distribution. I prefer to read documents and complete questionnaires in hard copy rather than on a screen and essentially I would be more comfortable working with paper-based questionnaires, both as a respondent and researcher.

To pilot my questionnaire (discussed in-depth in Chapter Four of this study) I emailed it as an attachment to a childminder co-ordinator in a neighbouring LA to be distributed to childminders. She e-mailed this to some possible respondents and printed some hard copies for others. She reported that the paper-based versions prompted a greater response than those which were e-mailed. Following this trial I consulted with the Family Information Service (FIS) in my LA, to establish how many childminders had active e-mail addresses, I found that only approximately 50% of them did. I considered e-mailing as many questionnaires as possible and posting the remainder but ultimately decided to post them all.

Whilst it is important to select the appropriate method of distribution it is of equal importance to ensure that the design of the questionnaire is 'fit for purpose'. A number of texts addressing the development and use of questionnaires (Foddy, 1994; Oppenheim, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007) are explored in the fieldwork chapter.

Questionnaire ethics

A number of ethical issues must be considered with any study involving human participants and a description of the ethical review procedure for

this study is included at the end of this chapter. Also there are ethical concerns from the questionnaire research method. Simply by sending out questionnaires I would intrude into the lives of the respondents in terms of time taken firstly to read the questionnaire and secondly to complete it should they choose to take part (Cohen et al., 2007; Sikes, 2007). Obviously it was unethical to coerce respondents to participate, this was their choice based on a full explanation of the purpose of my study, how the data would be used and with whom it would be shared. It was important to include the key points in a concise readable style as too much information could deter some childminders from participating if the paperwork appeared cumbersome and time-consuming. Confidentiality was assured for those that took part, no names would be included on the questionnaire unless respondents chose to include them and participants would not be traceable. I would also reassure them that this research would not cause them any harm, explaining what information would be shared, with whom and how this would be done (Aubrey et al., 2000), in fact I would hope that it would improve the childminders' situation within the LA as their opinions will be recorded and hopefully acted upon. Using questionnaires negated the need to obtain signed consent forms from all the respondents, as participation signalled their informed consent; however it was vital that my covering letter provided all the facts the respondents needed to make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate. It also made clear that respondents need not complete all items on the questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2007).

Interviews and Focus Groups

I have previously explained my reasons for choosing a survey method for my study. However, Gillham (2000) states that questionnaire data is "necessarily thin" (p.10) as the information obtained provides an overview but little depth; indeed the questionnaires I used were the means to acquire the breadth of information I originally sought. However as my research progressed I considered that some in-depth information would enhance the wealth of data collected through the

questionnaires. Whilst exploring the literature on Life Historical approaches I came across four short questions which, to me, summarised the depth of information I sought which would enhance the breadth of data I had already collected, namely: “why, how, what’s it like and what does it mean to you?” (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.22). These questions are intended to explore the “opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences” of interviewees (Denscombe, 2010, p.174) and I hoped to explore these in greater depth than would be possible via questionnaires alone. I chose to describe such ‘personal opinions’ and ‘feelings’ as ‘deep-level’ information, because to me they are not visible through questionnaire data or by semi -structured interviews alone and instead could be brought to light by adapting other research approaches. .

Therefore, although I originally planned to use solely a survey method I agreed with the views of Gillham, (ibid) and also Denzin and Lincoln (2005), who state that using a combination of research methods in any study adds “breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry” (p.5). So, to obtain this ‘deep-level’ information on the *views* of the childminders, I considered the use of interviews, as Gillham (2000) contends that “the overpoweringly positive feature of the interview is the richness and vividness of the material it turns up” (p.10). Through the interview process participants (interviewers and interviewees) can “discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.351). An explanation of the type of interview I selected, and the interview process used in my study follows in subsequent chapters.

Noaks and Wincup (2004) identified four types of interview strategies; structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews and focus groups. Below I will explore the first three of these types of interview strategy, followed by a brief discussion of in-depth interviews. Then I will compare the advantages and disadvantages of the interview method before addressing the topic of focus groups. Finally I will explain which interview strategy I chose to use and my reasons for this decision.

Structured, semi-structured and open-ended interviews

Structured interviews are conducted to obtain answers to direct questions written beforehand by the researcher. This type of interview is “like a questionnaire which is administered face-to-face” (Denscombe, 2010, p.174). When conducting structured interviews researchers use one set of questions with all interviewees, often offering a choice of answers to closed questions, thus enabling more straightforward data analysis (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Silverman, 2006) which lends itself to the collection of quantitative data (Denscombe, 2010). This type of interview is often used in market research.

Researchers using semi-structured interviews also have a list of issues and questions to be addressed but are more flexible about the order in which they are addressed and more significantly they “let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher” (Denscombe, 2010, p.175). It is asserted that researchers need to develop rapport with the interviewees when carrying out semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Noaks and Wincup, 2004; Seidman, 2006). Of course it would be extremely difficult to conduct an interview if the interviewee did not feel at ease with the interviewer “interviewee statements can be affected by the identity of the interviewer” (Denscombe, 2010)

In unstructured interviews the researcher introduces a theme or topic and then lets the interviewee talk freely around their ideas. Fontana and Frey (2005) describe the open-ended, in-depth interview as “the traditional type of unstructured interview” (p.705). The purpose of in-depth interviewing is to understand the lived experience of others and the meaning they make of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). Denscombe (2010) asserts that semi-structured and unstructured interviews are on a “continuum and, in practice, it is likely that any interview will slide back and forth along the scale” (p.175)

In-depth interviews

Seidman (2006) suggests the “Three Interview Series” (p. 16) to be used for in- depth interviews: 1) focused life history, 2) details of their experience, 3) reflection on the meaning. He states that an acceptable length of time that each of these interviews should last is 90 minutes - as an hour is too short a time and two hours can seem too long. Whatever length of interview is planned it is important that this is stated to the interviewee before the interview takes place (Gillham, 2000; Seidman, 2006; Silverman, 2006). In-depth interviews are used as a method of data collection in life history research (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Plummer, 2001). Life historians recognise that “lives are not hermetically compartmentalized” because all parts of our lives, personal and professional, overlap and affect each other (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.2). In-depth interviews provide a holistic view of interviewees, and their unstructured character enables interviewers to get a broader perspective than can be gained from a highly structured interview.

Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Seidman, (2006) claims interviews are the most appropriate method of discovering other people’s stories about their lived experiences and can produce data in detail allowing the interviewer and interviewee the opportunity to discuss issues in depth. Denscombe (2010) adds that interviews are a very flexible method of data collection as “developing lines of enquiry” can be followed as they occur (Denscombe, 2010, p.192) and issues can be clarified as they arise to eliminate any ambiguity.

Conversely Gillham (2000) questions the validity of interview data as interviewees are sometimes reluctant to tell the whole truth for a variety of reasons including embarrassment and fear. In addition, memories of events and feelings are not always accurate, especially regarding events that took place a long time ago. Although interviews can be conducted

relatively quickly, transcription and analysis are very labour intensive; this needs to be considered before undertaking interviews (Gillham, 2000; Seidman, 2006; Silverman, 2006; Denscombe, 2010).

The methods I chose to use in this study of childminders.

I originally intended to conduct focus groups to complement my questionnaire results, including a section on the questionnaire asking participants if they wished to take part in a focus group. However as I collated the data I realised I had a great deal of quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires. I decided that sufficient deep-level information needed for my study could be achieved through interviews with two or possibly three childminders.

I decided not to conduct structured interviews, because they are “based on pre-tested, standardised questions” (Silverman, 2006, p.143) and are too similar to a questionnaire format. I also decided that unstructured interviews were inappropriate because I was focusing specifically on the views of childminders on changes to their role and therefore I needed to have some control over the direction of the discussions. Whilst acknowledging the views of life historians that human lives can not be compartmentalised because of the interplay between all aspects of personal and professional lives, it was important that interviews concentrated on the childminders views of their role as this is the study focus.

Ethics and the ethical consent process

Although childminders are mainly self-employed I needed consent from the Local Authority in which they, and for whom I, work, as I hoped that ultimately the outcomes of this study will influence future childminder training and support. Ensuring that my employers were fully informed maximised the potential of this study to help childminders receive appropriate training and support (Taylor et al., 1999). Wellington et al.,

(2005) and Sikes (2007) emphasise the importance of sensitivity due to the implications of differences in social power between researchers and researched. I considered the issue of access to a research population, discussed by Sikes (2007), as the group of people I researched were childminders whom I have supported in my role as a Local Authority Early Years Consultant.

Permission to carry out my research in the LA was given by the Senior Management Team. I completed the University's Research Ethics Application Form and my application was approved (Appendix 1).

Subsequently, as it became apparent that face to face interviews with individual or pairs of childminders instead of focus groups would be more complimentary to the survey data I had already collected I completed an 'Unforeseen Events Report Form' and the changes were accepted.

In the following chapter I discuss specific details of how I formulated my questionnaire and planned the interviews which comprised the fieldwork used in my study.

CHAPTER 4

Planning the Fieldwork

Questionnaire design

After the initial decision to use a questionnaire to elicit the views of the childminders I had to determine which questions to ask whilst remembering that according to Gillham (2007) the “overall length of a questionnaire is critical (four to six pages is the usual tolerance maximum)” (p.39). I had spent a significant amount of time considering possible questions whilst developing and refining my research question, however never having worked as a childminder it would have been inappropriate to assume that I knew the key issues. As Gillham (2007) warns against the construction of questionnaires by researchers “off the top of their heads for groups of people quite different from themselves” (p.17), it was an important part of the development process to understand the views of current childminders. In the course of training sessions delivered over a period of two years as a Local Authority Early Years Consultant, I was party to many anecdotal conversations between childminders, and from these I began to understand more fully the issues and topics that were important to childminders in my LA. The conversations I had with childminders lacked formality and structure but I believe that they were more useful to my study in that they reflected the views of the majority of childminders within my LA as opposed to a small sample that would have been selected to take part in a focus group. These anecdotal conversations occurred whilst I was undertaking my day-to-day work, rather than in my role as a researcher; consequently I was not intending to collect data. I did however note in my research diary the key points raised. Combining the information obtained from such conversations with my own ideas I formulated some general topics to be explored in my study including; areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the role, career and qualification information, and support and training received and required. I then turned my attention to

previous research studies as Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) discuss the “importance of finding out what is already ‘known’ in an area of research, what’s been done before, and (just as importantly) how it’s been done” (p.46).

I began by looking at the four studies previously mentioned, conducted in the last 35 years, which elicited the views of contemporary childminders either through questionnaires or interviews: The Community Relations Council (1975); Mayall and Petrie (1977); Mooney et al., (2001a; 2001b); and The Department of Education, (2010).

[Due to some variation in the questions used in the annual surveys, where possible I have compared the information from the most recent surveys with my own finding.]

To allow me to learn from and build upon these previous studies I decided to explore the range of questions in the respective surveys; to identify similarities and differences between them and the findings from them. The four studies varied greatly in numbers and geographic location of the respondents; two were national studies (Mooney et al. 2001b; DfE, 2010) and the other two (Community Relations Council, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977) focused on distinct localities. However there were many similarities, and many questions were common to more than one of the studies. I grouped the questions used in all four surveys according to thematic similarities (Weber, 1990) for example age, gender, qualifications, career as a childminder, and training. I then categorised the questions into four discrete groups: personal; career; support and training; and childminder’s views of their own role. This structured and simplified the task of comparing one study’s content with another. For the purpose of clarity and for ease of reference I have displayed this in table format (Appendix 2). In the table one vertical column is used for each of the studies, the title of which heads up the column. Each horizontal line represents one of the four groups discussed above (personal; career; support and training; and childminder’s views of their own role). To enable comparison questions

with the same focus, for example the respondents' number of years as a childminder, are displayed in the table adjacent to one another. If a particular area was not explored in the study then a gap was left in the column. I paraphrased the majority of the questions to eliminate unnecessary wordage and repetition where this would not affect the accuracy of the original content. Some questions were included verbatim as paraphrasing would have affected their meaning.

I have discussed the findings from the four studies in a range of ways that I believe appropriate, namely – the literature review contains a detailed look at each study with reference to other literature; a brief summary of the findings are included in the table where I believe they contribute to the discussions regarding which questions to use in my own study; and some of the findings and issues arising from them are discussed in more detail within the analysis of the questionnaires from this study.

I found interesting questions in all four studies and many similarities between them, however the CRC study and that by Mayall and Petrie are over 30 years old and so some questions are no longer pertinent, for example the question asking whether the toilet was indoors or outdoors. There were also many questions I would have liked to include because I would have been interested to investigate the opinions of the childminders on other topics, for example working mothers, but this would have resulted in a very long questionnaire indeed. Remembering Gillham's(2009) caveat to make every question earn its place I filtered previously used questions as I needed to select areas that would best support my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' and were pertinent to a study conducted in 2010.

Personal questions

Oppenheim (1992) describes personal questions as “classifying questions” the answers to which may be deeply personal for the respondents but are used by the researcher to classify those respondents (p.108). Typical classifying questions include age, gender and ethnicity of the respondent and all were used in the studies by Mooney et al., (2001b) and DfE (2010). Mayall and Petrie (1977) did not ask a question on gender but stated in the text that all childminders in the study were women. The CRC study did not ask any of the above three questions: it was stated in the text that all childminders were female of which there were “127 white, 39 black and 20 Asian” (p.36). As a researcher it was important that I collated data that would be useful for classifying and analysing further information obtained. I decided that ethnicity of respondents was not vital to my research but that details of age and gender would be useful for analysis purposes as it is suggested in the literature that many childminders begin and remain in the job whilst their own children are young (Ferri, 1992; Mooney et al, 2001a; Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001).

The studies by Mooney et al. (2001b) and DfE (2010) asked the childminders about educational qualifications achieved and the DfE study also asked towards which qualifications childminders were working. The older studies (CRC (1975) and Mayall and Petrie (1977)) did not address this as the drive towards raising the level of qualifications for all childcare workers including childminders is a relatively recent initiative as evidenced in the Children’s Workforce Strategy (DfES, 2005).

An audit including questions about qualifications, age, gender and ethnicity of the childcare workforce in my LA was undertaken between July and September 2010 (Kirklees Council, 2010). One purpose of the audit was to build up a picture of the workforce in order to ‘identify and target training’ (p.4). Part of the work of my LA is to provide opportunities and funding to support the development of qualifications of the childcare workforce as is stated in the Early Years Outcomes Duty

Plan “to ensure that Kirklees has a highly qualified, competent and confident childcare workforce” (Kirklees Council, 2010, p. 5). The response rate of childminders to the local authority audit was 50% - lower than all the other groups (Private Day Nursery (PDN); Pre-schools; Nursery Unit of an Independent School (NUIS); Out of School Care (OOSC); and Holiday Clubs) as Figure 4.1 shows.

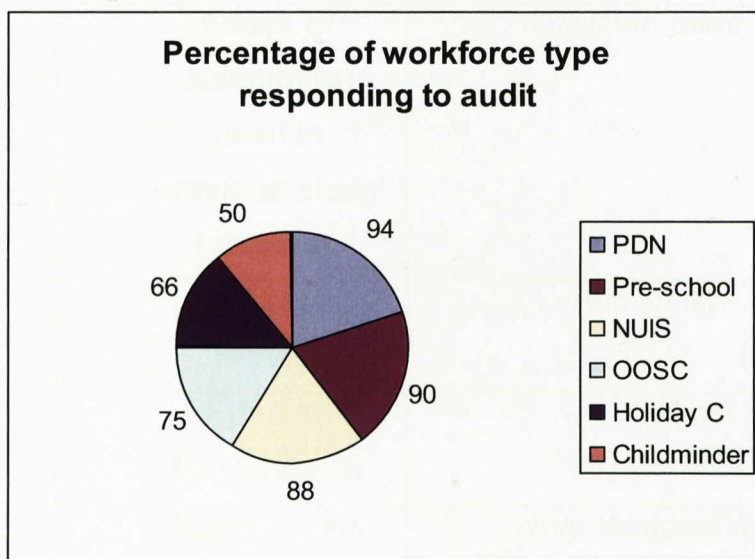


Figure 4.1 Percentage of workforce type responding to LA audit.

I was aware that including a question about qualifications in my own study was duplicating part of the local authority audit; however I needed the information to enable some in-depth analysis and comparison of the data as the literature suggests a strong link between higher qualifications and the quality of early years provision (Sylva et al., 2003; Taggart et al., 2003, Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2006).

Mayall and Petrie (1977) and Mooney et al. (2001b) asked the childminders about their marital status. Initially I did not consider this relevant to my study as my interest lay with their views of the role. However after further consideration I realised that the response to this question may go some way to explaining why childminders started in the job, for example to look after their own children or to work from home to enable them to be a carer (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mayall and Petrie,

1983; Gelder, 1993; Mooney et al., 2001a). This may also give an indication of how long they planned to continue in this role (Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001). However I chose to use direct questions about their career rather than asking about marital status or co-habiting.

In summary, the personal questions I chose are (figure 4.2):

Focus of question(s) used in previous study (studies).	Question used in my study (and question number).
Age	And finally...your age ...your gender. (Question 20)
Gender	
Ethnicity	Did not use these questions.
Marital status	
Qualifications attained	What childcare qualifications (if any) have you gained and what (if any) are you working towards? (Question 13)
Qualifications being worked towards	

Figure 4.2 Summary of personal questions used in my study.

Career questions

The CRC (1975), Mayall and Petrie (1977), and Mooney et al., (2001b) studies asked if respondents had their own pre-school children and the questions and results are included under the heading 'personal questions' in the table (Appendix 2). However, I assumed that this question was asked to gain an understanding of why childminders chose to take up the job. I too was interested to discover why, but rather than asking solely about childminders 'own children' I asked them to identify their main reason for becoming a childminder. I believed that this would elicit a wider range of answers and give a better understanding of their different reasons; similarly Mayall and Petrie (1977) and Mooney et al. (2001b) also used a separate question to ask respondents why they had become childminders. These two studies, published 24 years apart, showed marked differences between the responses. Mayall and Petrie depicted a group of women who had taken on the role to alleviate ill health, boredom, loneliness and/or depression; this was the case for nearly 25% of the childminders in this study. A comparison of the reasons given in these two studies is shown (Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4).

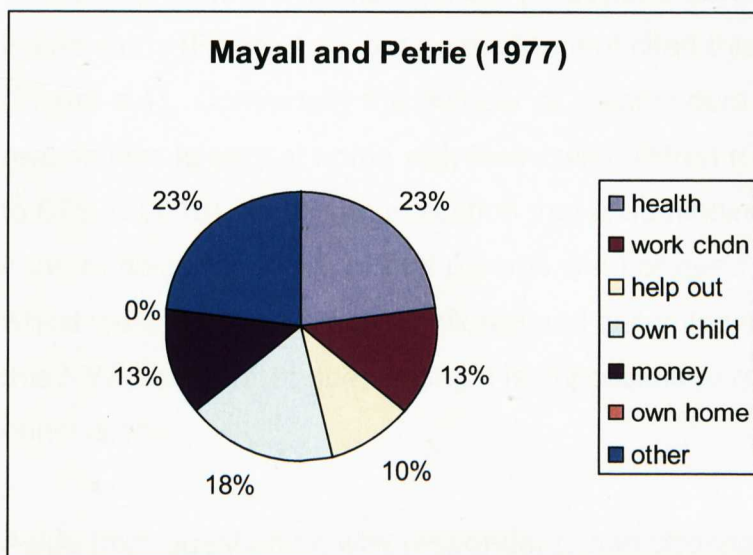


Figure 4.3 Reasons why childminders started in the role - Mayall and Petrie (1977)

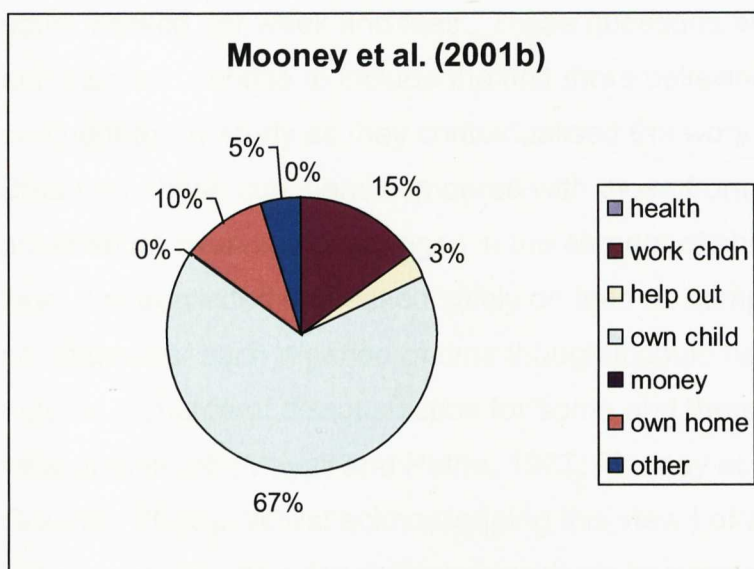


Figure 4.4 Reasons why childminders started in the role – Mooney et al. (2001b).

Comparing figures 4.3 and 4.4 is problematic as the wording of the answers does not correspond and the numbers of respondents varies greatly; 39 childminders took part in Mayall and Petrie's (1977) study compared to 487 who answered this question in the study by Mooney et al., (2001b). However there are some very obvious differences between the two. Health, including ill-health, boredom, loneliness and depression account for 23% of the total number (n=39) of answers in the Mayall and Petrie study (Figure 4.3), but no respondent cited this in Mooney et al. (Figure 4.4). Conversely the number of childminders stating that their reason was to stay at home with their own children rose from 18% (1977) to 67% (2001b). Is this an indication that childminding is presently a career choice for some, or that parents want or need to earn money whilst looking after their own children and childminding allows them to do this? Without further questioning it is impossible to reach any definitive conclusions.

Aside from questioning why respondents had chosen to become childminders, most questions in the 'career' section of the table (Appendix 2) are those I classified as factual regarding the job i.e. number of years as a childminder, number and ages of children minded,

hours worked per week and fees. These questions are included in all four studies. I chose to include the first three believing them to be pertinent to my study as they contextualised the work of the childminder. Data from these questions compared with those from previous studies provided an overview of changes in the careers of childminders over time. I disregarded a question solely on fees as comparison would be of no value over such a period of time though it could be argued that fees may be a source of dissatisfaction for some and therefore impact on their view of their job (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001a; Greener, 2009). Whilst acknowledging this view I offered an open-ended question to provide a forum for respondents to express themselves regarding the most satisfying and dissatisfying aspects of their role. Mayall and Petrie (1977) and Mooney et al. (2001b) also enquired as to what childminders found most satisfying and dissatisfying about their roles and their findings will be compared with mine later in this chapter.

Mayall and Petrie (1977) and Mooney et al. (2001b) both asked respondents about their previous jobs. The findings of Mayall and Petrie were reported under social class groupings using the Registrar General's classification of occupations. Of the 39 childminders 4 had no job previously, 17 had held jobs classified as social class II or III (non-manual), and 18 classified as III manual, IV or V. In Mooney et al.'s study 8% had no previous job, and the remaining 92% had "worked in a variety of occupations, though predominately semi-skilled and unskilled work in the service sector" (p.23). Along with a desire to know who was attracted to childminding I was also interested to explore any correlation between previous careers and current job satisfaction so included this question.

Mooney et al., (2001b) asked if respondents were registered; this was relevant as although I was using the LA list of registered minders, two previous studies, (Community Relations Council, 1975 and Mayall and Petrie, 1977) both reported difficulties experienced in aligning LA records

of registered childminders with those that actually were. For this reason I decided to include this question in my study.

In summary I decided to include the following 'career' questions (figure 4.5):

Focus of question(s) used in previous study (studies).	Question used in my study (and question number).
Registered minder?	Are you currently a registered childminder? If no, do you intend to work as a childminder again in the next 12 months? (Question 1)
Own young children	What was your main reason for becoming a childminder? (Question 3)
Reason(s) for becoming childminder	
Number of years as a childminder	How many years have you been a childminder? (Question 2)
Number and ages of children minded	How many children, in which age group do you mind? (Question 6)
Hours worked per week	How many hours per week do you work as a childminder? (Question 5)
Fees charged	Did not use this question
Previous jobs	What was your job before you became a childminder? (Question 4)
Most satisfying thing about role	What is the most satisfying aspect of childminding for you? (Question 9)
Most dissatisfying thing about role	What is the most dissatisfying aspect of childminding for you? (Question 10)

Figure 4.5 Summary of career questions used in my study.

Support and training questions

There is a wealth of literature examining the importance of training opportunities for childminders (Moss, 1987; Fischer and Eheart, 1991; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Helburn et al., 2002; Doherty et al., 2006) and these have been explored in the literature review in Chapter Two. All four of the studies I compared asked if childminders attended training. Interestingly questions on this topic became more detailed with time. In 1975 the CRC asked a general question about “services offered by the Local Authority” including training, and asked childminders “would you like any of them?”(p.70); financial support was a prominent theme in the responses. In 1977 Mayall and Petrie asked if any training was attended (15 of the 39 had). Changes to workforce development (including the introduction of National Occupational Standards in childcare and education and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the early 1990s, along with the implementation of the 1989 Children Act giving LAs the power to provide training and support) are reflected in the questions asked by Mooney et al. (2001b). Respondents were asked what non-qualification training they had attended in the last three years (76.1% had attended some) and how many hours they had spent on preparation to child-mind training (64% had received some). Interestingly Mooney et al. was the only study to ask why training was not attended. The 2008 provider survey DCSF (2009) concentrated on training attended in the previous 12 months – possibly reflecting the amount of training available and the current expectation that training will be attended. It was found that 80% of childminders had attended some training with 89% receiving some preparation training. No data on training was available from the 2009 survey (DfE, 2010). The policies and initiatives instigated by the Labour government (1997-2010) drove forward a vision of a qualified and skilled childcare workforce, supporting this with funding (Mathers, 2011). More recently documents including *Building Brighter Futures: Next Steps for the Children’s Workforce* (DCSF, 2008a) and *2020 Children and Young*

People's Workforce Strategy (DCSF, 2008b) planned further developments for the childcare workforce:

This publication sets out a vision for 2020 in which everyone who works with children and young people is: ambitious for every child and young person, excellent in their practice, committed to partnership and integrated working, and respected and valued as professionals.

(DCSF, 2008b, p.1)

However since the election of the coalition government in 2010 both these documents have been archived as they do not reflect the views of this government.

Training was certainly a 'hot topic' for the childminders that I spoke to, resulting in some very emotive discussions: their concerns included venues, timings, availability and suitability of courses. The views of childminders, workforce development initiatives and literature showing the importance of training for raising quality and retention of the workforce made this a topic that I strongly believed should be included in my questionnaire.

Support for childminders is widely recognised as vital because childminders are lone workers (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Owen, 1988). Respondents in the CRC study (1975) showed an interest in meetings for childminders (129 from 186 childminders), support with difficult children (146 from 186) and support with play activities (77 from 186). Mooney et al. (2001b) asked childminders to whom they turned for help; 64% said another childminder and 58% said an LA advisor. The amount of LA support varied from one LA to another (ibid, p.35). One of the relatively new functions of the childminder co-ordinators in my LA is to provide the 'challenge and support' strategy (Kirklees Council, 2010) equivalent to that delivered by childcare coordinators to private day nurseries and pre-schools. In the independent review of the Early Years

Foundation Stage Dame Clare Tickell states: “I believe that in this time of change, childminders are uniquely vulnerable in their single practitioner status, and could be disproportionately impacted by the removal of local support” (Tickell, 2011, p.44). I therefore wanted to know if childminders felt adequately supported and if so by whom, so chose to include this question in some form. Support for childminders may come from a variety of sources, including the National Childminding Association (NCMA), other childminders, and networks (Mooney et al., 2001b; Owen, 2007; Watson, 2010). I offered these suggestions in a question covering the range of support available.

As stated previously I included a question about qualifications held, and being studied for, by childminders. In addition I included the following questions covering support and training (figure 4.6):

Focus of question(s) used in previous study (studies).	Question used in my study (and question number).
Training attended including non-qualification training	What non-qualification training have you attended in the last 2 years? (Question 15)
Hours spent on preparation to childmind training	To be a childminder, how many hours preparation training did you attend? (Question 14)
Who childminders turn to for help and support	Who supports you in your role as a childminder? (Question 7)
Reasons for non-attendance of training	Are there any reasons why you have not attended training? (Question 16) Does the training provided meet your needs? (Question 17) Is there any further training you require? (Question 18)
Advantages and disadvantages of being a registered childminder	Did not use this question.

Figure 4.6 Summary of support and training questions used in my study.

The provision of training as a duty of the LA is detailed in the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). Furthermore providing training for childminders forms part of my role and therefore it was crucial that questions around training and support were included in my study – I wish to share the answers to these questions with senior managers within my LA to provide evidence as to why training for childminders is essential and must continue to be provided. Tickell discusses “opportunities for further training and professional development” continuing:

This should be readily available to all practitioners, particularly single practitioners such as childminders who I have heard can struggle to access the same opportunities as larger, group providers and practitioners working in schools.

(2011, p.44)

For this reason, besides exploring the educational qualifications of the respondents, I wanted to discover what non-qualification training they had attended. Mooney et al., (2001b) had explored this from a national perspective but I wanted to focus specifically on courses provided for childminders in my LA, in order to explore any connections between course attendance, job satisfaction and their view of the role. From this it was important to ask the respondents if they felt that training provided in the LA met their needs and if there was any further training they required - this is the information I hoped to share with senior managers within the LA to influence training strategies for childminders.

Questions on views of the role

Many of the above questions and areas of enquiry were included in my questionnaire to enable classification, to ascertain background information or to gain an understanding of the current training situation, before questioning childminder's on their views of the role - the primary focus of my study.

Previous studies have explored how childminders view their role. The CRC (1975) asked what the work entailed: 37% said it was being a “substitute mother”, 22% caring for children, 35% playing with children, 18% teaching behaviour and manners, 10% teaching children to talk, read or write, and 25% to take children for walks - a very parental view. Likewise, Mooney et al. (2001b) asked childminders how they “saw their role and what they thought were their objectives as childminders”. To obtain this data respondents were asked to rate the importance of “goals in their work” these goals were offered in the form of statements, which covered functions of their role - the results are shown below (Figure 4.7).

Childminders' ratings of the importance of goals in their work				
	n	Importance		
		No %	Somewhat %	Very %
Provide safe physical environment	495	-	1.6	98.4
Make children feel loved	494	-	6.9	93.1
Help children develop and learn	492	0.2	12.2	87.6
Help child like self	488	0.8	18.9	80.2
Provide fun-filled activities	489	-	20.0	80.0
Home away from home	487	0.8	23.0	76.2
Social contacts for children	492	2.0	27.0	70.9
Service for families	491	1.6	42.2	56.2
Prepare children for school	489	2.0	45.4	52.6
Allow mothers to work	487	4.7	47.4	47.8

Figure 4.7 Childminders' ratings of the importance of goals in their work (Mooney et al. (2001b) p.39).

As shown above (Figure 4.7) 98.4% of childminders rated 'providing a safe physical environment' and 93.1% rated 'making children feel loved'

as very important goals of their work. These two goals reflect the traditional view of the nurturing role of childminders, as does providing a 'home away from home' which 76.2% of respondents rated as very important. The move towards childminders as educators can be seen as 87.6% of respondents rated "helping children develop and learn" as a very important goal in their work and 52.6% stating that "preparing children for school was important". By comparison Mayall and Petrie recorded only 10% of childminders referring to "teaching children to talk, read or write".

I initially considered asking childminders to rate statements that they felt represented their view of their role, as previous studies had, but whilst trying to identify possible statements to be included I realised that providing such may steer respondents into selecting answers that did not fit their views. The information I really wanted to obtain through this question concerned childminders image of themselves in their role. Pre-written statements based on my basic knowledge of childminders from anecdotal conversations could not reflect the complexity and diversity of the views of the childminding workforce. I decided to ask childminders to select from a list, five words they believed reflected their views of themselves as childminders - the combination of words chosen allowing them to express their individuality to some degree whilst keeping the parameters of the data manageable.

Mooney et al. (2001b) asked respondents to score out of ten how satisfied they were with their work as a childminder, with 10 being a high level and 1 a low level of satisfaction. This was a question that I had already chosen to include in some form as I believed this an effective way to gauge the overall feeling of the childminding workforce. To add more detail I wanted to know what in particular childminders found most satisfying and dissatisfying in their role. As studies by Mayall and Petrie (1977) and Mooney et al., (2001b) both asked these questions, comparing their results with my own will reveal any similarities and differences in childminder's answers over time.

Mayall and Petrie (1977) asked childminders if they intended to continue childminding and Mooney et al., (2001b) asked respondents what their reason would be for stopping. I included both these questions to be considered with further data and literature around the retention of the workforce.

In summary I decided to include the following questions (Figure 4.8) to elicit childminders' views of their role:

Focus of question(s) used in previous study (studies).	Question used in my study (and question number).
Satisfaction / dissatisfaction with childminding.	Overall to what extent are you satisfied / dissatisfied with your role as a childminder? (Question 8)
Most satisfying aspect of role.	What is the most satisfying aspect of childminding for you? (Question 9)
Most dissatisfying aspect of role.	What is the most dissatisfying aspect of childminding for you? (Question 10)
Childminders view of their provision.	Who supports you in your role as a childminder? (Question 7)
Childminders view of their role.	Please circle 5 words that best describe how you feel in your role as a childminder. (Question 19)
Intention to remain working as a childminder.	Do you intend to continue working as a childminder for at least the next 12 months? If no, would you tell me your reason? (Question 11)
Reasons for stopping childminding	

Figure 4.8 Summary of questions on childminders' views of their role used in my study.

Questions I discarded

Some questions included in previous studies but unused in my own were discussed previously, along with the reasons why I chose not to include them. Further questions were unused because although interesting, they were outside my study focus, and have been included in the table under the heading 'unused' (Appendix 2). These include questions from Mooney et al. (2001b) concerning childminders' views on whether or not mothers should work, and what parents look for when choosing a childminder. Although I have not used the questions I have included where appropriate some of the findings to support discussions in the fieldwork.

Gaps

After identifying the common foci of questions used in previous studies I decided which of them corresponded with my initial ideas for use in a questionnaire and also those I believed would best provide answers for my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' Then I checked for gaps in question subject areas that I needed to include in my study.

There were no noticeable gaps in previous studies, with one or more addressing topics I believed were invaluable to address my research question. However 3 of the 4 studies were at least 10 years old so rather than writing new questions I updated them to make them appropriate for a study carried out in the second decade of the 21st Century in one LA.

Studies not explored

There have been other studies which have elicited the views of childminders which I chose not to include in the comparison table (Appendix 2), notably the National Childminding Association (NCMA) Annual Membership Surveys which have been conducted since 2007. The main reason being that the childminders included in them all

belonged to the NCMA. I felt that despite being a random sample drawn from the full list of NCMA membership and “stratified by region to reflect the NCMA membership in England and Wales” (p.4) the membership of the NCMA may not be representative of all childminders. Secondly the survey, conducted by telephone with 1001 childminders, provided much statistical data similar to that collected in my survey under the heading of personal or classifying questions but little that reflected the views or opinions of childminders, as the overall aim of the research was to “better understand the make-up of NCMA’s membership to inform its work for and on behalf of members” (NCMA, 2010, p.4). However there is a wealth of valuable contemporary data included in these surveys that provides opportunities to compare and contrast national figures with some of the data collected in my LA. They have therefore been included within the analysis of data from my survey where appropriate.

Drafting the questionnaire and consultation with colleagues

Following my selection of question topics to include in my questionnaires I began to develop the wording of the questions (A summary of the topics and questions used are shown below (Figure 4.9)). It was important that the wording was concise and unambiguous as this questionnaire was my one chance to acquire the information for my research. Through a process of drafting and re-drafting I selected a core of questions for inclusion. Once selected, they were written on individual cards to enable me to arrange them into a logical sequence. Oppenheim (1992) suggested putting personal questions at the end of a questionnaire, so respondents do not read an accompanying letter of explanation about an ‘important study’ only to find that the first question asks their age.

Gillham (2007) emphasises the importance of producing an “attractive, professional-looking questionnaire” that is clear, uncluttered and with plenty of space for the questions (p.39). Oppenheim (1992) states that although there had “been many experiments with general layout, typeface, colour and quality of paper etc. in the case of postal

questionnaires” that “no clear general conclusions have emerged; it is best to aim at a relatively ‘conservative’ but pleasant appearance” (p.105). Once the order was established a draft questionnaire was produced.

I was keen to ensure clarity of expression so shared this draft with a work colleague reported it easy to understand. I then shared the questions with the Childminding Network Co-ordinator in my LA, a former childminder who has worked with childminders in the LA for over ten years: she too considered the questions to be straightforward but suggested minor amendments to the wording. Following discussions I made some changes resulting in the production of a second draft questionnaire. This was shared with the Childminding Network Co-ordinator and agreed.

However despite making several checks for spelling, clarity and possible ambiguity I later discovered that I had mis-numbered the questions and left out question twelve completely.

In summary I decided to include the following questions in the questionnaire (Figure 4.9):

Focus of question(s) used in previous study(s).	Question used in my study (and question number).	Question group
Age	And finally...your age ...your gender. (Question 20)	Personal
Gender		
Qualifications attained	What childcare qualifications (if any) have you gained and what (if any) are you working towards? (Question 13)	Personal
Registered minder?	Are you currently a registered childminder? If no, do you intend to work as a childminder again in the next 12 months? (Question 1)	Career

Own young children	What was your main reason for becoming a childminder? (Question 3)	Career
Reason(s) for becoming a childminder		
Number of years as a childminder	How many years have you been a childminder? (Question 2)	Career
Number and ages of children minded	How many children, in which age group do you mind? (Question 6)	Career
Hours worked per week	How many hours per week do you work as a childminder? (Question 5)	Career
Previous jobs	What was your job before you became a childminder? (Question 4)	Career
Training attended including non-qualification training	What non-qualification training have you attended in the last 2 year (Question 15)	Support and training
Hours spent on preparation to childmind training	To be a childminder, how many hours preparation training did you attend? (Question 14)	Support and training
Who childminders turn to for help and support	Who supports you in your role as a childminder? (Question 7)	Support and training
Reasons for non-attendance of training	Are there any reasons why you have not attended training? (Question 16) Does the training provided meet your needs? (Question 17) Is there any further training you require? (Question 18)	Support and training
Satisfaction / dissatisfaction with childminding.	Overall to what extent are you satisfied / dissatisfied with your role as a childminder? (Question 8)	Support and training

Most satisfying aspect of role.	What is the most satisfying aspect of childminding for you? (Question 9)	View of the role
Most dissatisfying aspect of role.	What is the most dissatisfying aspect of childminding for you? (Question 10)	View of the role
Childminders view of their role.	Please circle 5 words that best describe how you feel in your role as a childminder. (Question 19)	View of the role
Intention to remain working as a childminder.	Do you intend to continue working as a childminder for at least the next 12 months? If no, would you tell me your reason? (Question 11)	View of the role

Figure 4.9 Summary of all questions used in my study.

Piloting the questionnaire

The importance of piloting questionnaires is well documented (Oppenheim, 1992; Gillham, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010). The purpose being to establish the clarity of the wording of the questionnaire and to see if the answers received are ones expected by the researcher or if there are any ambiguities. As my survey was carried out with all the childminders in my LA (434 in total) I had to look outside the LA. I spoke to an NCMA colleague to establish a contact within a neighbouring LA and made contact with a co-ordinator there. I asked if she would email my questionnaire to some of the childminders she worked with. (Although I intended to use paper copies of the questionnaire in my LA I used email with the neighbouring LA for reasons of speed of distribution). She forwarded it to 115 childminders. Two days later I received 3 completed ones by email – there appeared to be no problems or signs of ambiguity. Later the co-ordinator informed me that many of the childminders she had contacted preferred to

complete the questionnaire on a paper copy (which supported my view) – she had 112 printed and 17 childminders had completed them. Three days later I received 27 completed paper copies; adding the 3 emails gave a total of 30. Although the number of responses was quite low (26%) the answers received indicated that the questions used were unambiguous so I concluded the questionnaires were appropriate for my study.

Subsequently I produced copies of the questionnaire on different coloured paper and consulted 20 of my co-workers to see which they found most attractive and easy to read; cream was the most popular choice (Appendix 3). 700 copies of the questionnaire and accompanying letter of explanation were printed allowing for some spare copies so reminders could be sent out.

Gillham (2007) suggests that personally-delivered questionnaires have a good chance of being returned; however with over 400 to distribute this was impractical so they were mailed. Gillham also suggests that “the greater difficulty arises when the approach is impersonal” i.e. when questionnaires are sent to people who don’t know the researcher. To counter this I stated in my covering letter that many childminders may have met me through the EYFS training I delivered in my role as an EYC for the LA. I also made clear that I was funding the research myself and that I hoped to share a summary of my findings within the LA. Both Oppenheim (1992) and Gillham (2007) stress the importance of addressing the envelope containing the questionnaire to the respondent personally. Although Gillham argues that envelopes look more professional if typed I decided that hand-written reflected the personal origin (i.e. me) of the study and so addressed each envelope by hand. Oppenheim (1992) claims that the class of postage used makes little difference to the response rate, yet Gillham (2007) contends that first class post, and stamps rather than franked mail yielded better results. I used stamps, but as I funded this study myself used second class postage. For the return of the questionnaires I wanted to include a pre-

paid addressed envelope; however I spent a lot of time deliberating on the issue of cost. A stamp on all the return envelopes would mean a financial cost of a further 434 2nd class stamps– a situation I wished to avoid as the envelopes might not be used and I would have paid for the postage anyway. In a discussion with my senior manager it was decided that I could use the LA's freepost address and would reimburse the LA for the returns. This was a cheaper alternative as unused envelopes would not incur a cost (I was later told that I did not have to repay this postage). I did consider this may have affected my returns as the use of the LA freepost address may have suggested to some respondents that this was an LA survey despite my assurance to the contrary. The freepost address label had my name at the top and was attached to good quality opaque envelopes to ensure the contents could not be seen until opened. Envelopes were marked 'Private and Confidential', and administration staff were asked not to open these envelopes when they were received in the mail. All of these measures were to ensure the confidentiality I had pledged to the respondents (Oppenheim, 1992; Gillham, 2007)

Questionnaire mail-out and return

I mailed-out the questionnaires at the beginning of June 2010. This time was chosen as it was in-between two school holidays; Gillham warns against distributing questionnaires in holiday periods (2007, p.46). By mid-June I had received 79 completed questionnaires followed by a further 33 by the end of that month. During July a further 20 were returned and 4 more in the first few days of August. The total received from the initial mail-out was 134 (31%). Cohen et al., (2007) suggest a typical response to an original dispatch of 40%, so measured against this my return was disappointing. They continue, stating a first reminder typically produces a further 20% of returns - a total of 60%. The questionnaires mailed out were numbered and as the first batch were returned they were marked on a list as received and whether the respondent had indicated an interest in taking part in a focus group. I

could therefore identify who had not returned the questionnaire and was able to target them with a reminder letter, copy of the questionnaire and another stamped addressed envelope for its return. The reminders were posted in the second week of August 2010 and on return from holiday I had 57 completed questionnaires. In the following two weeks 10 more were returned. The reminder mail-out generated 67 responses and increased the response rate by 50%. The total number of questionnaires returned was 201, over 46%, and although this was less than the figure suggested by Cohen et al. (2007) I was very pleased with the response. Cohen et al. suggest that a second reminder may result in a further 10% of returns; I decided that the number of possible returns was unlikely to justify the expense. Gillham claims a return of 50% from a group who do not know the researcher is satisfactory and so I felt that the 46% return was acceptable and no further reminders were sent.

Focus groups or interviews

From the 201 returned questionnaires, 48 female respondents indicated their willingness to take part in a focus group, and supplied contact details. However, at this point my thinking had moved on. I had already collected a vast amount of data from the questionnaires. Focus groups would allow me to collect in-depth data but I believed that I would get more finely detailed data by interviewing a small number of childminders than by talking to a large group. Hence I decided not to conduct the focus groups but to carry out fewer, deeper-level interviews to gain a more personal insight into their role which would complement the results from the returned questionnaires providing rich and vivid material (Gillham, 2000, p.10). I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews into the careers of two childminders in some depth. I sifted the responses of those (n=48) who were willing to take part in focus groups, with the intention of selecting two that I could approach to be interviewed, and further respondents I could contact should the need arise following the transcription of the initial interviews.

Seidman (2006) discusses the selection of interview participants, asserting the importance of selecting a sample representative of the larger population if one is to assume generalisability from the interview data. Although I anticipated drawing some conclusions from the data collected I did not believe I could generalise about all the childminders in my LA (n=434) from my findings based on interviews with two childminders. Therefore a representative sample was not my primary concern. The focus of my study was how childminders in one Local Authority viewed their role and it was my belief that the role had changed as a consequence of Early Childhood policies, particularly within the last twelve years or so (Mooney et al., 2001b; Pugh, 2006; Vallendar, 2006; Hohmann, 2007). Accordingly I wanted to interview people who had been childminding for a number of years and who had experienced these policy changes during their career. It was therefore more important that I selected experienced childminders rather than a sample representative of the wider childminding workforce in my LA. For this reason I examined the length of time each of the 48 childminders, whose details I had been given, had been childminding. Half (n=24) had been childminding 6 years or less; Mooney, Moss and Owen (2001) state that six years is the average length of service of childminders when they stop minding. The remainder had been in the role for between 7 and 30 years. Fontana and Frey (1998) allege that interviewers must be able to gain access to the 'setting' [the childminders in my study]. Some of these experienced childminders had recently attended a series of training courses, that I had delivered, around curriculum areas from the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) so I was already familiar to them. I decided that approaching these women with the intention of interviewing them would be prudent as they may feel comfortable enough in my company to agree to this (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Seidman, 2006). On this premise I selected two childminders who had become mutual friends during over 10 years in the role. I had previously met them whilst delivering training, and approached each by email to ask if they would consider being interviewed on topics raised in the questionnaire. Each was aware that the other had been approached. Remembering Gillham's assertion that

the interviewer holds a controlling position I was mindful not to act too assertively (2000). Therefore I used email for this first contact as I felt they may feel more comfortable refusing to participate by email than if they had to say no on the telephone, or face to face. They emailed back their initial willingness to participate and I then telephoned them with more details, including the approximate length of the interview (I anticipated it would be about one hour). Gillham (2000) states that this sequence of events indicates to the participants that it is important to me and that I am taking the process very seriously. They both agreed in principle to participate and I mailed them an information sheet and consent form for them to read. After one week I telephoned them again and asked if they had considered taking part. They had discussed it with each other and agreed to take part if they could be interviewed together, as they supported each other in their jobs on a day-to-day basis and felt comfortable in each others company. I reflected upon this approach and consulted the literature (Oppenheim, 1992; Arksey and Knight, 1999; Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Denscombe, 2010) and there seemed no reason why interviewing two childminders at one time would be a problem, in fact Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest that having more than one interviewee can facilitate different views of events and therefore can complement one another providing a broader view of events and opinions. Consequently I decided to continue with the joint interview. As the interviewees were minding children until 6.00pm it was my belief that they would want to be interviewed somewhere close to where they lived; Suzie suggested we meet at her home and this was agreed by Sharon and me. Plummer (2001) asserts the importance of interviewing in a place where the interviewees feel comfortable.

Limitations of my interviews

The interviewees were selected from the 25% of respondents who indicated a willingness to take part in focus groups (n=48), these were all women. Both interviewees came from the 35 – 44 years age group and had over six years experience.

Seidman (2006) claims that interviewers who conduct “one-shot meetings” with people they have never met before are on “thin contextual ice” (p.17); he explains to get in-depth information interviewers need to use the “three interview series” (p.17). These three stages can be briefly described as: contextual data, concrete details of interviewees’ views and experience on the topic of the interview; reflection. My interview was a single event but I addressed some of Seidman’s stages through discussions with the interviewees in training meetings prior to and after the interviews, although these meetings were coincidental to my research.

The interviews, recording, transcription and coding

Before I conducted the interviews I planned them meticulously, Plummer (2001) stresses the importance of this. Firstly it was important that the questions and themes I used reflected those in the questionnaire, as the purpose of interviews was to enrich the data gathered from the questionnaires. Although the interviews were semi-structured I needed a few prompts to ensure that they served their purpose and that I garnered the information required. I focused the interviews on questions regarding the views of childminders’ of their role (figure 4.8). Then I discussed with two work colleagues the questions I intended to use to enable the identification of any pitfalls or further areas for discussion from the questions. These discussions resulted in additional prompts being added to my notes. I did not write too many notes as I was keen to ensure that the interview was as close to a natural conversation as possible; I believed that continually checking my notes would disrupt the flow of conversation.

I recorded the interviews using an electronic voice recorder, having discussed with the two interviewees beforehand that I wished to do this as I did not want to make notes and could concentrate on listening to the interviewees and having as relaxed a conversation as possible.

Wellington (2000) discusses the relative merits of tape recording versus

note taking in interviewing. He claims the advantages of recording include the preservation of “actual natural language”, the provision of an “objective record” and “allows interviewer to concentrate, to maintain eye contact and to observe body language” (p.86). Gillham (2000) also emphasises the importance of appropriate body language and facial expressions on the part of the interviewer.

Disadvantages of tape recording were stated to be “time-consuming to transcribe”, “context not recorded” and “presence of machine can be off-putting” (Wellington, 2000, p.86). I considered these yet felt that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. The childminders were happy with the use of the voice recorder which was small enough to be placed unobtrusively near a bowl of fruit in the centre of the table.

A common error of interviewers is to talk too much and consequently not listen (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Gillham, 1998; Seidman, 2006) so I consciously avoided this during my interview. Before starting I reiterated the purpose of my study, telling them to stop the interview at any time they wished and explaining again that they would receive a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy and content. Following the structure of an interview suggested by Gillham (2000) – introduction; opening development; central core; and close – I conducted the interviews.

Within a week they were transcribed verbatim and were returned to the interviewees to be checked. It was important that this process was done quickly whilst the interviews were still fresh in all our minds. Atkinson (1998), states that “pronunciation and dialect can be a tricky issue” (p.54). He suggests using standard spellings rather than attempting to convey the way words were expressed by interviewees; this is acceptable as long as the meaning does not change. However during the interviews one childminder volunteered that she had struggled with literacy in the past. Because of this I felt it more appropriate to transcribe the interviews in exactly the way they happened as I did not want to appear arrogant by altering them. The interviewees were told that anything they wished could be deleted from the transcript and any inaccuracies amended. However both childminders were happy and

stated that the transcripts were an accurate record. They both stated that they wanted their real names used in the study rather than pseudonyms.

Subsequently the pages of the transcript were lettered and the lines numbered for identification. The transcriptions were analysed using the following method suggested by Denscombe (2010). I annotated the conversation adding “informal notes and comments alongside the interviewee’s words” (p.276), these were from my own recollections of the interview and included comments about gesture, outside interferences and the general ambience of the interview. Once this was completed analysis of the data could begin.

Analysis of the data

Questionnaires

The data was analysed manually, a time consuming process, which meant it was prudent to deal with the returned questionnaires as I received them rather than allowing a backlog to build up. I made the decision to analyse the information thus as this allowed me to immerse myself in the data by handling it, coding and referring back to it as necessary. Although commercial data analysis programmes were available, I was far more comfortable with the method I chose.

Gillham (2007) describes the first stage of analysis as a “descriptive one: setting out the results in a summary form (tables or graphs) so that you can see the overall response to individual questions at a glance” (p.49). Likewise Denscombe (2010) describes this as the stage where the researcher organises their raw data so that it can be “easily understood” (p.246). The process I used in this first stage was:

- 1) The individual respondent’s number was recorded on each page to ensure that the answers were attributed correctly to each respondent on the spreadsheet (figure 4.10).

227

Questionnaire

1. Are you currently a registered childminder?

Yes No A227

If no, do you intend to work as a childminder again in the next 12 months?

Yes definitely
 Yes maybe
 No
 Not sure

2. How many years have you been a childminder? A 10.
C227

Please specify 10 yrs APPROX (In TOTAL)

3. What was your main reason for becoming a childminder? (Please choose one)

To be at home with own children
 To work with children B227
 To work from home
 Other (please specify) _____

4. What was your job before you became a childminder (if applicable)?

NURSERY NURSE D227

5. How many hours per week do you work as a childminder?

Up to 15 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	36 - 45 hours <input type="checkbox"/>
16 - 25 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	45+ hours <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E227
26 - 35 hours <input type="checkbox"/>	

Figure 4.10 The front page of a completed questionnaire showing individual respondent number 227

2) Each answer choice for the questions was given a letter code (this matched the letter at the top of each column on the spreadsheet). Again this was to enable accurate recording of the answers onto the spreadsheet I used. I started with the answers to the closed questions, such as gender, age, how many hours of preparation training did you attend? (figure 4.10). This was reasonably straightforward as the answer options were already provided and it was simply a matter of assigning a letter to each answer. It was more complex where respondents answered open questions as the answers given had to be grouped into themes of similar content. When researchers create groups “they are *imposing* on the data in a pretty strong way” as they have moved away from the raw data and are shaping it themselves; it is therefore

important to stay as true to the original data as possible whilst making the data easily understood (Denscombe, 2010, p.247).

- 3) Question 19 asked childminders to 'circle 5 words that best describe how you feel in your role as a childminder'. A letter was assigned to each word hence a number of letters were written on the original questionnaires next to the answers (figure 4.11).

17. Does the training provided meet your needs?
 Yes No

18. Is there any further training you require?
 Yes No

If yes, please specify DEPENDS - ITS ALWAYS GOOD TO KEEP UP TO DATE WITH CURRENT THINKING AND PRACTICE

19. Please circle 5 words that best describe how you feel in your role as a childminder.

qualified	appreciated	comfortable	caring
unhappy	professional	unqualified	supported
confident	isolated	happy	stressed
non-professional	relaxed	skilled	challenged
unskilled	parental	taken for granted	teacher

20. And finally
 Your age
 16-24
 25-34
 35-44
 45-54
 55-64 E
 65+

Gender
 Female
 Male G 227

Figure 4.11 Question 19 coding

- 4) All the responses were entered onto a separate page on a spreadsheet (one per question) (figure 4.12). The numbers down the left hand side of the sheet tallied with the respondent numbers. When all the data had been entered I removed all the lines with no data – this condensed the size of the printouts and made them physically easier to manage. Finally I totalled the number of responses in each column and each line which gave me a summary of responses per question. In my examination of the data in Chapter Five of this study I used both the summaries and the original spreadsheet where applicable.

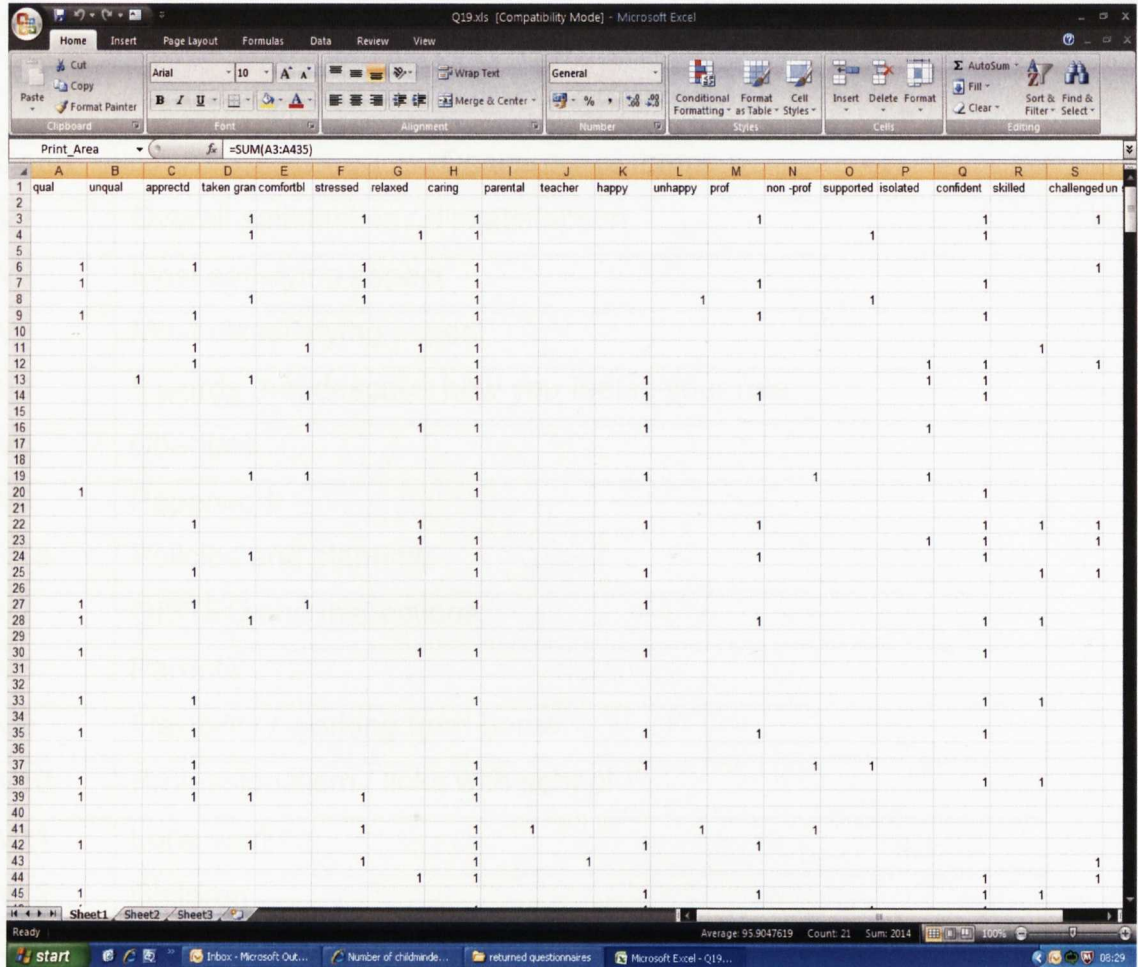


Figure 4.12 Screen shot of the data when entered onto the spreadsheet.

Some of the graphs and charts contained in Chapter Five were produced from the summary of each question; others are representations derived from comparing and contrasting the results of one question with another.

Interviews

Initially the content of the transcribed and annotated interviews was analysed in line with the themes that had emerged from the questionnaire responses, for example ‘main reason for becoming a childminder’, and ‘most dissatisfying aspect of childminding’. Each theme was given a code – this consisted of a letter to indicate whether it linked to a personal (P), career (C), training (T) or view of the role (V)

question followed by a number. Any other themes that emerged solely from the interviews were coded in the same way (figure 4.13).

Code	Descriptor of theme
V1	Overall satisfaction / dissatisfaction
V2	Most satisfying aspect
V3	Most dissatisfying aspect
V4	5 words that describe how you feel in your role
V5	Changes
V6	Paperwork –
V6a	Policies and planning
V7	OfSTED and inspections
V8	Parents
V9	Flexibility / working from home
V10	Professionalism / links with school
V11	Lone worker
V12	Children
V13	Fees / finances
V14	Contracts
V15	Characteristics of childminders

Figure 4.13 Views of the role – an example of the coding index

The relevant code was written into the coding column next to the transcription (figure 4.14).

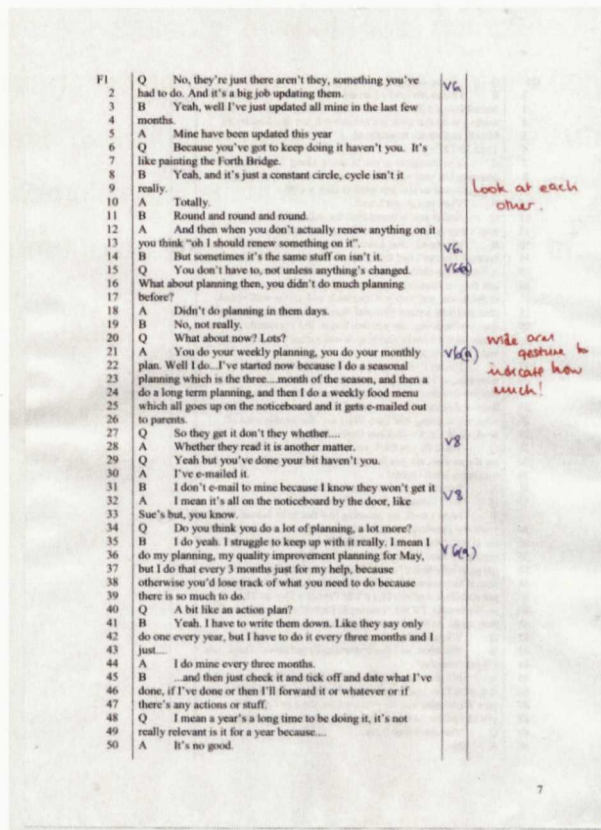


Figure 4.14 Interview transcript with coding

Finally I collated an index of each page and line where a code was used (figure 4.15). This enabled easy identification of interview content which could be used to support or contest the data from the survey questionnaires as well as any additional data.

Code for data theme	Page (e.g. AA, AC, L) and line number/(s)
V1	AA9, AC45/49, AD1, AG24
V2	O3
V3	L31/36/43/46, AD6/9
V4	No interview data
V5	A5, AH1
V6	A9, C47, D11/25, E5/22/45, F1/12, I20, L46/48, M2/6/22/46, N13, W31/38, AB28, AF5/21/43, AG3

Figure 4.15 Section of index of page and lines where codes used

Once the organisation of the data was completed I was able to start summarising my findings and exploring connections. Denscombe (2010) asserts that “quantitative data can be used very effectively without the need for complex statistical analysis” (p.242); this is what I have endeavoured to do. My findings are offered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Fieldwork

Presentation of data and data analysis

Questions arose for me around the presentation of the data collected through this study and the subsequent analysis of it: namely should the data and the analysis be presented separately or concurrently?

Wellington et al. (2005) suggest that it is important both to present and discuss study findings whilst avoiding unnecessary repetition; I decided to present my data and its analysis simultaneously to avoid this.

The data is discussed under the same headings I used in the table (Appendix 2) i.e. personal questions, career questions, training and support, and view of the role. The questions used are at the beginning of each discussion, and any similarities and/or differences between this and previous studies are discussed. Furthermore, in the interests of coherence I chose to present the data from both the questionnaires and interviews together where applicable, for example the same themes or issues emerging in both data collection processes. Any quotes from specific questionnaires are identified by questionnaire number (e.g. QN22). Any issues or themes arising solely from the interviews are explored after the main body of data from the questionnaires for reasons of consistency, not because they are less important than the questionnaire data. Finally, under each heading I will summarise the findings and data analysis, identifying the salient points.

Questionnaire returns

In all, 201 completed questionnaires were returned. Some questions were unanswered by some of the respondents, however no respondent failed to answer multiple questions; most respondents (95%) answered all questions with the remainder answering 17 or 18 of the 19 questions.

The number of respondents choosing not to answer a question is given alongside the findings from that question.

Data obtained from personal questions

Personal questions were used in this study to gather information about respondents' age, gender and qualifications. The findings facilitated deeper analysis of subsequent questions.

Age of childminders

My question: And finally ... your age?

This was the final question and was answered by all respondents.

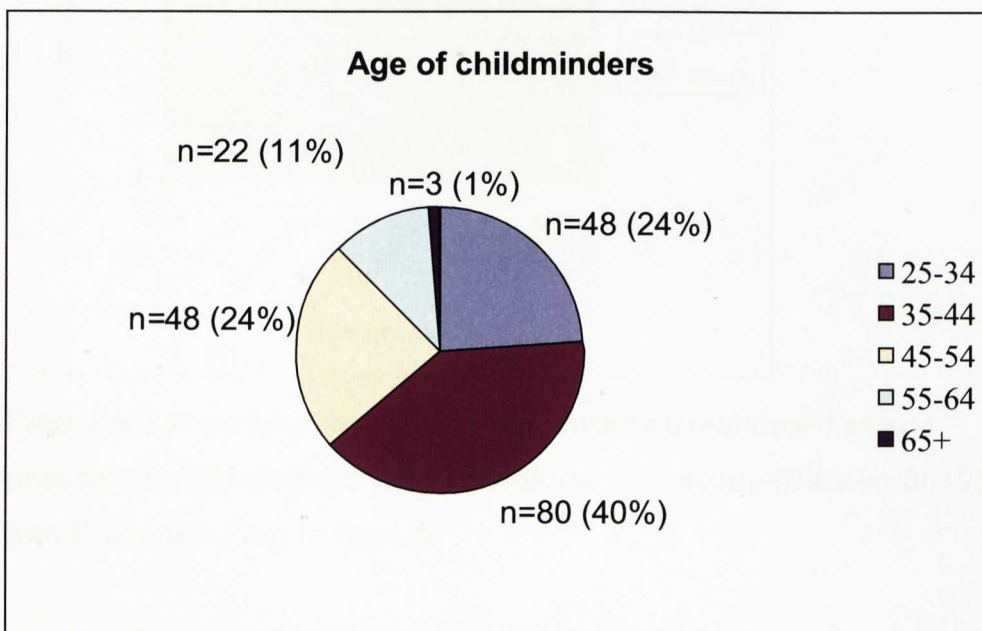


Figure 5.1 Ages of the childminders who completed the questionnaire in my study.

Of the 201 childminders responding to the questionnaire none came from the 16 - 24 age group, and the largest number (n=80) came from the 35 - 44 years age group. Those aged 25 - 34 and 45 - 54 were identical (n=48), and childminders aged 55 - 64 made up 11% of the total (n=22).

Only 3 (1%) childminders aged 65 or over returned the questionnaire. I was keen to know if the age groups of the respondents to this questionnaire were representative of the age groups of childminders within the LA, so compared the percentage make-up of the responding childminders with the make-up of the childminders who responded to the Local Authority Workforce Audit 2010 (Kirklees Council, 2010). The audit obtained data from slightly more childminders than my study (n=211). (N.B. The data for the Workforce Audit was collected approximately 2 months after my initial mail-out so the chances of major differences due to the passage of time are negligible.)

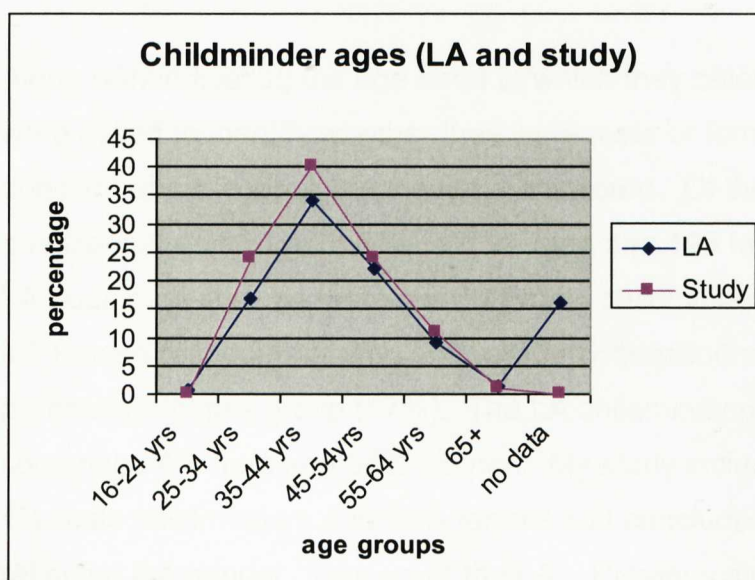


Figure 5.2 A comparison of the percentage breakdown of age groups of childminders who completed this study (Barker, 2012) and those working in the LA.

The graph shows that when comparing age groups the composition of the respondents to my study followed a very similar trend to that of childminders within the LA. Thus conclusions reached after analysis of the data based on childminder ages may well be representative of childminders in the LA. Because only 50% of childminders responded to the audit information request, the data on age and gender reported in the

audit is for 84% of the childminders in the LA and came from the registration database (not the audit).

The only major difference between the results, as shown in figure 5.2, is in the number of responses received that included no data about participant's age. The LA does not have recorded ages for 71 (16%) childminders, in my study all participants supplied details of the age band to which they belonged.

Age and gender

My question: Your gender?

Along with indicating the age band to which they belong, respondents were asked to identify whether they were male or female. As with the question about age, all respondents answered. Of the 201 questionnaires returned, 8 were from men and 193 from women. The LA audit data showed there were 17 male childminders within the LA, so the 8 male respondents who answered my questionnaire formed a high percentage of this group (47%). The LA childminding workforce comprised 4% men and 96% women. My study included the views of 4% male childminders and 96% female so I concluded that my study reflected the gender make-up of the LA. Previous studies contained fewer responses from men; Mooney et al., (2001b) stated less than 0.005% of respondents were men while the DfE (2010) reported 2% of childminders surveyed in 2008 were male (no data on gender was available for 2009). The NCMA membership survey (NCMA, 2010) included responses from 11 men (1% of total responses).

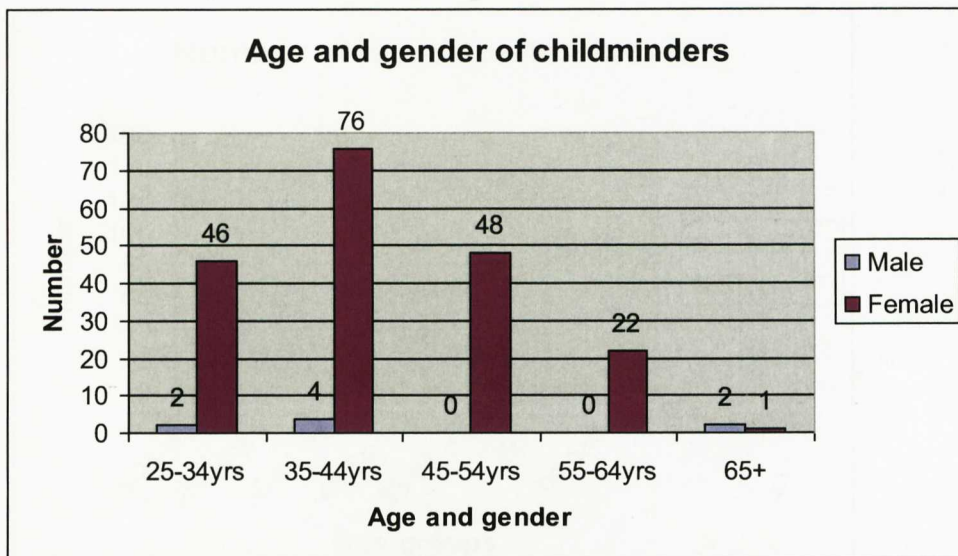


Figure 5.3 Age and gender of childminders who completed my questionnaire.

The number of male respondents was not spread equally over the age ranges; 2 were aged 25-34, 4 were aged 35-44 and 2 were from the 65 and over age range (Figure 5.4) below. No male childminders from the age ranges 45 - 54 or 55 – 64 responded to the questionnaire. All the male respondents in my study work with their partners rather than alone.

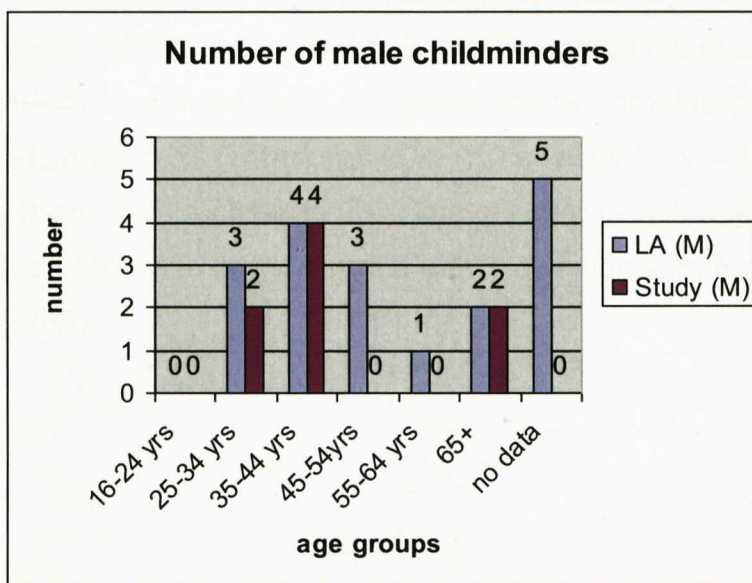


Figure 5.4 A comparison of the number of male childminders registered with the LA and those who completed my questionnaire.

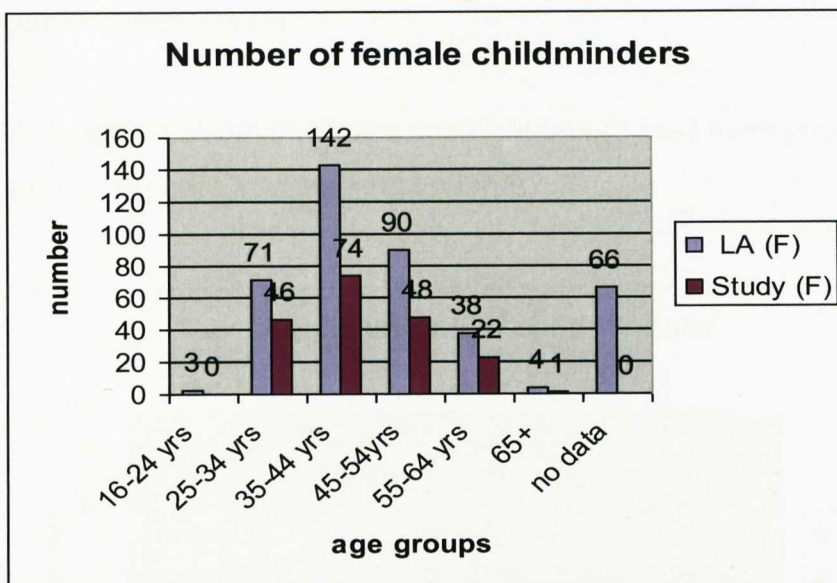


Figure 5.5 A comparison of the number of female childminders registered with the LA and those who completed my questionnaire.

As stated earlier no completed questionnaires were received from the 3 registered female childminders from the 16-24 years age bracket, however there were respondents from all other age brackets. The biggest response was received from the 25-34 years age group where 65% (n=46) of the total number recorded as registered by the LA (n=71) responded, with the 55-64 years group following closely with a percentage return of 58% (22 questionnaires out of a possible 38). A return rate of over 50% came from the two other largest age bands – 35-44 years, 52% (74 returns from 142 possible) and 45-54 years, 53% (48 returns from a possible 90). The only group with a return rate of less than 50% was the 65+ group with 1 questionnaire from a possible 4 (25%).

Qualification levels

My question: What childcare qualifications (if any) have you gained and what (if any) are you working towards?

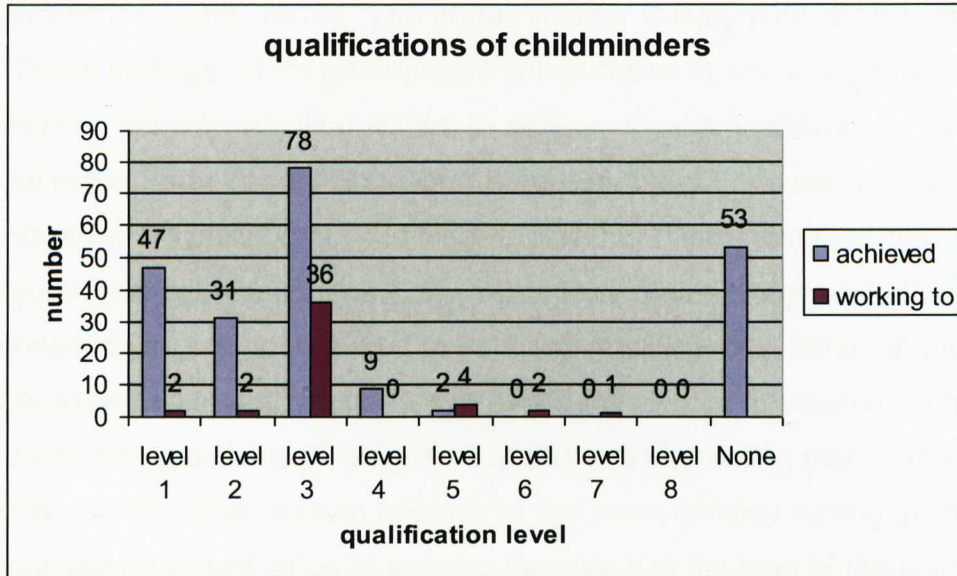


Figure 5.6 Qualifications achieved and working towards of the respondent childminders.

In my questionnaire respondents were asked to give details on any childcare qualifications they had achieved and also any that they were currently working towards, so respondents may have supplied more than one answer. Fifty-three (26%) childminders did not answer this question indicating that they either had no childcare qualifications or elected not to answer for personal reasons (as the question was situated in the centre of a page in the middle of the questionnaire it is unlikely that it was overlooked). In comparison this figure is lower than the national figure quoted in the Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey 2009 (DfE, 2010); “one in three childminders (31%) did not have any relevant qualification” (p.83). In contrast the LA Workforce Audit Report 2010 had no data on qualifications for 50% of childminders as they failed to respond; 13% of the 50% who replied stated they had no qualifications.

In relation to qualification levels my study found that the largest group of childminders had either achieved (39%) or were working towards (18%) a level 3 qualification (n=78 and n=36 respectively). Nationally 49% of childminders hold at least a level 3 qualification, higher than the figure from my study, whilst 56% of staff in daycare provision holds the same qualification (DfE, 2010). The 2009 Provider Survey (DfE, 2010) states “These findings reflect government policy aimed at encouraging staff working in under eights day care to achieve level 3 qualifications as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework” (p.83). However the position of childminders is rather different in that “the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage state that childminders are not required to hold any qualifications, although they are expected to undertake an approved course prior to commencing childminding activities” (DfE, 2010, p.83); it is interesting that so many childminders have chosen to study at this level, already having gained their level 3 qualification or working towards it at the time of the study, despite not being required to.

Both of the interviewees had completed the Introduction to Childminding Practice, Developing Childminding Practice and Extending Childminding Practice, the three units that make up an accredited Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) qualification (Level 3 qualification). What motivates childminders to study for further qualifications? Is there a perception that a formal qualification may give some parity in status with other childcare providers? Further, would such a qualification encourage parents to choose them over an unqualified childminder (although the two interviewees stated that no parents had ever enquired as to their qualification levels)?

Nationally the data on childminders who held at least a Level 3 qualification shows an upward trend; in 2007 the figure was 41%, rising to 44% in 2008 and again to 49% in 2009 (DfE, 2010, p.85). Prior to this Mooney et al., (2001b) state that 21% of respondents in their study held a childcare qualification.

Did the levels of qualifications differ according to the age group of the respondents?

I was interested to explore whether there was any correspondence between the age of the respondent and their qualification levels, possibly reflecting the drive to increase the qualifications of all childcare workers (Mathers et al., 2011).

Childminders recording no qualifications

Of the 53 respondents who gave no details on qualifications 3 were men, all from the 35-44 age group, and 50 were women across all the age groups. The numerical and percentage breakdown by age of the whole group recording no qualifications (n=53) was as follows; 25-34 years n=8 (15%), 35-44 years n=19 (36%), 45-54 years n=18 (34%), 55-64 years n=7 (13%) and 65+ n=1 (2%) (figure 5.7).

Age group	Percentage of childminders (n=53) who recorded no qualifications
25 – 34 years	15%
35 – 44 years	36%
45 – 54 years	34%
55 – 64 years	13%
65+ years	2%

Figure 5.7 Percentages of childminders who recorded no qualifications.

Forty-eight childminders from the age band 45 -54 years returned the questionnaire – eighteen stated they held no formal qualifications; a substantially higher percentage of this group are unqualified. Conversely

only eight of the forty-six respondents from the 25-34 years age group stated they had no qualifications. I considered whether this reflected the funding that has been available for the childcare workforce to study for level 3 qualifications? To explore this further I compared the numbers of those with, and those working towards, level 3 qualifications.

Level 3 and Working towards level 3

Age group	Percentage of childminders (n=78) who have achieved a level 3 qualification	Percentage of childminders (n=36) who are working towards a level 3 qualification
25 – 34 years	28%	25%
35 – 44 years	41%	47%
45 – 54 years	22%	25%
55 – 64 years	9%	3%
65+ years	0%	0%

Figure 5.8 Comparison of percentages of childminders with or working towards a level 3 qualification by age group.

The provider survey (DfE, 2010) reported nationally 49% of childminders had achieved at least a level 3 qualification (p.85) and 12% were working towards this. In comparison, the findings from my study showed the total number of those who had already achieved a level 3 qualification was 78 (39% of the total number of respondents- lower than the national figure) with a further 36 (18% of the respondents – higher than the national figure) working towards it.

Although in my study childminders in the 25-34 years age group made up 24% of the total number of respondents they comprised 28% of the number with, and 25% of those working towards, a level 3 qualification. This substantiates the earlier evidence that those in this age group are

less likely to have no qualifications. The 35-44 years age group made up similar percentages of the overall group and the number with a level 3 qualification (40% and 41% respectively) and 47% of this group are currently studying for this qualification. Of the 55-64 years age group (13% of the total number of respondents) 9% have a level 3 and 3% are working towards it indicating that childminders in the older age groups are less likely to be studying for this level of qualification than those in the younger groups.

The findings regarding the 65+ age group (1% of the total number, (n=3)) substantiate this as there are no childminders with or working towards a level 3 qualification. I considered the length of time each of them had been childminding, wondering if they had taken on the role recently and therefore thought it unnecessary to gain qualifications. However I found that the three over 65s had been minding for 6, 9 and 30 years respectively so my supposition was wrong. I returned to the responses regarding training.

The childminder of 6 years experience stated "If mandatory I will do courses. At my age 65yrs. And non academic I want to continue for the sake of my grandchildren". This supports my theory above that this was a role started recently in order to support family, and that there was no wish to undertake any formal training at his age; he had also only attended 2 non-qualification courses in the previous two years. The childminder who had been in the role for 9 years did not elaborate on why she had not attended any formal qualification training, but stated that the five non-qualification courses attended in the past two years met her needs. Finally the respondent who had worked in the role for 30 years had no formal qualifications and had only attended 4 non-qualification courses in the last two years. She stated simply "Working for years at childminding". This may indicate that some, more experienced, childminders feel training has nothing to offer - an idea that is investigated further alongside other training issues later in this chapter.

Summary of personal questions section

The age group and gender composition of the respondents in my study reflect those of the entire childminding workforce of the LA. Responses to my study were received from all age groups except the 16-24 age group; however the LA figures show that this group comprises just three female childminders.

There is no requirement for childminders to hold formal qualifications but despite this 39% state that they have achieved a level 3 qualification, (lower than the national figure), and 18% are working towards this, (higher than the national figure).

Furthermore childminders under the age of 35 years are less likely than other age groups to have no formal qualifications.

Data obtained from career questions

Following the discussions around the age, gender and qualifications of the respondent childminders I moved onto the questions used to obtain data about their careers.

Registered childminders

My question: Are you currently a registered childminder?

The first question asked childminders if they were currently registered. Of the 201 respondents 199 were registered and 2 were not. Both the unregistered childminders were not minding at the time of the study (so they were not working illegally); one stated that she intended to work as a childminder again in the next 12 months; the other did not indicate what his future intentions were. As my study set out to explore the views of childminders registered in the LA I deliberated whether or not to include responses from these two. I chose to include them for the reason that LA records showed they had been recently registered, and so were in a position to give their contemporary views on the role.

Number of years childminding

My question: How many years have you been a childminder?

Respondents were asked to indicate how many years they had been working as a childminder and I recorded the answers in two ways; firstly the actual number of years stated, and then, to simplify the data and allow comparison with other studies, the information was grouped e.g. 1-5 years, 6-10 years and so on (figure 5.9).

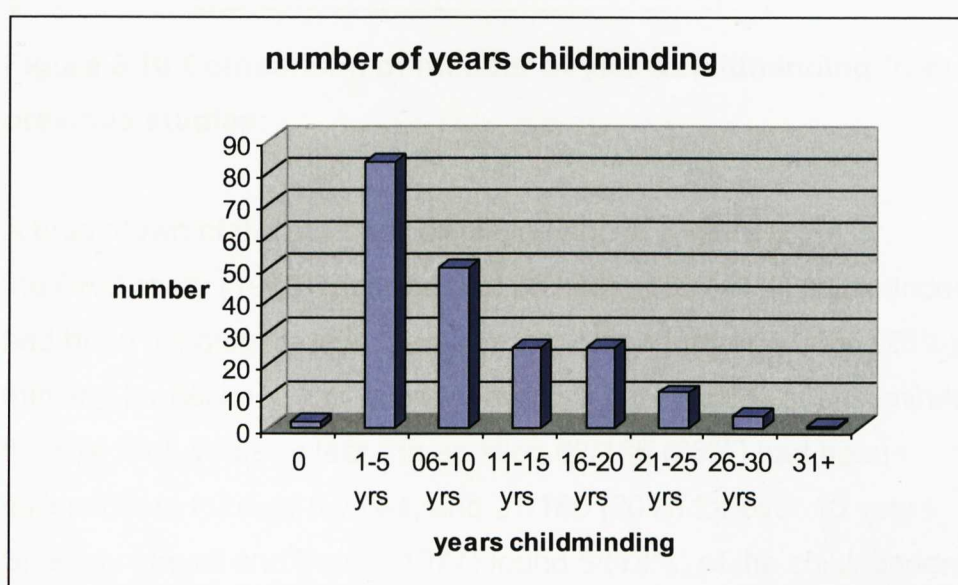


Figure 5.9 number of years childminding by age group

The largest number had been minding for between 1 and 5 years ($n=83$, 42%). The graph shows a steady decrease in numbers with 50 childminders (25%) in the 6-10 years band, and 25 (12.5%) in the 11-15 years band. The graph levels off, the number in the role for 16-20 years being the same as the previous band (12.5%), followed by further steady decreases in the following bands. This pattern can also be observed in previous research (figure 5.10).

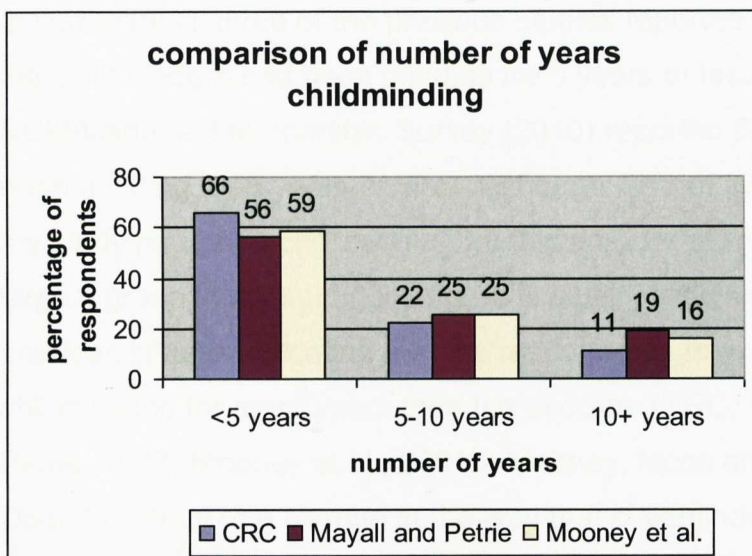


Figure 5.10 Comparison of number of years childminding from previous studies.

A breakdown of the statistics displayed above (Figure 5.10) is: the CRC study (1975) reported that 76 of the 186 (41%) childminders had been minding for less than 2 years, with a further 47/186 (25%) minding for between 2-5 years, showing a total of 66% of childminders in the role for 5 years or less. In addition 62/186 (33%) had been childminders for over 5 years, and 21/186 (20%) for over 10 years. Similarly Mayall and Petrie (1977) found 5 (13%) of the childminders had been in the role for under 2 years, with a further 17 (43%) minding for between 2 - 4.11 years; a total of 56% childminders in the role for under 5 years. The statistics for the remaining 44% were as follows; childminding for 5 - 9.11 years n=10(25%), 10-14years n=6(15%), and 20+ years n=1 (4%). It must be remembered that this study was conducted on a small sample of only 39 childminders. Finally Mooney et al. (2001b) discovered that 106 of the 480 childminders had been minding for 0-1 years (22%), with a further 106 minding for 2-3 years (22%) and 72 in the role for 4-5 years (15%); a total of 59% childminding for 5 years or less. The statistics for the remaining 196 childminders (41%) were: childminding for 6-10 years n=120(25%), for 11-15 years n=48(10%), for 16-20 years n= 19(4%), and finally 21+ years n=10(2%).

In summary all three of the previous studies reported that over 50% of the childminders had been minding for 5 years or less. Likewise the NCMA Annual Membership Survey (2010) reported 54% (n=538) had been minding for 5 years or less. Although 42% of the respondents to my study had been childminding for this amount of time (making it the largest group in my study) the figure is significantly smaller than in previous studies indicating that the respondents to my survey have been childminding for more years than the average (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b; Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001). Does this point to a change in the way that childminders view their role? If they are continuing in the job for longer this may signify that they see the role as a career rather than a short term job to be pursued whilst their children are young. A study by Wandsworth Social Services (1979) suggests that there are two types of minders:

Short-termers who were generally women who became childminders for a few years while their own children are very young on the other hand *career minders* had been working for more than five years and tended to be older women, with children of primary school age and upwards.

(p.10)

I also plotted the actual number of years childminders had been doing their job to obtain an overview of the range of experience in the childminding workforce (Figure 5.11).

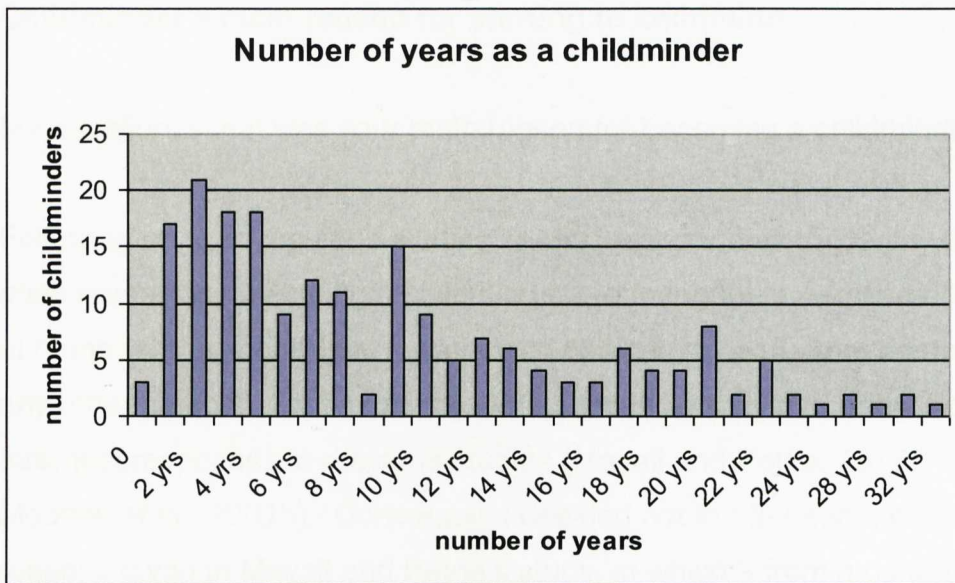


Figure 5.11 Actual number of years as a childminder.

The largest group comprising 21/201 have been minding for 3 years followed closely by those who have been minding for 2, 4 and 5 years (n=17, n=18, n=18). Approximately 50% have been minding for 6 years or less – a year longer than 50% of respondents to previous studies (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b). These figures can be explained by the main reason stated for starting to childmind – ‘to be at home with own children’ (figure 5.12), as this time period (5-6 years) covers the baby to Key Stage 1 age range, indicating that many leave childminding once their children enter full-time schooling. Conversely approximately 50% have been childminding for 7 years or more, with 25% of them doing the job for 14 years or more. On balance it would appear that the childminding workforce in my LA is made up of both “short-termers” and “career minders” as identified in the literature (Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Wandsworth Social Services, 1979; Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001; Mooney et al, 2001a).

Childminder's main reason for starting to childmind

My question: What was your main reason for becoming a childminder?

Following on from previous studies I asked respondents to identify their *main* reason for becoming a childminder – offering them 4 options; to be at home with own children, to work with children, to work from home, and any other reason. These options were chosen as they had been the foremost responses in previous studies (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b). Conversely I decided not to offer some of the reasons given in Mayall and Petrie's study, in which 3 from a cohort of 39 stated ill-health as the reason why they started to childmind, and, more worryingly, 6 women giving "boredom loneliness and/or depression" (p.28) as their reason; I hoped that these responses were more typical of a time when childminding was seen as just a way of earning money whilst at home with one's own children (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Gelder, 1993; Mooney et al, 2001b). Besides, the option to choose 'other reason' on my questionnaire allowed the respondents the opportunity to give any specific details, including health issues, should they want to.

Despite asking respondents to choose only one option, 19 selected two, 7 selected three and 1 gave no answer at all. Of course it may have been some time since the childminders started their jobs, memories may have faded or it is likely that there was not one *main* reason why they chose to take up this career. I decided to count all the answers and calculate the percentages in two ways. Firstly the incidence of reasons from all the returned questionnaires (including those where more than one selection was made), then the questionnaires where more than one answer was given were removed and the number of occurrences counted again, the different totals are shown below (figure 5.12).

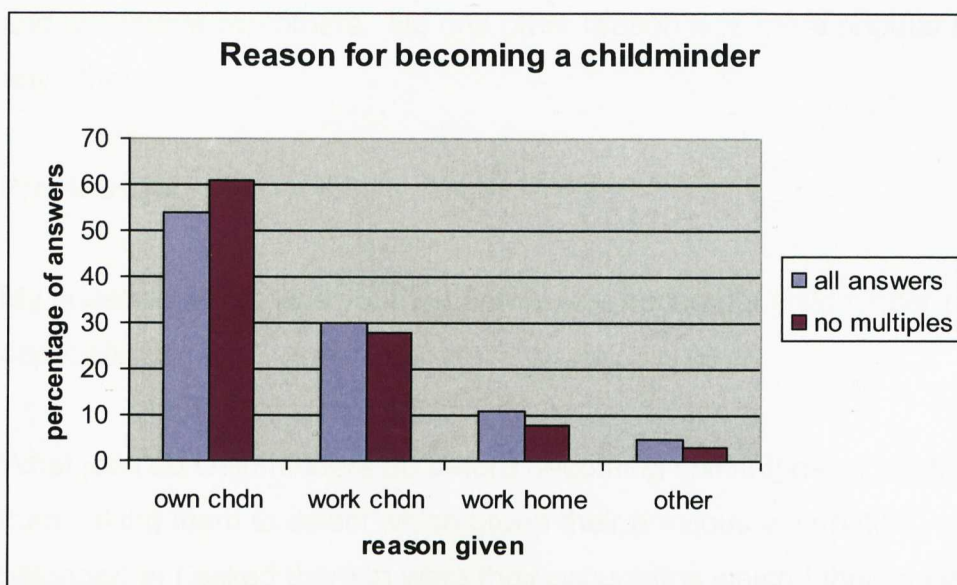


Figure 5.12 Main reasons stated for becoming a childminder.

The graph shows that the most popular reason given for taking up childminding was that they had their own children. This was the case when all answers were taken into consideration and in the questionnaires where only one reason was given. In both sets of data the order according to preference remained the same. Incidentally both of the childminders interviewed started to childmind because they had their own children at home. Earlier studies also reported that the most common reason for starting to childmind was to stay at home and look after their own children (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al. 2001b). Hence it is clear that the majority of childminders, past and present, begin to childmind to allow them to care for their own children whilst earning money.

Twelve respondents selected the 'other reason' box giving details of these reasons, namely; to help a friend or partner – (n=5), to care for a disabled family member / to be a foster parent / because suitable childcare couldn't be found – (n=3), and 1 each of – flexible hours, made redundant, have own business and previously worked with children. Also of these twelve childminders six indicated more than one reason for starting their jobs, four of them chose one of the other options offered,

and two chose two others. No one other reason was more popular than any other.

Previous job

My question: What was your job before you became a childminder (*if applicable*)?

What jobs do childminders do before becoming childminders? Rather than asking them to select which group their previous occupation belonged to I asked them to write their occupation which I then classified into the 9 groups identified in the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) 2010 (Office for National Statistics, 2010). In addition to these classes I added two groups that arose from the data; 'parents' and 'no answer given'.

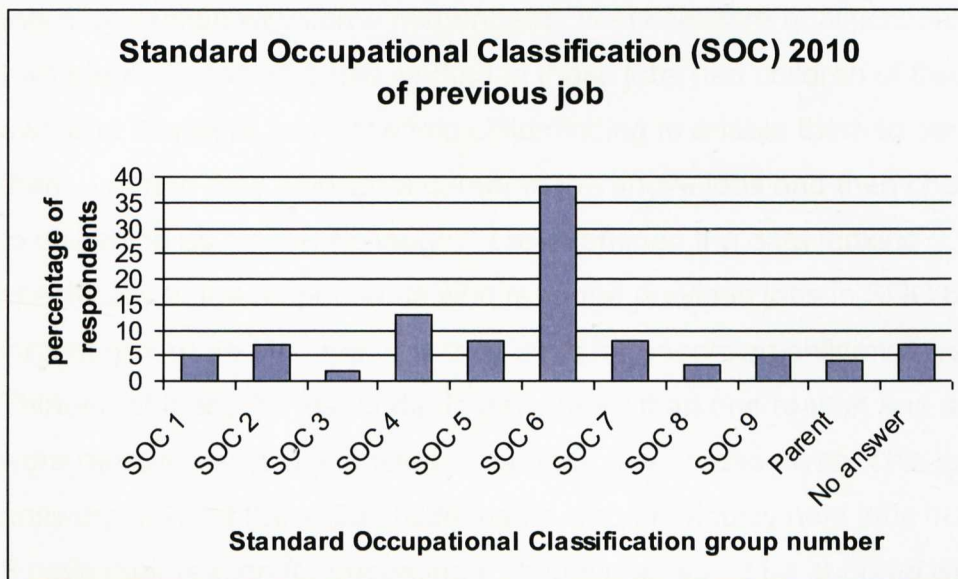


Figure 5.13 Standard Occupational Classification of previous jobs

Examples of jobs given for each of these classifications.

SOC 1 – hotel manager, retail manager

SOC 2 – solicitor, teacher, bank manager

SOC 3 – artist, draughtsman, laboratory technician

SOC 4 – bank clerk, accounts clerk, retail sales administrator

SOC 5 – coachbuilder, workshop controller, roofer, chef

SOC 6 – dental nurse, care worker, hairdresser, Nursery Nurse (NNEB)

SOC 7 – store checkout, shop worker, market trader

SOC 8 – driving instructor, textile dyer

SOC 9 – warehouse worker, factory worker, cleaner

The biggest group by far was SOC 6 with 38% (n=76) of respondents previously working in this classification group, including the two interviewees. Many of these jobs involved work with children and included nursery officers, Nursery Nurses, school support staff, school secretaries, Pre-School Learning Alliance workers and playgroup staff; this may explain why some respondents held childcare qualifications. I wondered if staff who had worked in these jobs had children of their own and therefore had gone into childminding to enable them to care for them – or had they enjoyed a career in the above jobs and then chosen to childmind as a career change? I re-examined the data looking specifically at the respondents who reported previous jobs in SOC 6 (the largest group) and the reasons they gave for becoming childminders. Thirteen of these 76 respondents gave more than one reason and so were removed as it was unclear what their main reason was. This left 63 answers. 66% of these 63 childminders who previously held jobs in SOC 6 gave their reason for becoming a childminder as 'to be at home with own children', compared to 25% who stated they wanted to 'work with children'. Previously working with children may have fostered an interest in being a childminder, but again caring for their own children is the overriding reason given.

Comparison of my findings with those from earlier studies is impossible as previous jobs held by childminders are not reported. Mayall and

Petrie's (1977) findings are listed using the Registrar General's classification by social class; 7 childminders belong to class II, 10 to class III (non-manual), the remaining 18 are distributed across classes III (manual), IV and V with 4 stating no previous job. Mooney et al, (2001b) merely stated that 92% of childminders had held a job previously and were predominantly semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in the service sector.

How many hours per week do childminders work?

My question: How many hours per week do you work as a childminder?

For this question respondents were asked to select from five options; up to 15 hours, 16-25 hours, 26-35 hours, 36-45 hours and 45+ hours. In addition to selecting one of these options, three respondents added a higher number of hours actually worked – 57, 60 and 69+ hours were recorded, and one of the childminders who marked the 45+ box added that it would be “more if I included paperwork” (QN100).

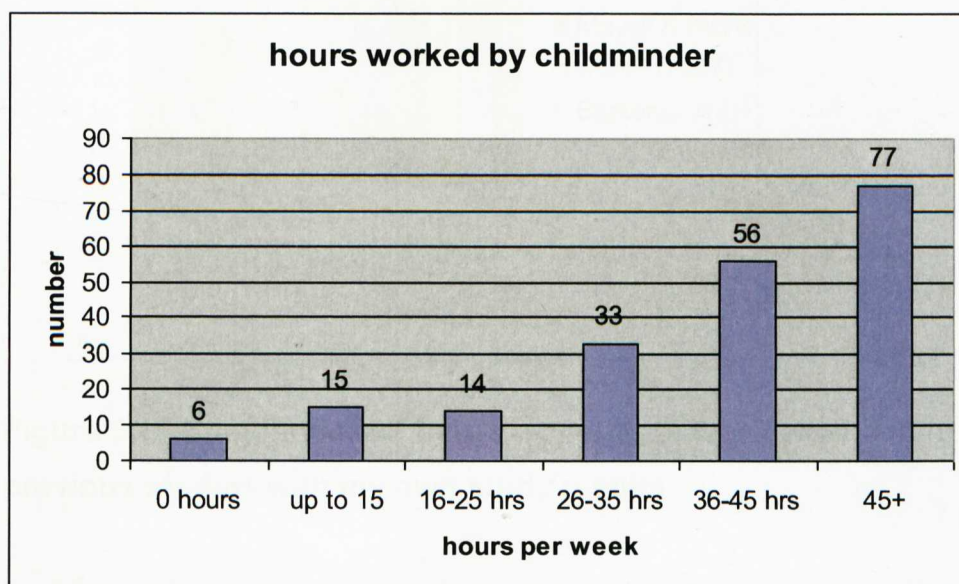


Figure 5.14 Hours worked by childminders per week

Six respondents stated that they had no children to mind currently and therefore recorded zero working hours. A range of answers were

received from the remaining 195, but the majority (n=133, 66% of the total) worked over 36 hours per week. The largest group was childminders recording 45+ hours (n=.77, 38% of total), followed by those recording 36 - 45 hours (n= 56, 28% of total) (figure 5.14). Mooney et al (2001b) claim that 33% of childminders work between 41 – 50 hours per week and report that 34 hours per week is average; no further details are given. Other studies (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; DCSF, 2007) give more detailed information on childminders' working hours which I have compared with findings from my study (Barker, 2012) (Figure 5.15). The DCSF (2007) information is taken from the *Childcare and Early Years Provider Surveys 2006 – Childminders* (separate surveys were conducted for different provider types, for this year only); this is the most recent information on childminders weekly working hours.

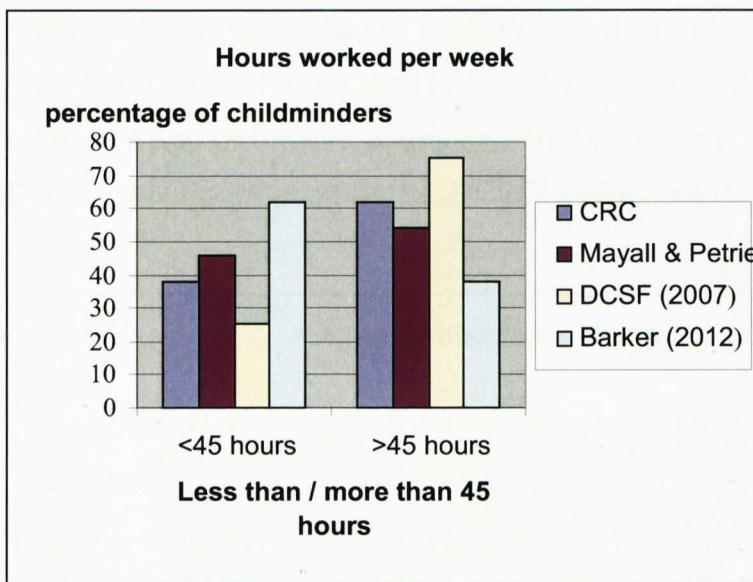


Figure 5.15 Comparison of hours worked per week recorded in previous studies with my own study results.

From figure 5.15 it is apparent that fewer respondents to my study (Barker, 2012) claim to work more than 45 hours per week than in previous studies; this could be a sign that childminders are working less hours than in the past. However the DCSF (2007) survey results refute this showing more childminders working over 45 hours per week than in

the two previous studies (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977). The total number of childminders responding to my study (n=201) is lower than those to the DCSF study (n=723) so it is possible that the smaller numbers in my study may be a less representative sample (Gillham, 2000; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007)

How many children?

My question: How many children, in which age group, do you mind?

Childminders were asked to indicate the number of children that they minded in each age group. Numbers varied but it must be remembered that some childminders work with assistants and that children may attend for a number of sessions rather than a whole week. Therefore the number of children stated by each minder may appear to be higher than expected as they are allowed to care for a maximum of three children under the age of 5 years at any one time (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DCSF, 2008c, p.51).

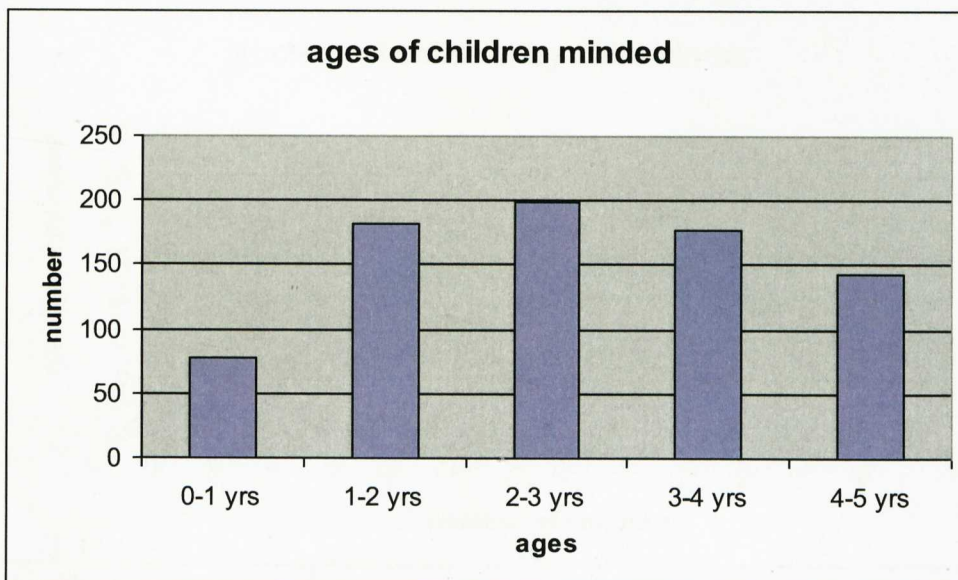


Figure 5.16 Number of children aged 5 years or less minded by childminders.

The curve of the graph (figure 5.16) shows that the largest group of children in the care of childminders is age 2-3 years. The number of children aged 1-2 years and 3-4 years in the care of childminders are similar, the number of 4-5 year-olds is smaller still. This may be explained thus; from the term after a child's third birthday parents/carers can claim 15 hours of Nursery Education Funding (NEF) for their child in settings which are registered for NEF; this includes Private Day Nurseries, Pre-schools, Maintained Nursery Schools and classes and a small number of CCF Network childminders (discussed previously in Chapter Two of this study). Many childminders find that they provide 'wraparound' care for children as parents claim their child's NEF provision in other settings, returning to the childminder afterwards. The smallest number of children cared for are those aged 0-1 years - reflecting the choice of mothers to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave (www.directgov.uk).

In addition to the 782 children aged 0-5 years included in the graph above (figure 5.16) childminders also care for a total of 591 children who are aged 5+ years.

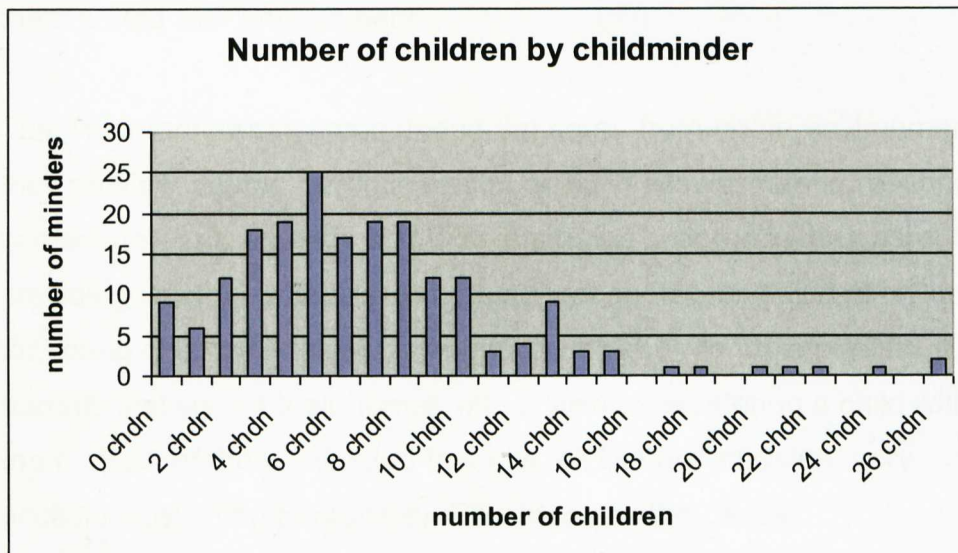


Figure 5.17 Numbers of children minded by each childminder

Nine respondents state that they are not currently minding, which contrasts with the six who stated that they did not work any hours per

week. This suggests that three minders work some hours per week but have no children to mind at present; they could be anticipating the arrival of children to mind in the near future and are working to prepare the environment and paperwork.

The majority (85%) state that they mind between 1 and 10 children across all ages with the largest group (n=25) stating that they mind 5 children (figure 5.17). The most children being cared for was 26 in two cases and in both cases the vast majority of these children were aged 5+ (20 children for one and 12 for the other childminder - both worked with assistants). According to my survey a total of 1373 children were being minded by the 201 childminders who completed the questionnaire - an average of 7 per childminder.

A childminder's home replicates a familial environment where children interact with others across a range of ages. This contrasts with private daycare settings where children are often grouped together by age. A family-like setting is one of the reasons why parents use a childminder for their children (Mooney et al., 2001b), and the interview data supports this. Similarly Mooney et al. (2001b) conducted 21 telephone interviews asking parents what they looked for when choosing a childminder, 11 of them stated the "environment".

The two interviewees commended the home-from-home environment they provide, stating how this way of working allows them to respond immediately to the needs and interests of the children in their care, thus providing what they believe to be the most appropriate kind of childcare for young children. I asked if they found it uncomfortable or difficult when parents first visited their homes with a view to registering a child with them. Both of them indicated that this felt like an "intrusion" very occasionally; citing personality differences as the cause.

Intention to continue childminding

My question: Do you intend to continue as a childminder for at least the next 12 months? (Respondents were asked to tick a box indicating yes or no. If they answered no they were asked to give their reason.)

Of the 201 respondents, 180 (90%) intended to continue, 17 said no, 2 answered yes and no as they were undecided and 2 gave no answer.

The 10% (19 in total) who replied that they would not, or in 2 cases may not, continue childminding came from all age bands except the 65 and over group; however the majority were aged 44 and under (Figure 5.18).

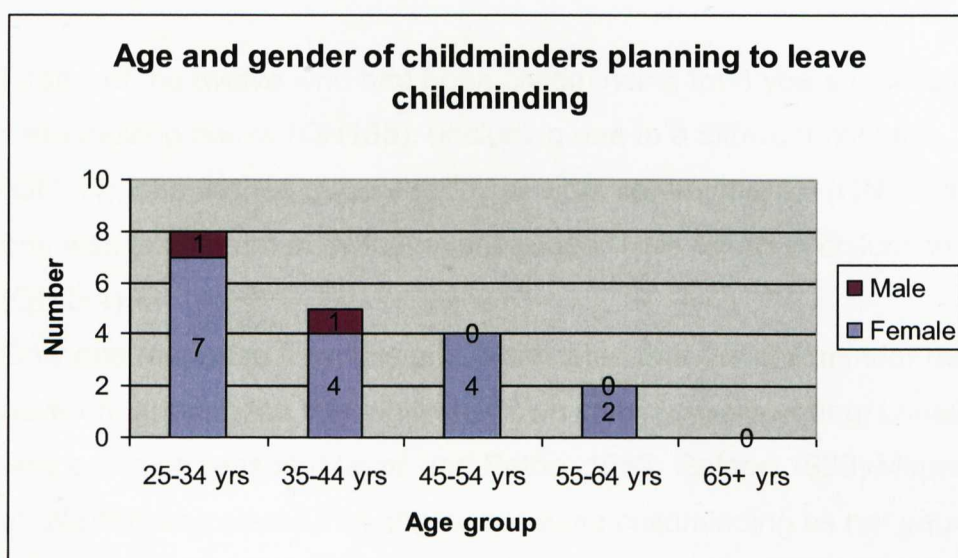


Figure 5.18 Age and gender of childminders planning to leave childminding.

As can be seen (figure 5.18) two childminders planning to leave the job are male, an already under-represented group; the reasons they give for leaving are very similar; "Need more money to pay the bills" (QN83) and "Long hours with little money" (QN314). This is supported in the literature as low-pay is considered to be an obstacle to continuing childminding and a barrier to men joining the childcare profession (Mooney et al., 2001a; Rolfe, 2006). Mayall and Petrie (1977) also asked childminders if they intended to continue in the role and 69% said yes; much less than in my study.

Why do the childminders in my study want to leave the role?

The nineteen respondents who stated that they intend to leave gave their reasons.

Reasons given for leaving childminding

It is claimed in the literature that the average length of service of former childminders is six years (Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001); for this reason I decided to look separately at the reasons for leaving given by those who had worked for 6 years or less and for those who had worked for 7 years or more to identify any significant differences in their answers.

Firstly, of the twelve who had been childminding for 6 years or less two were moving house (QN188), (including one to a different country (QN97)); one wished to pursue “other work commitments” (QN70) and one was taking maternity leave, but added “I will return to childminding” (QN224).

Only one response from this group indicated that the childminder may have undertaken the role whilst her own children were young, usually a very common reason (Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Gelder, 1993; Mooney et al, 2001b); she stated that she was leaving childminding as her youngest son was starting school in the following September, adding “I don’t plan on carrying on childminding after that” (QN82).

The remaining reasons proffered indicate some dissatisfaction with the role. Financial reasons for leaving are given by four childminders:

“Long hours with little money” (QN314)

“It depends on my income. I nearly gave up as I wasn’t earning much”, (QN407) (this was from one of the two childminders who was unsure whether or not they were going to remain in the role).

“If I don’t get any business soon I will go back to teaching as I need to earn money - I currently work mornings in a Nursery already” (QN413)

“Need more money to pay the bills” (QN83)

And dissatisfaction with OfSTED and paperwork also emerged as a theme:

“OfSTED/paperwork (unrealistic amounts that are UNNECESSARY)” (*capitals and brackets in original*) (QN100)

“Paperwork - long hours already then hours of paperwork” (QN230)

“I feel totally let down by OfSTED. All my efforts seem to have been pointless, yet they have given no recommendations for me to improve my service!?” (*this childminder had only been working for one year*) (QN415)

Secondly, of the seven with 7 or more years service who were considering finishing, one was starting a new job in a pre-school (QN289) whilst a childminder of 9 years stated “my family has grown up so now able to do other things”(QN24).

Another stated that after 17 years “I have decided to take early retirement and turn my house back into our family home” (QN38).

Just as childminders who have worked for 6 years or less stated financial reasons for quitting, more experienced childminders gave the following reasons:

“Not enough children to make it viable”, (QN43)

“Lack of work” (QN41)

“Loss of minded children to ‘nursery’ for their 15 hours free sessions” (QN374)

And finally a childminder who has been in the role for 18 years stated she wanted to leave because: "I do not like all the changes" (QN267).

Recently I checked an updated list of current childminders working within my LA and found that 13 of the 19 respondents to my study who had indicated an intention to leave had in fact stopped childminding in the last twelve months.

However six, all of whom had given a financial reason for leaving, including a lack of children to mind, remained in the job. I assume this signifies that they currently mind sufficient children to make their business viable, or possibly have struggled to find alternative employment. Of the six childminders continuing in the role two were females who had been childminding more than six years, two females had been in the role for less than six years while the remaining two were both male with less than six years experience as childminders.

Mooney et al. (2001b) asked 471 respondents what their main reason for stopping childminding would be; this was a hypothetical question as the childminders in the survey had not indicated an intention to leave. (Figure 5.19)

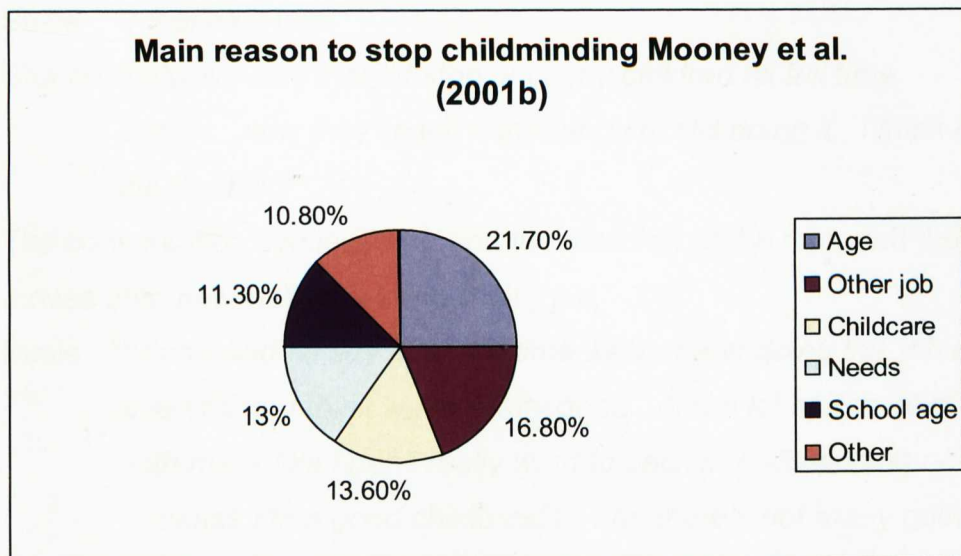


Figure 5.19 Main reasons given for stopping childminding in Mooney at al. (2001b)

21.7% of the childminders stated that their age would be the reason they would stop childminding. A further 16.8% said they would leave for another job and 13.6% would stop childminding to take up another job in childcare. 13% said they would stop childminding to meet the needs of their own children and 11.3% would stop because their children had reached school age. The latter two reasons support the theory that many take up childminding to enable them to care for their own children whilst earning some money (Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Gelder, 1993). It is interesting that the most popular answer given to this hypothetical question was the age of the childminder – yet this reason was not mentioned at all in my study, likewise just 2% of the 205 former childminders surveyed by Mooney, Moss and Owen (2001) stated that their reason for leaving childminding was age related. I believe that the reasons behind these differences is that the childminders in Mooney et al. 2001b were answering hypothetically and those in Mooney, Moss and Owen (2001) and my study were answering factually as they either intended to, or did leave the job.

I asked the two childminders that I interviewed “Do you think you will carry on childminding forever?” Their response:

Sharon *“Probably”*

Susie *“I feel as if I will”*

Sharon *“I always said that I’d stop once my children hit full time school...now they’ve left home and I’m still doing it. I think it’s the flexibility”*

The conversation continues around the flexibility of the role, and then moves onto how well they know their jobs.

Susie *“Yeah. And I’d say after the time we’ve been doing this job and everything, I think we’re pretty good. And a lot of it, a lot of it with me is like I don’t really want to pack in childminding now because I’m a good childminder, and there’s not many good childminders out there.”*

Sharon *“No there isn’t, that’s the problem”*

Susie *“At the end of the day, if I pack it in and you pack it in, where does that leave...”*

Sharon *“Poor parents”*

Susie *“Yeah but...where’s it going to come from, where’s the good role models going to come from”*

Sharon indicated that she started childminding as a way of working whilst caring for her own children, as discussed in the literature (Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Gelder, 1993; Mooney et al., 2001b).

It is claimed in the literature that the average length of service of former childminders is 6 years (Mooney, Moss and Owen, 2001). I was interested to see how long those intending to leave the role in my study had been childminding (Figure 5.20).

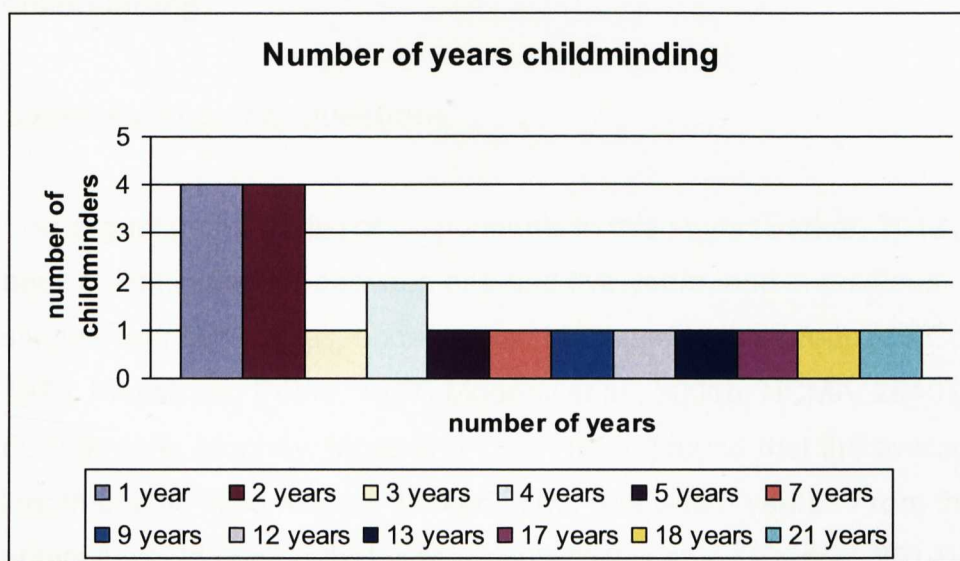


Figure 5.20 Number of years childminding of the group intending to leave the job.

Eight (42%) of those intending to leave the job had worked in the role for 2 years or less (six of them did leave). In concurrence with the literature a total of 63% (n=12) had been childminders for 6 years or less (eight of the twelve did leave). The other 37% (n=7) had been childminders for between 7 and 21 years (five of the seven left). The years of service of

the thirteen childminders who actually stopped cover a wide range (figure 5.21).

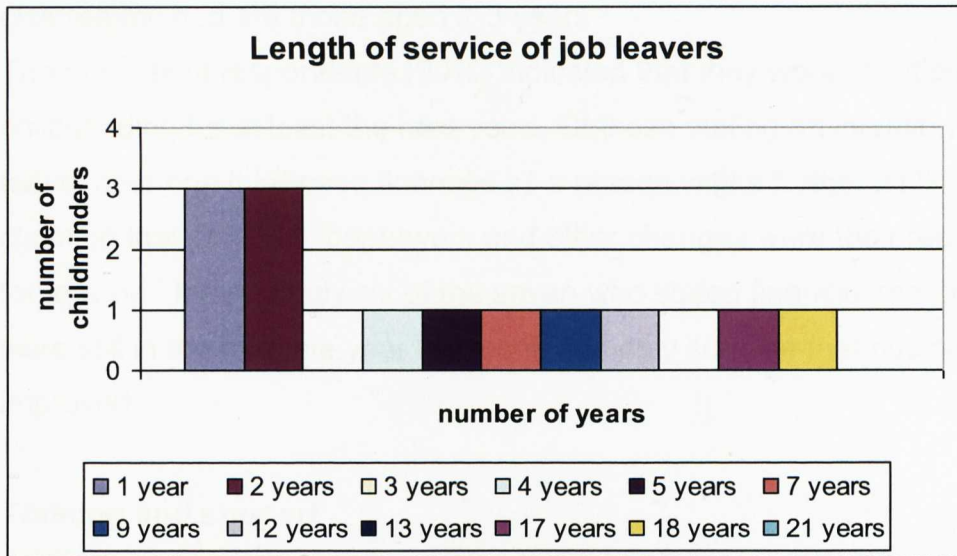


Figure 5.21 Length of service of childminders who actually stopped childminding.

Summary of career questions

The largest group (42%) of respondents in this study (Barker, 2012) had been childminding for between one and five years, and in previous studies over 50% of respondents also belonged to this group (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b; NCMA, 2010). Furthermore, Mooney, Moss and Owen (2001) found that the average length of time childminders worked in the role was 6 years. From the above it would appear that respondents to this study (Barker, 2012) are more experienced childminders as 25% had been in the role for 14 years or more. It is beyond the scope of this study to understand whether this is a national or local trend, or peculiar to my study.

Previous studies have suggested that the majority of childminders started as parents wishing to remain at home with their own children whilst earning some money – my research confirmed this

Previous research also report variable hours indicating that this is a flexible job. This study (Barker, 2012) found that the majority (66%) of

childminders reported working for 36 or more hours per week, the average number of children minded being 7 and the largest age-group of children minded are those aged 2-3 years.

The majority of respondents (90%) indicated that they would continue childminding for at least the next year. Of those stating an intention to leave, over one third gave finances as a reason with a further 21% claiming that OfSTED, paperwork and other changes were their reason for leaving. Interestingly six of the seven who stated financial reasons were still in the role one year later; one can only surmise that business improved.

Training and support

The importance of training and support, their effect on recruitment and retention of childminders and the quality of their provision is evident in the literature (Moss, 1987; Fischer and Eheart, 1991; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Helburn et al., 2002; Doherty et al., 2006). For this reason I wanted to discover what training and support was available for, and consequently used, by childminders.

Support for childminders

My question: Who supports you in your role as a childminder?

Options including “Another childminder, Childminder Co-ordinator, and Health Visitor” were offered along with an “other (please specify)” option - respondents were asked to tick all options that applied to them. From the results of previous studies (Mooney et al., 2001b) I anticipated that childminders may use more than one group for support; my findings confirmed this. The number of sources of support identified by the respondents ranged from 0 to 5 (figure 5.22).

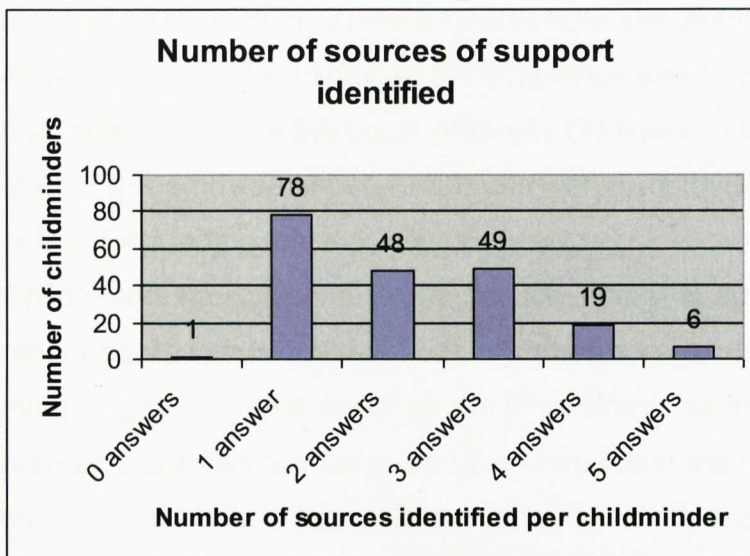


Figure 5.22 Number of sources of support identified by each childminder.

Only one childminder (0.5%) did not answer this question. Of the 200 that did the most frequent response (n=78, 39%) was that childminders were supported by one group. Similar numbers of respondents said that they were supported by two (n=48, 24%) and three groups (n=49, 24.5%). In addition 19 (9%) named four groups and 6 (3%) said five. But which groups provided support to the most childminders? (Figure 5.23)

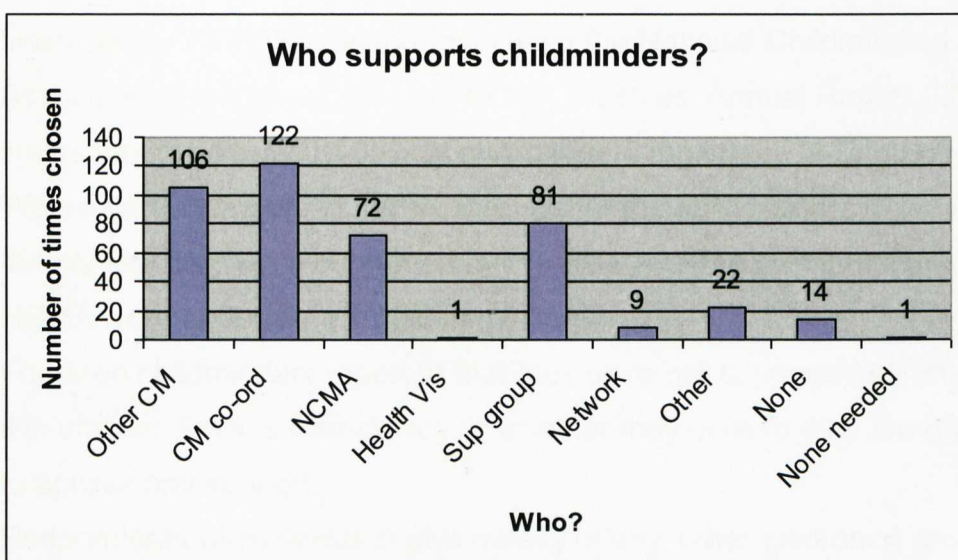


Figure 5.23 Who supports childminders?

Supporting most (n=122) were Childminder Co-ordinators - staff employed by the LA to deliver the Challenge and Support Strategy to childminders across the Local Authority (Kirklees Council, 2011). At the start of this study seven co-ordinators were employed, however due to cuts in LA funding there are currently six.

Childminders also turned to other childminders for support with 106 respondents choosing this option. Furthermore 81 used a childminder support group - these are often run in children's centres; I expect the number using this form of support to increase in the future as the LA is introducing a lead childminder scheme. Under this, one childminder is recruited by the LA for each of the 33 children's centres. Lead childminders are the link between the children's centre management and support group members; in addition to leading the support group they are responsible for overseeing the setting up and clearing away of resources used by the group.

A further 9 childminders are supported by the Children Come First network (Owen, 2007); this appears to be an insignificant source of support but the total number of childminders eligible to belong to the network in the LA is small, less than 20 presently – this is discussed in more depth in Chapter Two of this study. My study received responses from 50% of the network minders.

Interestingly 72 (36%) respondents used the National Childminding Association for support. Yet the NCMA Trustees' Annual Report (2010) states that in 2009/2010 65% of childminders registered in England and Wales were members of the NCMA. Either the childminders in my study did not feel they were supported by the NCMA or the membership of the NCMA were underrepresented in my study.

Fourteen childminders reported that they were not supported by anyone; it is unclear if this is their choice or whether they believe they are unable to access any support.

Respondents were asked to give details of any 'other' person or group that supported them in their role and 22 stated that they were. Nine of them named a husband / wife / or family member, 6 had an assistant, 2

said Surestart staff, the remaining 5 identified their support as parents of the children they minded, early years support, the tenants association, pre-school or school, or friends.

Mooney et al. (2001b) reported the most popular form of support was another childminder - 64% of respondents, with a further 58% receiving support from an LA advisor. These two answers are the same as my own top two, though in my study more childminders were supported by LA staff (61%) than other childminders (53%). Mooney et al. (ibid) claimed that 42% of their respondents were supported by NCMA, a figure slightly higher than my own. Health visitors supported 16% of childminders in Mooney et al.'s study but only 0.5% (n=1) in my own. Conversely the CRC study (1975) does provide no figures on support given to childminders but does report the responses to the question asking childminders "would you like any" of the services offered by the LA, including training, support and grants. They found that 150 of the 186 respondents would like grants for safety equipment, and 146 would like support from someone on dealing with difficult children. Furthermore 77 would like support around play activities.

Preparation training

My question: To be a childminder, how many hours preparation training did you attend?

The Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey 2009 states: "the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage state that childminders are not required to hold any qualifications, although they are expected to undertake an approved course prior to commencing childminding activities" (DfE, 2010, p.83). From anecdotal conversations with the Local Authority Network Childminder Co-ordinator I understood that the amount of preparation training offered to childminders had changed over time (figure 5.24)

Date	Length of training	Delivered by	Content
1994	6 sessions – total 16 hours	Local Authority	Safety, business, play
1999	10 sessions – total 20 hours	LA registration staff and existing childminders	Parents, business, safety, behaviour, equality, child protection
2000	10 sessions – total 20 hours	Initially delivered by LA	Introduction to Childminding Practice (ICP) (level 1) – parents, business, safety, behaviour, equality, child protection
2001	10 sessions – total 20 hours	Delivered in 2 local colleges	ICP as above
2002	12 sessions – total 24 hours 30 sessions – total 60 hours	Delivered in 2 local colleges	ICP – course length extended DCP (Developing Childminding Practice) (Level 2)
2003	30 sessions – total 60 hours	Delivered in 2 local colleges	As above but also ECP (Extending Childminding Practice) (Level 3)
2007	5 sessions – total 10 hours	Local Authority	Childminder preparation training delivered around the Every Child Matters outcomes.
2008	8 sessions – total 16 hours	Local Authority	As above
2009	10 sessions – total 20 hours	Local Authority	Introduction, safety, health, parents, business, inclusion and behaviour, learning and development, child protection, summary

2010	10 sessions – total 25 hours	Local Authority	As above but sessions are longer
2011	18 sessions – total 45 hours	Local Authority	Introduction, policies and procedures, inclusion, safety, risk assessment, health, safeguarding, parents, child development, play, behaviour, business, medicines, summary.

Figure 5.24 History of preparation training provided in my Local Authority

Figure 5.24 shows that the amount of training provided has increased threefold since 1994; in fact the largest increase has been in the last year from 25 to 45 hours. Since 2000/2001 attendance at preparation training has been compulsory in my Local Authority before registration is completed. The rationale behind this is to ensure that childminders are fully aware of the complexities of the role before they begin, thus reducing the number who register, decide that the job is not what they expected and then leave.

Previously Mooney et al., (2001b) found that 36% of childminders had not attended any pre-registration training and a further 46% had attended between 1 and 12 hours of training (figure 5.25).

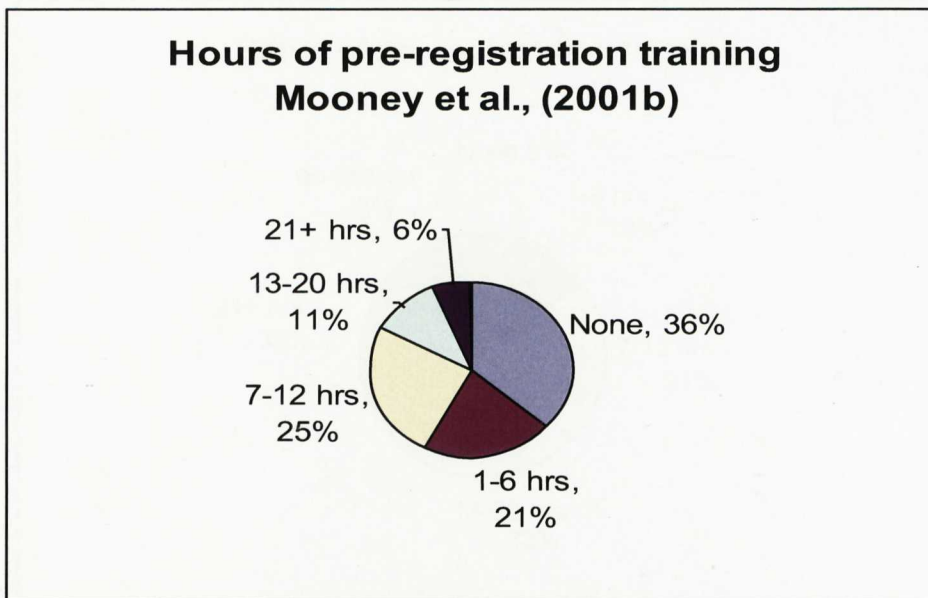


Figure 5.25 Hours of pre-registration training reported in Mooney et al., (2001b).

The most recent data on pre-registration training attended by childminders in the Childcare and Early Years Provider Surveys series comes from the 2006 Survey (DfE, 2007). The survey reports that nationally 83% of childminders have attended some pre-registration training. Of these 72% have attended eight or more hours, 11% have attended between four and seven hours and 6% less than four hours training. Furthermore 13% of respondents state that they “don’t know” how much training they had.

In my study 195 respondents state the number of hours of pre-registration or preparation training they attended (figure 5.26).

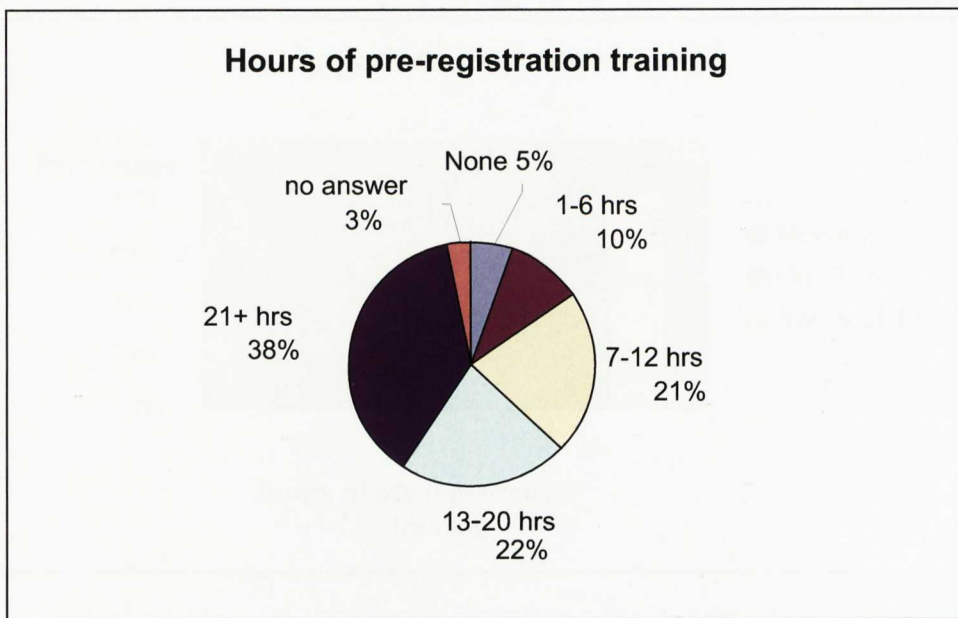


Figure 5.26 Number of hours of pre-registration training attended

As shown above (figure 5.26) 38% (n=76) had attended more than twenty one hours of training prior to becoming childminders, with a further 22.5% (n=45) attending between 13 - 20 hours. A comparison of two previous studies (Mooney et al.,2001b; and DfE, 2007) with my own (Barker, 2012) shows a decline in the number with no pre-registration training (from 36% to 5.5%) and an increase in those attending more than seven or eight hours of training (from 42% to 82%) within this ten year period (figure 5.27).

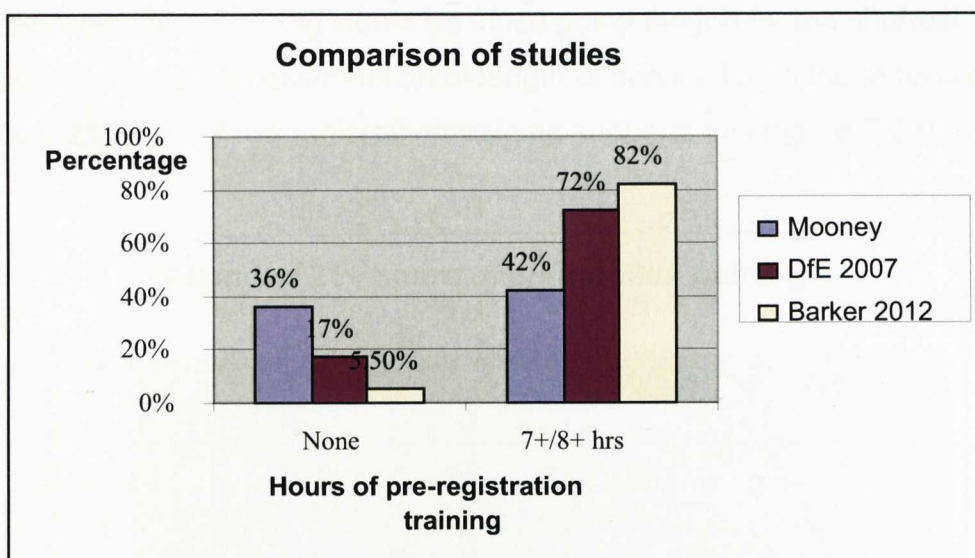


Figure 5.27 A comparison of study findings on pre-registration training

I suspected that the amount of training attended was inversely proportional to the length of time that childminders had been doing their jobs.

All 11 childminders (5.5%) who said they attended no training prior to registration had been in the role for between 10 and 30 years, so my assumption about this group, based on less non-compulsory pre-registration training being available at this time, was correct. Likewise I expected those who reported attending between 1 and 6 hours of training to be the more experienced ones, indeed the majority of this group had been childminding for between 7 and 32 years. However I was surprised to see that three of this group had been working for 2,3, and 4 years respectively – I assumed that these more recently registered childminders would have needed to complete much longer pre-registration training. Of course it is possible that they had originally worked in a different LA with less comprehensive training or even that their recollection of the actual amount of training attended is unclear. As stated, I expected the more experienced childminders to form the majority of those who had received little or no pre-registration training and so conversely I expected that those who had attended the longest

pre-registration training would be those doing the job for the shortest period of time. An examination of length of service for all those recording over 21 hours of pre-registration training supports this (figure 5.28).

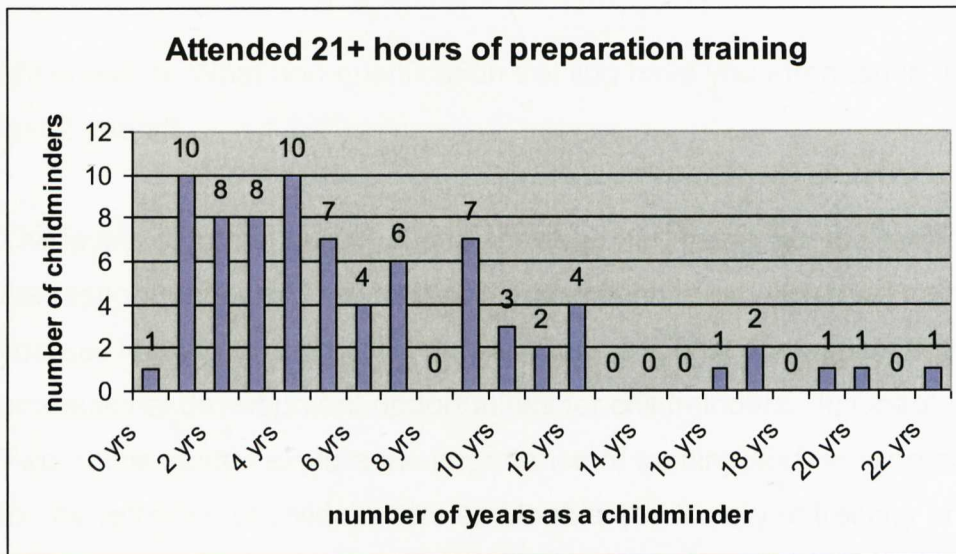


Figure 5.28 Length of service of childminders who attended 21+ hours of preparation training

In total 76 childminders attended 21+ hours of pre-registration training and nearly half of them (n=37, 49%) had been in the role for four years or less. In fact the majority (n=70, 92%) had been childminding for twelve years or less. Interestingly the remaining six (8%) had been working for between sixteen and twenty-two years each. I speculated why these six childminders had attended so much preparation training when this type of training opportunity was unavailable in my LA at the time of their registration in the mid to late 1990's. Perhaps as new training was introduced these more experienced childminders elected to attend it, or maybe they were registered in a different LA where longer pre-registration training was offered? Unfortunately my study does not provide the answers to these questions.

The two interviewees said that they each attended six sessions of preparation training before starting as childminders; one was trained in a neighbouring LA. Six sessions equates to around twelve hours of

preparation training. Since they were first registered they have both also completed the ICP, DCP and ECP.

Non-qualification training attended

My question: What non-qualification training have you attended in the last 2 years?

The levels of formal qualifications achieved and being worked towards by the respondents are discussed earlier in this chapter. However training courses leading to accredited qualifications are only one aspect of the professional development opportunities for childminders. In Chapter Two of this study I explore the importance of training and development for the retention of childminders and look at the history of training in my LA and in the wider context. With this in mind I asked what non-qualification training had been attended.

The first courses (other than preparation training and the ICP, DCP and ECP courses discussed above) delivered specifically for childminders in my LA are:

- Safeguarding
- First Aid
- Self Evaluation Form (SEF) (an introduction to completing the OfSTED form evidencing practitioners' reflections of their practice)
- EYFS principles into practice (an introduction to the EYFS)
- Look, listen and note for childminders (an introduction to observation, assessment and planning)

These course titles were specified on the questionnaire and respondents were invited to indicate if they had attended any of them and any other courses within the last two years. All the 201 respondents answered this question, although six stated that they had not attended any of the

courses. Attendance figures at these courses are quite high (figure 5.29).

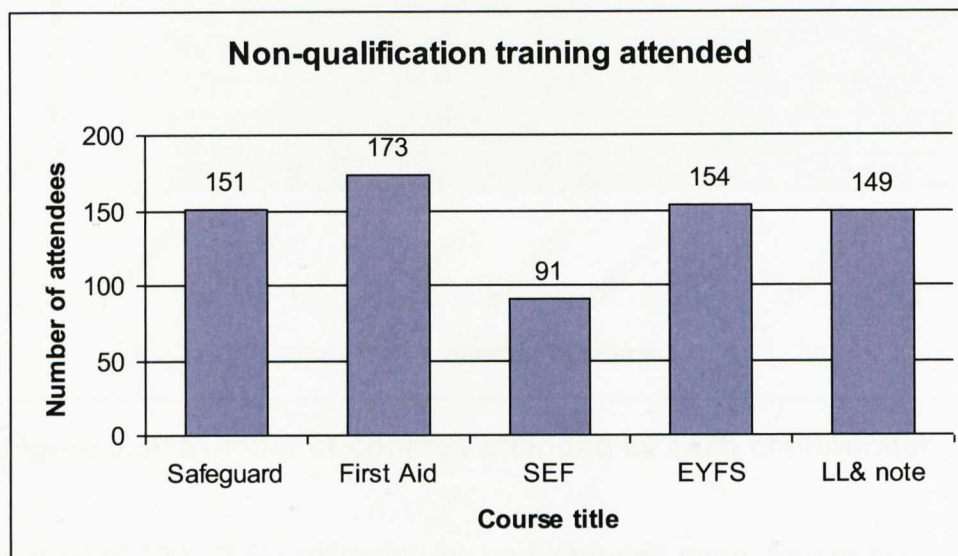


Figure 5.29 Non-qualification training attended

Around 75% of the 201 childminders had attended the Safeguarding, EYFS and Look, Listen and Note training courses, whilst 86% had attended First Aid training in the previous two years. (It is a statutory requirement that childminders and other childcare workers hold a current paediatric first aid certificate - these are valid for three years).

In addition, 32 different training courses (Appendix 4) have been attended by a total of 131 attendees over the 2 year period. The most frequently recorded are: Food Safety/Hygiene; Special Educational Needs; Developing a Listening Culture; Healthy Eating; and Creativity. In total 849 course attendances at non-qualification training are reported in the questionnaires, an average of four per respondent. I was curious to discover if course attendance was distributed equally across all the childminders or if a small group was attending large amounts of training whilst others attended very little. To answer this I totalled the amount of courses each childminder indicated they had attended; the results of this are shown in the table below (figure 5.30).

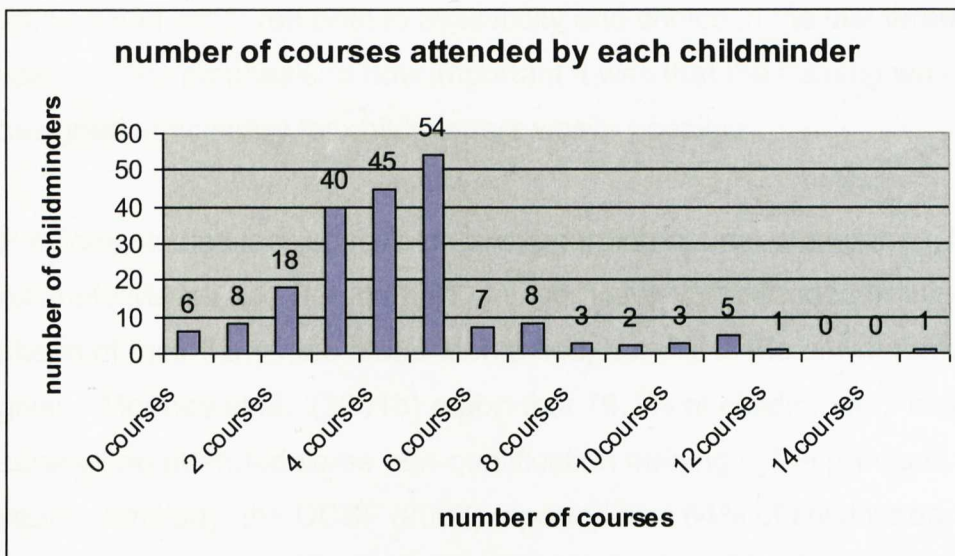


Figure 5.30 Number of courses attended by each childminder

A total of 139 (70%) childminders had attended three, four or five training courses in the previous 2 years; these were by far the most frequent responses. A further eighteen (9%) had attended two courses, and eight (4%) had attended just one. In addition there were six (3%) who had not attended any courses; I was interested to discover if there was any link between this and their length of service as childminders. On investigation I discovered that these six respondents had been in the job for various lengths of time ranging from less than one year to sixteen years so there was no discernable pattern, in addition they were from three different age groups and one was male.

In contrast eighteen (9%) childminders had attended six, seven or eight courses, eleven (5.5%) had attended between nine and twelve courses and one childminder said she had attended fifteen training courses during the two year period. The length of time these respondents had been childminders ranged from one to twenty-two years, here again there was no discernable pattern.

Both interviewees said they attended a 'lot' of training. I asked their opinion of current training opportunities compared to training offered previously - earlier in the interview they stated that very little training for childminders was available when they first started. Both agreed that

training had improved both in availability and choice in the last three years. They emphasised how important it was that the training was designed specifically for childminders where possible.

Previous studies lack specific details regarding course attendance, for example Mayall and Petrie (1977) asked "Have you attended training?" - fifteen of their thirty nine respondents had, but this is the only information given. Mooney et al., (2001b) report that 76.1% of childminders in their survey had attended some non-qualification training in the previous three years. Similarly, the DCSF (2007) reported that 64% of childminders have done some training in the last twelve months; 68% of these had attended five training 'days' or less.

A comparison of previous studies with mine shows an increase in attendance of non-qualification training over time; with just six childminders (3%) in my study stating they had attended no training in the last twelve months compared to 36% in the DCSF (2007) study. It appears that annual attendance at some training is the norm today. However the majority of childminders in my study had attended between 3 and 5 courses over two years, which is not a large amount in that period of time. So are there any over-riding reasons why training is not attended?

Reasons why training is not attended

My question: Are there any reasons why you have not attended training?

The importance of attending regular training has been discussed in Chapter Two of this study and earlier in this current chapter. It is of great importance that the training provided meets the needs of the childminders; i.e. training that they want to attend and which addresses issues raised during OfSTED inspections. The evidence proving that content and availability of training is appropriate is that training *is* being accessed and a rise is apparent in the number of good or outstanding

OfSTED grades received. However, since September 2011, due to cuts in Government funding to Local Authorities, childcare providers from all sectors must pay for the courses they attend; as a result of this I anticipate that the number of childminders attending training will decrease. From my experience there will always be some in the childminding workforce who will attend training, even if they have to fund it themselves, as they understand that training improves their practice. However I believe that there are as many, if not more, who will not attend any training.

Respondents were asked to indicate which, if any, of the eight options were their reasons for non-attendance on training courses. The eight options provided were based on answers given in previous studies (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001). Respondents could also indicate that 'no difficulties were experienced' or choose 'other' for any further reasons they had. They could choose as many reasons as applicable to them (figure 5.31).

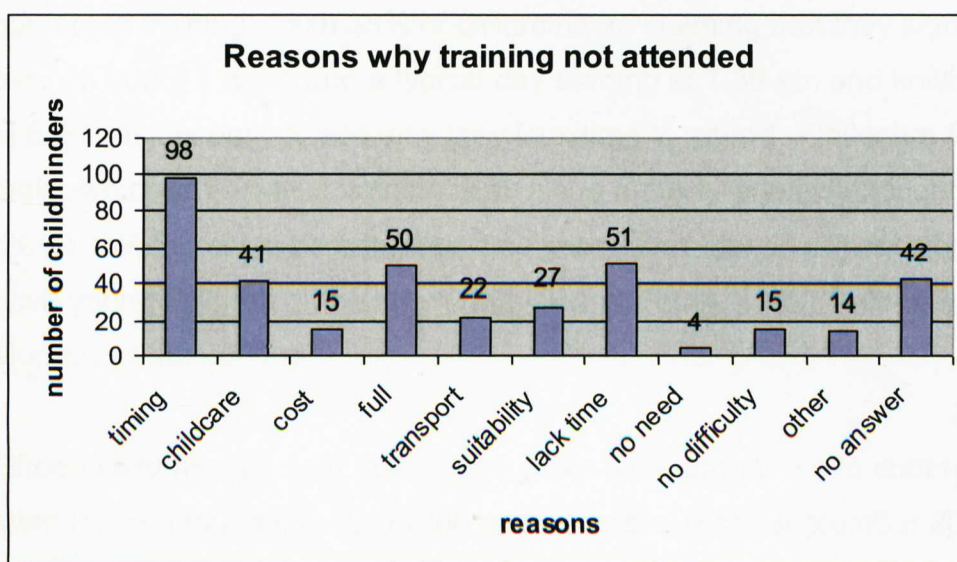


Figure 5.31 Reasons why training not attended

I was surprised that 42 (21%) did not answer this question, as anecdotal conversations with groups of childminders prior to this study had indicated that attendance at training was quite problematic for them.

Nevertheless 159 did answer, and the most frequent response (n=98, 62%) was that childminders considered the timing of courses a barrier to their attendance. This was expected as previously there was very little training aimed specifically at childminders in my LA and consequently many courses have been delivered during the day or in the late afternoon when childminders are still working.

Fifty childminders (32%) stated that there were no places available on the courses they wanted to attend; again this was unsurprising as there are currently 434 childminders registered in the LA and very few LA staff members to deliver training. Availability of places on courses is also an issue for staff in daycare settings as the small number of LA staff employed to deliver training to them restricts the number of courses that can be delivered. It is important to note that no LA staff member is employed solely to deliver training; it is part of their role alongside the provision of the Challenge and Support Strategy (Kirklees Council, 2011).

Fifty-one respondents (32%) stated 'lack of time' as the reason they did not attend training. With 38% of childminders claiming that they work over 45 hours a week and a typical day starting at 7.30 am and finishing at 6.00 pm it is easy to see why they lack time to attend. Childcare for their own children whilst training is an issue for forty-one childminders (26%); this too could be anticipated as many start the job because they have young children of their own (Mayall and Petrie, 1983; Gelder, 1993; Mooney et al., 2001b).

Fifteen childminders said that course costs were prohibitive to course attendance: I found this surprising as all courses (until September 2011) were provided free of charge. The same number said they experienced no difficulties accessing training. In addition twenty-two respondents stated that transport was an issue for them and of the fourteen respondents who specified 'other' reasons location was identified by six of them. This has also been an issue identified by training attendees

from daycare settings as many do not drive and public transport is not necessarily available around the start and finish times of courses. Other reasons given were; 'need a bigger range', 'tired', 'repeated courses', 'need more information', 'family', 'it is not mandatory', 'no children' and 'appropriate training only'.

A comparison of the answers to this question reported in a previous study (Mooney et al., 2001b) with my own (Barker, 2012) illustrates the changes over time (figure 5.32).

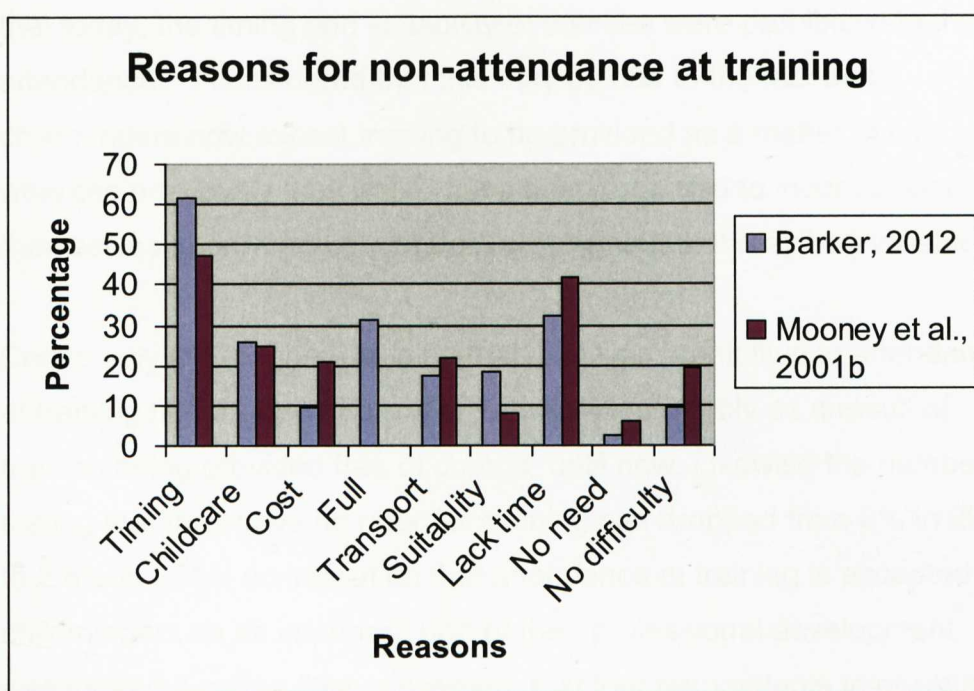


Figure 5.32 Reasons for non-attendance at training - a comparison of studies by Mooney et al., (2001b) and Barker (2012).

Timing of courses is the reason most frequently given for non-attendance at training in both studies; interestingly the number giving this reason is 14% higher in my study than that of Mooney et al. (2001b). I find this surprising as I hoped that the introduction of training specifically for childminders may be addressing this issue within my LA. In addition the number of respondents in my study stating that the lack of suitable courses was their reason for non-attendance was also higher than in Mooney et al. (2001b), with more than double the number stating this.

Moreover the number of respondents stating that they have experienced 'no difficulties' in attending training in my study is 50% of the number stating this in Mooney et al. (ibid). It could be concluded however that the 42 (21%) who did not answer this question may consider that they have experienced no difficulties, hence they ignored the question.

Furthermore 31.4% of respondents in my study state they did not attend courses because they were fully-booked, an issue that did not appear at all in the previous study.

Currently, in my LA, more training for childminders is being delivered than at any previous time, and yet many respondents in my study stated that today, the timing and suitability of courses were prohibitive to their attendance. I considered that this may be due to the fact that childminders now expect training to be provided as a matter of course whereas previously they would have been prepared to inconvenience themselves in order to benefit from any training that may be available.

Conversely the number claiming that cost was prohibitive to attendance at training has dropped from 20.7% to 9.4%, probably as a result of training being provided free of charge, until now. Likewise the number stating that they have no need for training has dropped from 6% in 2001 to 2.6% in 2011, an indication that attendance at training is accepted by childminders as an important part of their professional development. I was intrigued, and a little concerned, that four respondents in my study asserted that they needed no further training so I looked at their questionnaires more closely.

Childminder A had been in the role for 17 years and was previously a teacher. She was in the 55-64 years age bracket and was considering leaving the role to take early retirement. In the previous two years she had attended two training courses.

Childminder B had been minding for 10 years and had worked for the Pre-school Learning Alliance. She too was aged between 55-64 years,

but intended to continue childminding for at least the next 12 months. In the previous two years she had attended three training courses.

Childminder C had been minding for 7 years and had previously been a nursery assistant in a private day nursery. She was from the 35 -44 years age group and was not planning to remain as a childminder due to *“the loss of minded children to ‘nursery’ for their 15 hour free sessions”*. In the previous two years she had attended just one training course. (QN374)

Finally childminder D had only been minding for 1 year, previously working as an office manager and belonging to the 25 – 34 years age group. She again did not intend to continue childminding and stated *“I feel totally let down by Ofsted. All my efforts seem to have been pointless, yet they have given no recommendations for me to improve my service!?”* When asked what childcare qualifications she had gained or was working towards she commented *“Frankly, the amount of admin piled on me so far hasn’t exactly encouraged me to do more. I’d rather play with /look after children than write about it!”* The final comment written on the questionnaire was *“Ofsted told me I didn’t NEED further training”* (capitals in original). In the one year that she had been a childminder she had attended three training courses. (QN415)

The childminders discussed above belonged to three different age groups and had been minding for between 1 and 17 years. All but one considered that leaving the job was an explanation as to why they felt they needed no further training. On further investigation I discovered that two (A and D) had recently left the role, whilst the others remained.

Does the training meet the needs of the childminders?

My question: Does the training provided meet your needs?

Before asking if they had any further training requirements I included a question to ascertain if current training met their needs. There were 2 options for this question, yes or no. However some respondents did not choose but wrote 'don't know' or 'sometimes' on the paper; with hindsight I should have included this option on the questionnaire (figure 5.33)

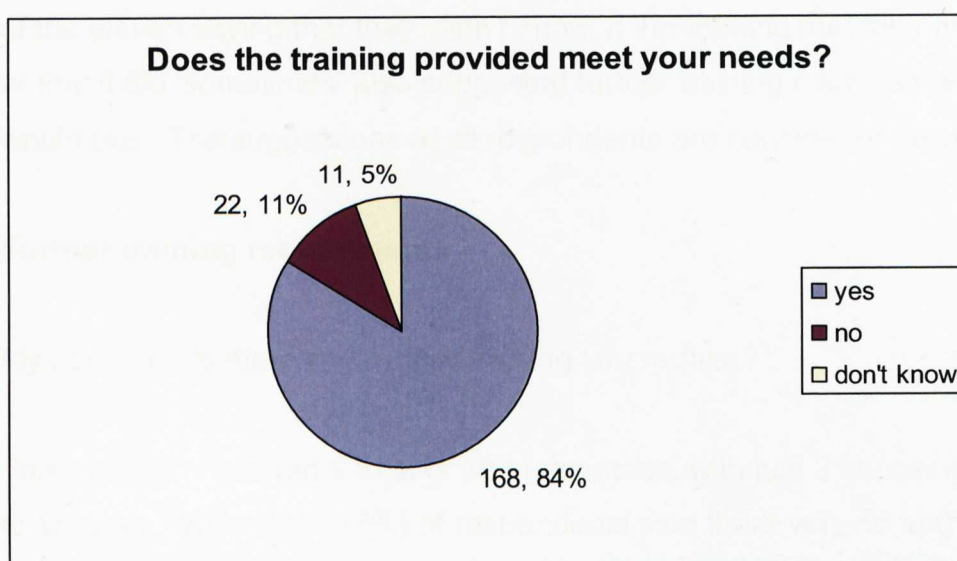


Figure 5.33 Does the training provided meet the needs of childminders?

Clearly the majority (84%, n=168) think that the training provided meets their needs. This is good news as the LA is providing considerably more training opportunities for childminders than they have in previous years; when I started my job in January 2007 the only training available for them was preparation / pre-registration training and the certificates in childminding practice (ICP, DCP and ECP). Further training was developed due to the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) and childminders were offered courses with similar content to those working in daycare settings, but modified to represent childminding practice. The introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) – the statutory framework for all

early years providers - has prompted much discussion amongst childminders in my LA. Many welcomed it, as for the first time they were being regarded equally with other childcare providers in private day nurseries, pre-schools and maintained nursery provision, whilst others argued that they should not have to follow the same curriculum guidance because their provision was completely different to that provided in settings in non-domestic premises.

Eighteen of the twenty-two respondents who said that the training did not meet their needs suggested further training they required. In addition six of the eleven saying that they 'didn't know' if the training met their needs or that it did 'sometimes' also suggested further training courses they would like. The suggestions of all respondents are considered below.

Further training requirements

My question: Is there any further training you require?

This question received a total of 198 responses, with just 3 choosing not to answer. Whilst 113 (57%) of respondents said there was no further training they required, 85 (43%) said that there was. No pre-populated suggestions for further training were included so respondents could make their own suggestions, and as I expected a range of responses were received.

In total 107 suggestions were put forward proposing 27 different courses (Appendix 5). Some suggestions were vague but pointed to an ethos that has been absent from childminder training in my LA until recently; including "childminder specific", and "same as settings". One respondent stated that she required more training but when prompted to give more details wrote "don't know". However the majority of responses were specific and the seven most frequently requested courses were each suggested by at least six childminders (figure 5.34).

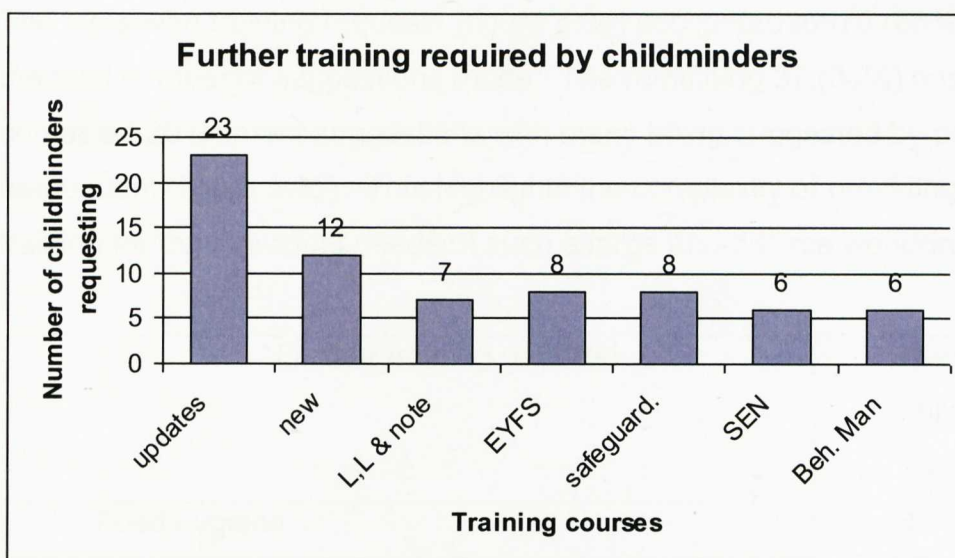


Figure 5.34 The seven most frequently requested training courses.

Since the mail-out of my questionnaire there have been significant changes in the training strategy for my LA following the restructure of the Early Years Service and the implementation of budget cuts. This is a result of government policy aimed at reducing the budget deficit for the country as a whole (Stabe and Jones, 2011). Until August 2011 training provided by the LA for pre-school staff, daycare providers and childminders was free of charge; however this changed in September 2011 as LAs needed to levy a charge to cover their costs. All childcare providers now pay for the courses they attend, based on a pro-rata system, and childminders will pay less than daycare providers who in turn pay less than schools (who have always paid for the training their staff receive). To this end, LA employees including Early Years Consultants, the Childcare and Childminder coordinators, Childcare Inclusion Officers and the Business Team were asked to suggest courses that they felt the childcare workforce wanted, needed and ultimately would pay to attend. At this point I was able to give a summary of the suggestions (Appendix 5) that I had collated during this study to a representative of the training strategy group, and of the twenty-seven suggestions submitted fifteen were subsequently advertised.

The top seven training requests (figure 5.34) accounted for 70 (66%) of the total number of suggestions made. The remaining 37 (34%) answers contained 20 different suggestions with many being suggested by one respondent (figure 5.35). This highlights the complexity of providing training for the individual needs of such a large and diverse workforce.

Further training required	Number of childminders suggesting this.
Food hygiene	4
Self Evaluation Form (SEF)	3
Observation, Assessment and Planning	3
NVQ 3	3
Brain development	2
Information Technology	2
NVQ level 4/5	2
Forest school	2
Childminder specific training	2
Healthy eating	2
Accounts	1
Don't know	1
Every Child a Talker (ECAT)*	1
Assertiveness training	1
Common Assessment Framework (CAF)	1
Empathy dolls	1
Same as settings	1
Divorce and its effect on children	1
Paperwork	1
Child development	1

Figure 5.35 Training course suggestions and number of requests for each.

* ECAT was an initiative with attached Government funding to encourage early language development.

It was interesting that many of the suggestions were for courses which have been delivered previously in the LA – this may indicate that the LA had understood, and provided for, the training needs of childminders who could not think of anything else they wanted. Requests for these courses signified a need to deliver them again.

Nonetheless the most frequently requested ‘training’ with 23 (22%) of the 107 suggestions received was ‘updates’ which coincidentally started to be delivered to all childcare providers just after I mailed-out the questionnaires. The bi-annual updates are delivered in each of the seven localities in the LA at a time convenient for childminders – these sessions provide an update on national initiatives, Local Authority and locality issues and an opportunity to network with other childcare providers.

None of the previous studies I investigated included questions asking childminders what training they would like. This is unsurprising; the two previous studies that were conducted in distinct localities (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977) were done at a time when support and training for childminders was uncommon. The two later studies (Mooney et al., 2001b; DfE, 2010) were national studies; knowledge of the training childminders want in various parts of the country is likely to be of little value to a national study.

The two interviewees have attended a considerable number of training courses and said they were always willing to attend more, with this in mind I asked if the training provided met their needs. They both stated that it did but sometimes felt frustrated that they could not get places on courses that they had attended previously. Their rationale for wanting to re-attend courses was that they wanted reassurance that they are doing everything correctly; an interesting viewpoint as these two childminders are viewed as role models for others and both belong to the CCF

network in the LA with just eighteen other childminders, all of whom have undertaken and successfully completed rigorous Quality Assurance accreditation. However they said they both appreciated courses written and delivered for childminders alone, as training for all childcare practitioners is not always relevant to the distinctive working practices of childminders. Neither Sharon nor Susie had done their Foundation Degree, but were considering it.

Summary of training and support questions

The introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) brought all childcare providers under the umbrella of one document. Although childminders previously used *Birth to Three Matters* (DfES, 2002) and *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000) the EYFS was the first document to be statutory for all childcare providers caring for children aged 0-5 years. The process of inclusion further confirmed that childcare is provided not only in private daycare and pre-school settings but also by childminders.

Childminders have accessed training in the last two years, and this meets the needs of the majority of respondents (84%). Suggestions for further training were made and a summary of these shared with the Senior Management Team in my LA (Appendix 5). Starting time and venue of courses were the biggest barriers reported to attendance on training – an issue that must be considered when training is planned. Only in the last four years has childminder-specific training, beyond pre-registration, safeguarding and first-aid, been available in my LA and my concern is that, as training courses now carry a cost for attendees, many will find this prohibitive or off-putting, training attendance will decrease and standards fall. Only time will tell.

Views of childminders

Ultimately my aim in this study was to discover and understand how current childminders within the LA regard their role, thus indicating any significant changes in the role over time.

Identifying specific features of childminders' work with which they are satisfied or dissatisfied will provide information that I will share with the senior management teams in the LA. I hope this knowledge will influence and improve the future practice of the LA in their work with childminders and improve their retention.

Overall satisfaction / dissatisfaction with role as childminder

My question: Overall to what extent are you satisfied / dissatisfied with your role as a childminder?

I asked this initial question to ascertain an overview of the feelings of the childminders. Using a Likert scale (Denscombe, 2010) respondents were asked to select one from five choices: very dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, neither satisfied or dissatisfied, mostly satisfied, or completely satisfied. Although it is suggested in the literature that offering four alternatives ensures that the respondent cannot 'sit on the fence' therefore occupying the middle ground (Bell, 1999; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007) I included five options as I believed that some childminders may be ambivalent about their job.

Two respondents did not answer this question; both indicating on the questionnaire that they had insufficient experience to answer this question. The remaining 199 answers are displayed in the table below (figure 5.36).

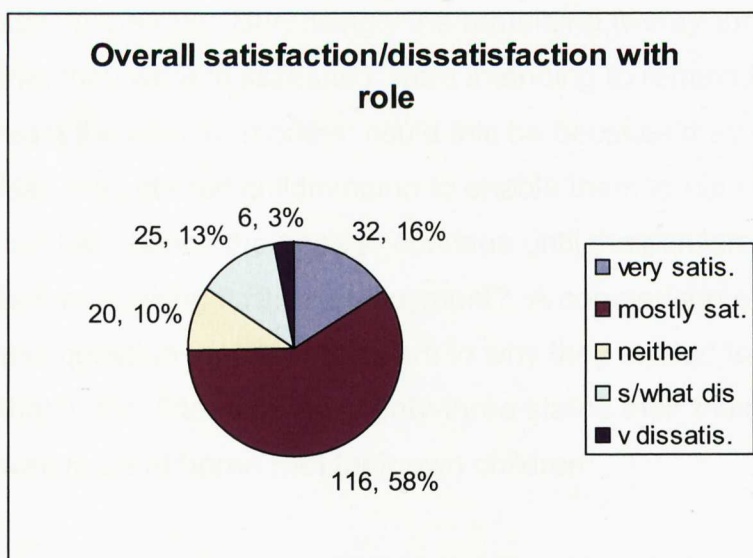


Figure 5.36 Childminders' overall satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their role.

The majority (58%, n=116) were 'mostly satisfied' with their role, with a further 16% (n=32) stating that they were 'very satisfied'; a total of 74% (n=148) were therefore positive about their role. In addition, a further 10% (n=20) indicated 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' in their role.

Mooney et al. (2001b) used a Likert scale to ascertain the levels of job satisfaction of childminders who gave themselves a score between 1 and 10 with 1 being 'not satisfied' and 10 being 'completely satisfied'. The majority of the 491 childminders (89%) scored themselves towards the more satisfied end of the scale (7 or above); indicating that in this previous study they were more satisfied in their role than those in my study. Furthermore only 3% of Mooney et al.'s respondents scored their satisfaction level as 4 or below, yet in my study 16% (n=31) expressed dissatisfaction with the role – 13% (n=25) were 'somewhat dissatisfied' and the other 3% (n=6) were 'very dissatisfied'. I wondered how many of these were intending to leave childminding, so compared the answers of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the role with their answers for question number 11 – Do you intend to continue working as a childminder for at least the next twelve months? Two of the six who were very dissatisfied were not intending to remain childminders, and of the twenty-five who were somewhat dissatisfied six were not intending to

stay in the role. Surprisingly the remaining twenty-three who indicated that they were 'dissatisfied' were intending to remain in the role for at least the next 12 months; could this be because they have little choice? Had they started childminding to enable them to care for their own young children, hence the need to continue until their children started school before seeking further employment? A comparison of their answers to this question and their answers to why they started to childmind showed that in fact fifteen of the twenty-three stated their main reason for starting was to be at home with their own children.

The interviewees both said they enjoyed their jobs most of the time. Susie stated that she liked her job *"90% of the time"* so I asked *"what is the 10% you don't like?"*

Susie *"The parents and children you don't get on with. I mean they make it or break it for you I'd say".*

Sharon *"They can do, yeah"*

It transpired that currently Susie was looking after a child whose mother was demanding of her time.

In summary the majority of childminders who responded to my questionnaire indicated that they were not dissatisfied with their roles (84%). To expand this overview I used open questions to ask them to identify aspects of their role with which they were particularly satisfied and dissatisfied with. From anecdotal conversations with childminders I anticipated that some common themes would emerge.

Most satisfying aspects of the childminder role

My question: What is the most satisfying aspect of childminding for you?

Of the 201 who returned questionnaires nine gave no response to this question; 192 provided at least one answer. The question implied that respondents should supply one 'most satisfying aspect' rather than multiple answers – however this was not actually stated by me so I

included all the answers provided. The most factors quoted were three and just four childminders did this; I did not consider that this would adversely affect my data analysis for this question.

In total 247 answers were submitted; I 'thematically' grouped them according to content whilst mindful of the importance of classifying the content as close to childminders' original words as possible in order to reflect their meaning accurately (figure 5.35).

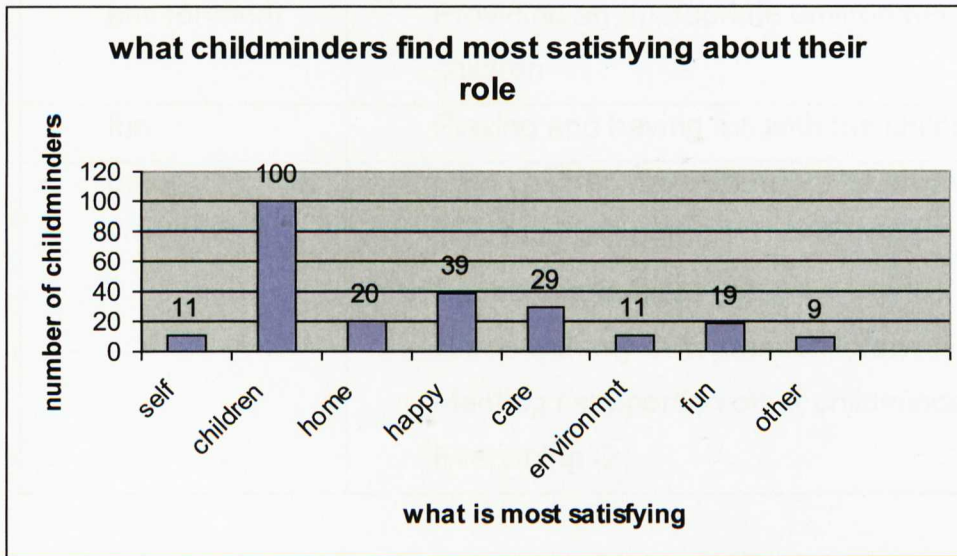


Figure 5.37 What childminders find most satisfying about their role

Due to lack of space on the axis of the graph above (figure 5.37) I have added the table below to enable a fuller description of what childminders wrote (figure 5.38).

<u>Title on graph</u>	<u>Full title</u>
self	Working for myself
children	Working with children and seeing their achievements
home	At home with my own children
happy	Children and parents are happy
care	Providing consistent care for children
environment	Providing an appropriate environment for the children
fun	Playing and having fun with the children
other	Own children have someone to play with (2) Teaching children (1) Supporting families (1) Home with my own grandchildren (1) Meeting / supporting other childminders (2) Everything (2)

Figure 5.38 Explanation of categories used in figure 5.37

The most popular answer by far is 'working with children and seeing their achievements' with 40% (n=100) of the answers. As a teacher myself I understand why this is so important to anyone working with children; knowing you have contributed to the development of a child is very satisfying indeed. I asked the interviewees what the most satisfying aspect of their role was for them.

Susie *"The children"*

Sharon *"Well if the children are happy and smiling and they come up to you and they go "I love you" ...ooh"*.

Susie *"Yeah and when they achieve something"*

In second place 16% (n=39) said that seeing parents and children happy with their service was the most satisfying aspect of their role followed by 12% (n=29) stating it was providing consistent care for children. Twenty (8%) and eleven (5%) respectively stated that being home with their own children and working for oneself were the most satisfying aspects of the job. Both of these were listed as main reasons for becoming childminders and it is interesting to see them both as reasons for starting to childmind and two of the most satisfying aspects of the job. A comparison of the answers given in my study with those received by Mooney et al., (2001b) show significant differences (figure 5.39)

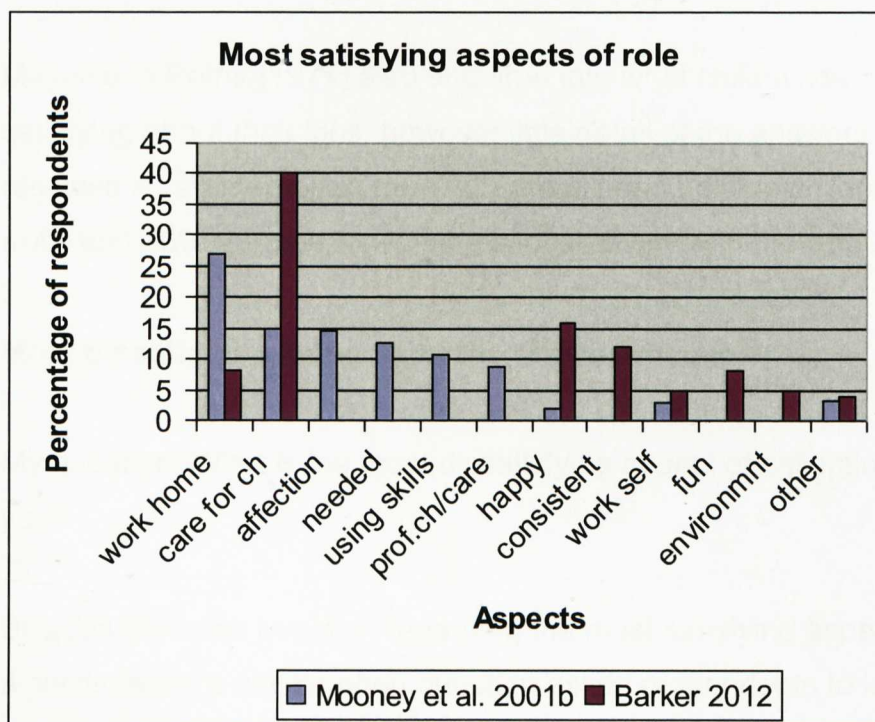


Figure 5.39 The most satisfying aspects of a childminder's role - a comparison of studies by Mooney et al., (2001b) and Barker (2012).

The only other satisfying aspect named by a similar number in both studies is 'working for oneself'; in all other aspects the studies are vastly different from one another. In the earlier study the responses given focus on aspects that affect childminders themselves, for example; 'working from home', 'affection from children', and 'needed by children' whereas the responses to the later study focus on the aspects that

benefit children and their families, such as: 'caring for children', 'children and parents happy', and 'providing consistent care for children'. The conclusion I draw from this comparison is that in the ten years between studies there has been a change in the way that childminders view the purpose of their role: from providing a service that suits their circumstances (essentially a mothering role) to providing one that suits their customers - essentially a professional role.

Probably one of the most uplifting answers given to this question in my study came from the 2 childminders who answered that the most satisfying aspect of their job was "everything" (QN277 and QN343).

Mayall and Petrie (1977) also enquired into what childminders found satisfying about their jobs, however little detail of the answers they received is reported apart from 42% mentioned helping children achieve skills and 36% referred to working cooperatively with mothers.

Most dissatisfying aspects of the childminder role

My question: What is the most dissatisfying aspect of childminding for you?

Besides the open question regarding the most satisfying aspect of being a childminder, a similar open question asked respondents to identify the most dissatisfying aspect of their job. As in the previous question nine childminders did not answer, nevertheless 192 did, providing a total of 270 answers (twenty-three more answers than to the question on satisfying aspects).

Curious to see if those who did not answer this question were the same nine who did not answer the previous one I returned to the data. Seven childminders did not answer either question and six of these had stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied in the preceding question (the remaining respondent stating mostly satisfaction with the role). Had these seven respondents been childminding for a similar length of time

and had this influenced their decision to not answer these questions? It appeared not as this group had been minding for anywhere between 1 and 20 years. They were also representative of most of the age groups and included both male and female respondents; there appeared to be no commonality amongst them.

However, when I examined data provided by the group regarding qualifications I found that three had no qualifications, one had a Level 1 qualification, and two had Level 2 with just one having achieved a Level 3 qualification. In addition the number of non-qualification training courses attended in the previous two years by this group was at the lower end of all the childminders responding to my questionnaire; two of the seven had not attended any, four had attended 2 and just one had attended 3. Earlier analysis of the question regarding non-qualification training attendance showed that the majority (70%) of childminders had attended between 3 and 5 courses. Furthermore all of the seven only selected courses from the list provided – none of them had attended anything different. Does this indicate lack of engagement with the role or disinterest in the questionnaire? Unfortunately answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this study.

A wide range of answers were given to question 10 'What is the most dissatisfying aspect of childminding for you?' To enable me to present all the 270 answers supplied they are displayed in two separate figures: the first (figure 5.40) represents the most frequently received answers (given by six or more childminders) and includes an 'other' column. The breakdown of this 'other' column is displayed separately in the second figure (figure 5.42).

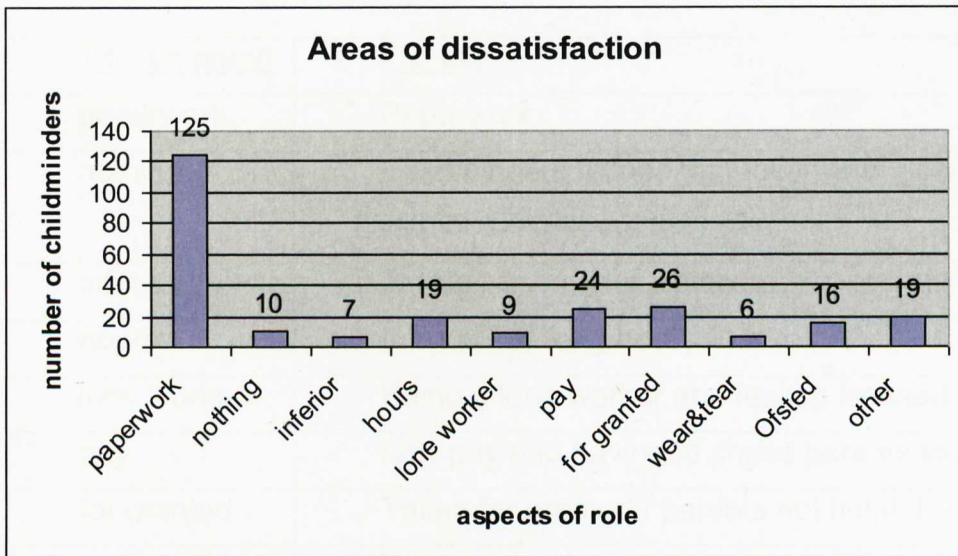


Figure 5.40 What childminders are most dissatisfied with in their roles

As in the analysis of Question 9, due to lack of space on the axis of the graph above I have added the table below to enable a fuller description of what childminders actually wrote (figure 5.41).

<u>Title on graph</u>	<u>Full title</u>
paperwork	Paperwork
nothing	Childminders replied that they were dissatisfied with nothing about their role.
inferior	Treated as inferior childcare
hours	Irregular or long hours
lone worker	Being a lone worker and feeling isolated
pay	Low pay and having to chase parents to pay fees
for granted	Taken for granted / parents not helpful
wear and tear	Wear and tear on own home / having a messy house.
Ofsted	Ofsted pressures and changes in legislation
other (these are displayed in the chart below (figure 5.42))	<p>Having own children in house –difficulties disciplining them.</p> <p>Other childminders who are very competitive for business and those who bend the rules.</p> <p>No children to mind</p> <p>No future career development</p> <p>Children leave eventually</p> <p>Lack of empathy from neighbours</p> <p>Access to training</p> <p>Rude / crying children</p> <p>Lack of LA support</p>

Figure 5.41 Explanation of categories used in figures 5.40 and 5.42

A breakdown of answers included in the 'other' column is displayed below (figure 5.42).

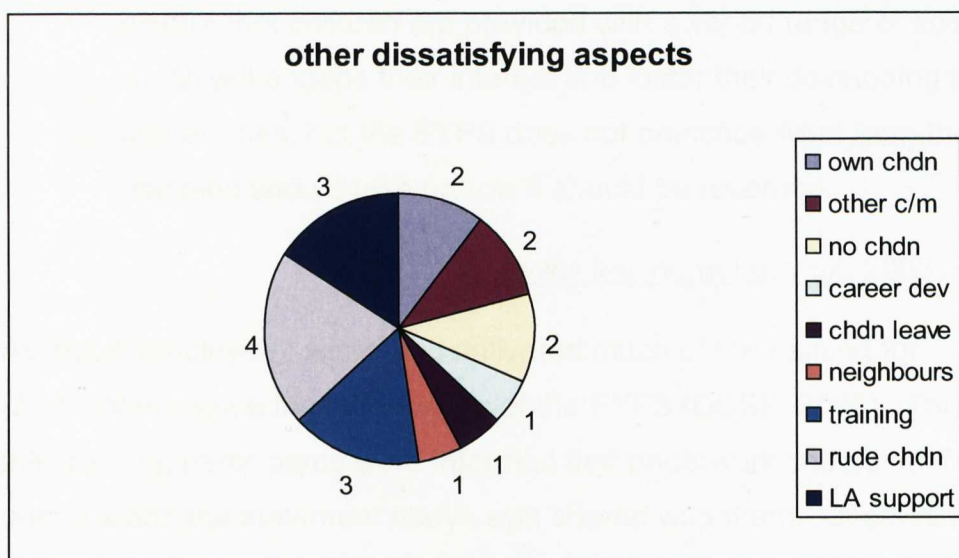


Figure 5.42 Breakdown of 'other' category

A considerable number of respondents (n=125, 46%) stated that the most dissatisfying aspect of their role was the paperwork they had to complete. Prior to this study, anecdotal conversations with registered childminders indicated a belief that documentary evidence such as written planning and observations were required in the EYFS and therefore by OfSTED - views supported in the press (Murray, 2009). However a 'frequently asked question' on the government sponsored website Teachernet stated:

Will the EYFS require childminders to complete lots of extra paperwork?

No. The EYFS does not require childminders to keep written copies of their policies and procedures providing they are able to clearly explain them to parents and others when required. The EYFS expects practitioners to observe children's progress and respond appropriately to help them to take the next steps in their development and make progress towards the early-learning goals. This is something a good practitioner will already be doing as part of their everyday practice. Although it may sometimes be helpful to note down observations, it is not a requirement to do so. A certain amount of planning is required to

ensure that children are provided with a varied range of activities which will engage their interest and foster their developing skills and abilities, but the EYFS does not prescribe what form that planning should take or how it should be recorded.

(www.teachernet.gov.uk, 2008)

As an LA employee I wrote and delivered much of the training for childminders since the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008). Through this training, participants were informed that paperwork should not be onerous and the statement above was shared with them. Of course it is likely that some childminders never previously had any written planning, observations of children or policies, so undertaking any written documentation may pose a challenge. I speculated if the amount of paperwork carried out by childminders was driven by them in order for them to be prepared for OfSTED inspections? The interviewees allude to this below.

From the questionnaire results it is apparent that there is a commonly held view that more paperwork is necessary although the rationale for this is unclear; an issue addressed in the EYFS review (Tickell, 2011). Likewise the interviewees stated that there was a lot more paperwork to be completed now than when they started to childmind.

I asked *“So what sort of paperwork did you do when you first started?”*

Sharon *“Register, accounts, contracts and information details”*

Susie *“Quite basic really wasn’t it”*

Self *“Not planning?”*

Sharon *“No planning, no risk assessments”*

Susie *“No planning, you just had your little log book for your children, you know, the daily diaries, the daily routine and what they’d eaten and that was it”*

Sharon *“I mean basically it was like that, that’s what we did. No planning, no risk assessments, no ...well we had a few policies I think – did we? Yeah possibly one or two policies, not many,*

not like now.”

The conversation continued and Susie stated that she had spent much of the previous weekend completing paperwork.

I asked *“Who do you think puts the pressure on you to do the paperwork, where does it come from?”*

Sharon *“I suppose in a way, if you know you are due your inspection, it’s from OfSTED, but it’s also yourself, if you’re motivated enough it can be you doing too much paperwork. I mean I’ve been told I’ve done too much paperwork in the past...”*

Susie *“Oh yeah, I’m always getting told I’ve done too much”.*

It transpired that the LA childminder coordinator had told both interviewees that they were completing “too much” paperwork. I explained that the EYFS does not prescribe large amounts of written paperwork. However they both justified their reasons for this, stating it helped them to be organised; in addition we discussed that for some childminders having written planning in place is vital, enabling them to explain their practice confidently during OfSTED inspections.

I asked Susie and Sharon if OfSTED inspectors looked at their policies during inspections, they replied that they may ask to see a particular policy but rarely look through them all.

Paperwork was by far the most frequently reported dissatisfaction for childminders with nearly half of respondents stating this (46%, n=125) a view reflected by the interviewees. The second most frequent response was that childminders felt taken for granted by parents (9.6%, n=26), followed closely by 24 (8.8%) stating that the poor rate of pay or having to chase parents for fees was the most dissatisfying aspect.

I asked the interviewees if this was ever a problem for them.

Susie *“At the moment I’ve no problems but I have had in the past. I have been known to go and knock on parents’ doors, and I’ve*

had bounced cheques off them. Whereas now on the contracts I have like a £5 fine for late or bounced cheques”.

A further (3.7%, n=10) stated that there was nothing about their role that dissatisfies them.

A comparison of the study by Mooney et al., (2001b) with the study reported in this thesis reveals a big change in some areas of dissatisfaction expressed by childminders (figure 5.41). In the earlier study ‘low status’ is named by almost 40% of childminders as the most dissatisfying aspect of their role; ten years later my study found that just 2.6% of respondents stated this. Conversely no childminders in the earlier study specifically mention ‘paperwork’ as dissatisfaction, but 46% of respondents in my study did.

From this data it is possible to postulate that the need to complete paperwork as part of their role has helped to raise childminders’ views of their status. Similarly the interviewees stated that they needed to behave as “professionals” when dealing with parents, indicating the need for a professional relationship between both parties. I asked if they thought that parents saw them as professionals and they both answered “yes”.

Susie *“Now they do”*

Sharon *“Nowadays, yes”*

Self *“Why, why do you think it’s changed then?”*

Susie *“Probably because they’re bombarded with paperwork to be honest”.*

Sharon *“And also because the word OfSTED, OfSTED with schools “oh it sounds a bit more important then, OfSTED do childminders so they must be...” you know”.*

Self *“So you’re being treated the same as schools and private day nurseries, in a way”.*

Susie *“No we’re not quite there yet”.*

Sharon *“No”.*

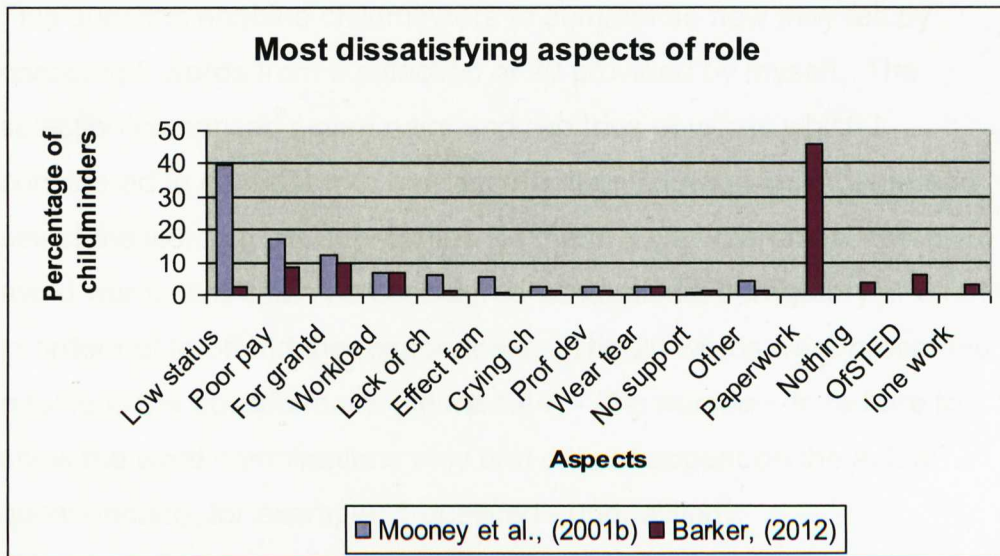


Figure 5.43 The most dissatisfying aspects of a childminder's role - a comparison of studies by Mooney et al., (2001b) and Barker (2012).

To summarise, I had asked childminders to indicate on a Likert scale their overall level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their role, then ascertained specific details of the most satisfying and dissatisfying aspects. To further my understanding of childminders views I asked one further question:

How do childminders feel in their role?

My question: Please circle 5 words that best describe how you feel in your role as a childminder.

This process appeared to me to be the crux part of determining how childminders view their role. To this end I analysed the findings at considerable length and in some depth as the inevitable subjectivity would give rise to a wealth of personal views. From these views I hoped to detect any common strands occurring, perhaps enabling me to draw conclusions regarding the general feeling within the childminding workforce.

This question enabled childminders to summarise how they felt by choosing 5 words from a selection of 20 provided by myself. The selection comprised seven pairs and two trios of words which I considered to contrast with one another thus allowing childminders to select the words most appropriate for them. I was extremely careful to avoid words that could be considered contentious, derogatory or emotive in order not to offend the respondents. The 20 words were presented in a table in the questionnaire (figure 5.44) - (the numbers in red are to show the word combinations only and did not appear on the actual questionnaire, for example, 1 qualified - unqualified).

1 qualified	2 appreciated	9 comfortable	3 caring
6 unhappy	8 professional	1 unqualified	7 supported
9 confident	7 isolated	6 happy	3 stressed
8 non-professional	3 relaxed	5 skilled	9 challenged
5 unskilled	4 parental	2 taken for granted	4 teacher

Figure 5.44 The twenty words that childminders were asked to select from.

Providing words in this format allowed respondents to select those which afforded the most apt description of their feelings in their role as a childminder, whilst giving me some control over the content of their choices and making it easier to quantify / analyse. Prior to writing this question I considered the implications of providing words that I believed may be those that childminders would use to describe themselves. Although the words offered originated from my reading and anecdotal conversations I was concerned that I may be leading childminders thoughts. However if asked to give 5 words of their own choice the 201 respondents could potentially have provided 1005 different words, the analysis of which would require the identification of groups of words

according to meaning and would have been very difficult to undertake in the time available for this study. I concluded that respondents could always choose not to answer this question so continued with this design.

I was quite concerned when I calculated a possible 15504 five-word combinations from the twenty words I provided. Admittedly I had preconceptions as to which words would be most frequently chosen based on my anecdotal conversations with childminders and supposed that when I examined the data I would see several duplications of the same five words chosen– I was very surprised by the results.

The results

Of the 201 questionnaires returned, 197 respondents answered this question. Although the question asked that five options be chosen, which 171 respondents did, 14 chose more and 12 chose less (figure 5.45). In total 1007 words were selected.

Number of words chosen	Number of childminders who chose this number
1	1
2	1
3	3
4	7
5	171
6	4
7	2
8	3
9	1
10	3
11	1

Figure 5.45 Number of words chosen by respondents

This posed a problem regarding the responses where more - or less - than five words were selected as it was impossible to determine which five of the words selected by those childminders who chose more than five, were the *most important* for them. This raised the question as to whether or not to include them. To address this issue I analysed the data twice; once with all the answers given despite the number of selections made, and again using the data only from those respondents who chose five words. This is made clear in the data analysis and comparisons are made.

From the data I compared the ten words most frequently chosen by all the childminders, with the ten words most frequently selected by the childminders who circled five words only (figure 5.46).

Top ten words chosen by all 197 responding childminders	Ranking	Top ten words chosen by 171 childminders who selected 5 words only
caring (H)	1	caring (H)
happy (K)	2	happy (K)
confident (Q)	3	appreciated (C)
appreciated (C)	4	confident (Q)
professional (M)	5	professional (M)
qualified (A)	6	qualified (A)
challenged (S)	7	challenged (S)
comfortable (E)	8	comfortable (E)
taken for granted (D)	9	taken for granted (D)
stressed (F)	10	stressed (F)

Figure 5.46 A comparison of the top ten answers of both groups

The top ten words selected by both groups were the same; the only difference was the ranking of the two words 'confident' and 'appreciated'. When the number of occurrences of the words chosen by all childminders and by those selecting only five words are compared in graph form (figure 5.47), the similarities became more pronounced. Finally when the two sets of figures were calculated into percentages and compared, the similarities were confirmed (figure 5.49).

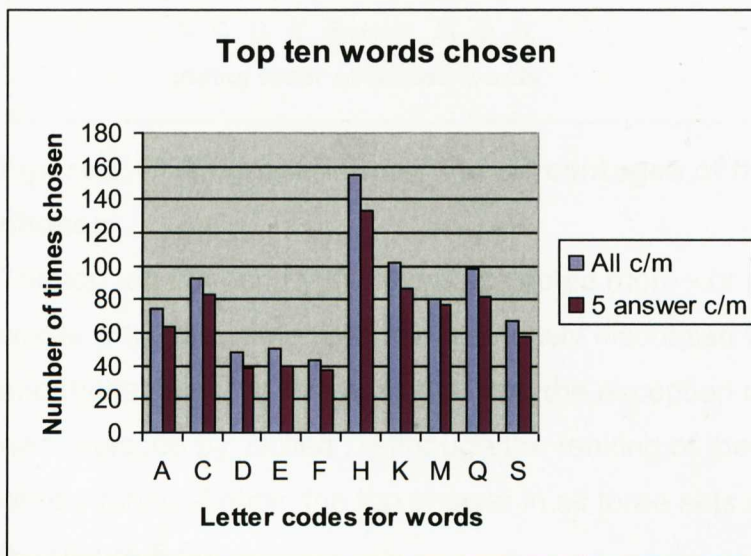


Figure 5.47 Comparison of number of top ten words chosen

A – qualified, C – appreciated, D – taken for granted, E – comfortable, F – stressed, H – caring, K – happy, M – professional, Q – confident, S - challenged

Figure 5.48 Index for graphs (figures 5.47 and 5.49).

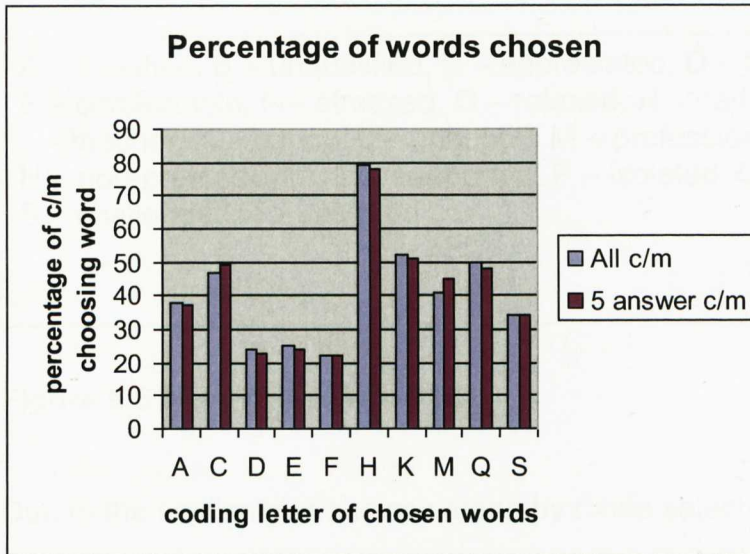


Figure 5.49 A comparison of the percentages of the top ten words chosen

The top ten chosen by those who selected more - or less - than five words were the same as those previously discussed for all childminders and those selecting five answers, with the exception of 'stressed' which was replaced by 'skilled'. Although the ranking of the most-chosen words varied slightly, the top answer in all three sets of data was caring (H) (figure 5.50).

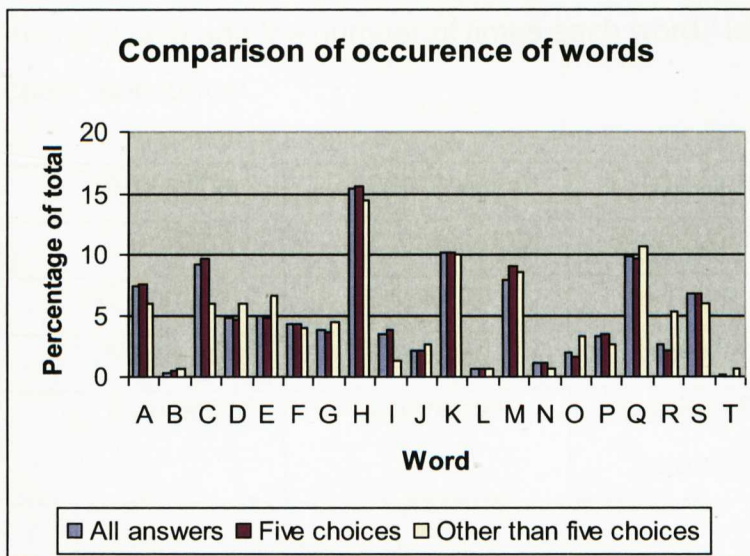


Figure 5.50 A comparison of the occurrence of words across all sets of data.

A – qualified, B – unqualified, C – appreciated, D – taken for granted,
 E – comfortable, F – stressed, G – relaxed, H – caring, I – parental,
 J – teacher, K – happy, L – unhappy, M – professional,
 N – non-professional, O – supported, P – isolated, Q – confident, R – skilled,
 S – challenged, T – unskilled

Figure 5.51 Key (for figure 5.50)

Due to the similarity of choices made by those selecting five words and those selecting a different number I tabulated only the responses from those choosing exactly five words as had been requested.

Response analysis

To analyse the responses I firstly attributed a letter to each of the words (figure 5.52) (these were not on the original questionnaire, only appearing on my analysis sheet). Hence a letter combination relating to the words selected could be added to each questionnaire, entered onto the database and the number of times each word / letter was chosen could be counted.

A qualified	C appreciated	E comfortable	H caring
L unhappy	M professional	B unqualified	O supported
Q confident	P isolated	K happy	F stressed
N non-prof	G relaxed	R skilled	S challenged
T unskilled	I parental	D taken for granted	J teacher

Figure 5.52 Letters attributed to each word for analysis purposes

The number of occurrences of each word was counted and displayed in both table and graph formats to provide alternative representations of

any salient features arising from the data. The results are discussed, comparisons made and similarities and differences highlighted.

Letter for coding purposes	Word chosen by childminder to describe how they felt in their role	Number of occurrences (total number 855)	Percentage of total number of occurrences	Ranking out of 20
H	caring	133	15.5%	1
K	happy	87	10.2%	2
C	appreciated	83	9.7%	3
Q	confident	82	9.6%	4
M	professional	77	9.0%	5
A	qualified	64	7.5%	6
S	challenged	58	6.8%	7
E	comfortable	40	4.7%	8
D	taken for granted	39	4.6%	9
F	stressed	37	4.3%	10
I	parental	32	3.7%	11
G	relaxed	31	3.6%	12
P	isolated	29	3.4%	13
R	skilled	19	2.2%	14
J	teacher	18	2.1%	15
O	supported	14	1.6%	16
N	non-professional	10	1.2%	17
L	unhappy	6	0.7%	18
B	unqualified	4	0.5%	19
T	unskilled	0	0%	20

Figure 5.53 Number of occurrences of each word chosen by respondents who selected five words.

This data in graph form clearly identifies the most popular choices (figure 5.54).

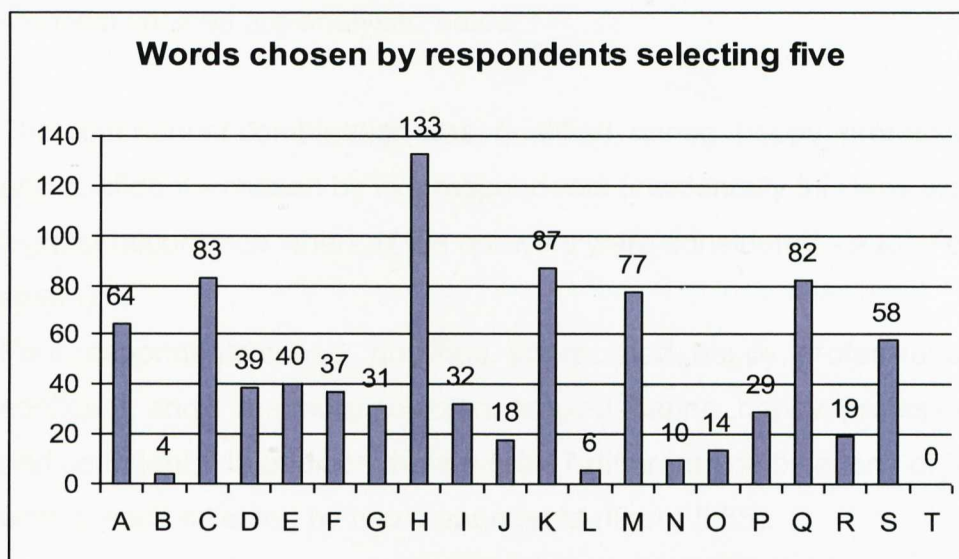


Figure 5.54 Frequency of words chosen by respondents who selected five options

In summary there are strong similarities evident in the data (figures 5.46 - 5.54). The top eight words chosen by respondents (nine in the case of those selecting more - or less - than five words) are 'positive'. The other two ('stressed' and 'taken for granted') reflect the nature of the work of the childminder: firstly they are lone workers and hence may experience stress due to isolation. Secondly, childminders offer a uniquely personal service to families, the interviewees explained to me how attached they become to the children in their care and how difficult it can be to separate their private and professional lives, especially the families and childminders live near to one another. Under these circumstances it could be easy to be 'taken-for-granted'.

Following the tally of occurrences of words chosen by childminders I explored the combinations as these, in some way, depict how childminders feel in their role. I identified the different combinations of words selected by respondents who chose five words only. As stated

previously, I anticipated that there would be a number of identical combinations, yet there were very few – the number of different combinations from the 171 five-word answers was a staggering 145; few combinations were selected by more than one childminder. The identical choices are analysed below.

The commonest combination was: qualified, caring, happy, professional, and confident - chosen by five respondents (incidentally this was also the highest occurrence when *all* the answers were considered - a total of seven).

Four respondents chose: qualified, appreciated, happy, professional and confident, and three more selected: relaxed, caring, happy, professional and confident. In addition there were 17 different combinations of five words, each selected by two respondents (figure 5.55).

Five-word combinations each chosen by 2 childminders
qualified, appreciated, caring, happy, confident
qualified, appreciated, caring, happy, challenged
qualified, appreciated, caring, professional, confident
qualified, appreciated, caring, professional, challenged
qualified, appreciated, caring, confident, skilled
qualified, comfortable, relaxed, caring, happy
qualified, comfortable, caring, happy, confident
qualified, stressed, caring, professional, confident
qualified, caring, professional, confident, skilled
appreciated, comfortable, caring, happy, confident
appreciated, comfortable, caring, happy, challenged
appreciated, relaxed, caring, happy, confident
appreciated, caring, happy, professional, confident
appreciated, caring, happy, professional, challenged
taken for granted, comfortable, caring, happy, isolated
comfortable, caring, happy, professional, confident
relaxed, caring, isolated, confident, challenged

Figure 5.55 The 17 combinations of five-words each selected by two childminders.

In summary, combinations of words chosen by more than one childminder accounted for a total of 27% (n=46) of the 171 five-word answers, and included thirteen of the twenty words offered. Based on my previous data analysis I anticipated that some words would appear in combinations more frequently than others (figure 5.56) as I had already recognised the higher occurrence of those words. The word most frequently selected in these 46 responses was 'caring' with 42 of the 46 (91%) childminders choosing this word to describe themselves, 34 of the 46 (74%) selected happy and / or confident. With a further 27 (59%)

selecting qualified, 26 (57%) choosing professional and 24 (52%) opting for appreciated. These words are all affirmative indicating the positive attitudes of childminders about their role.

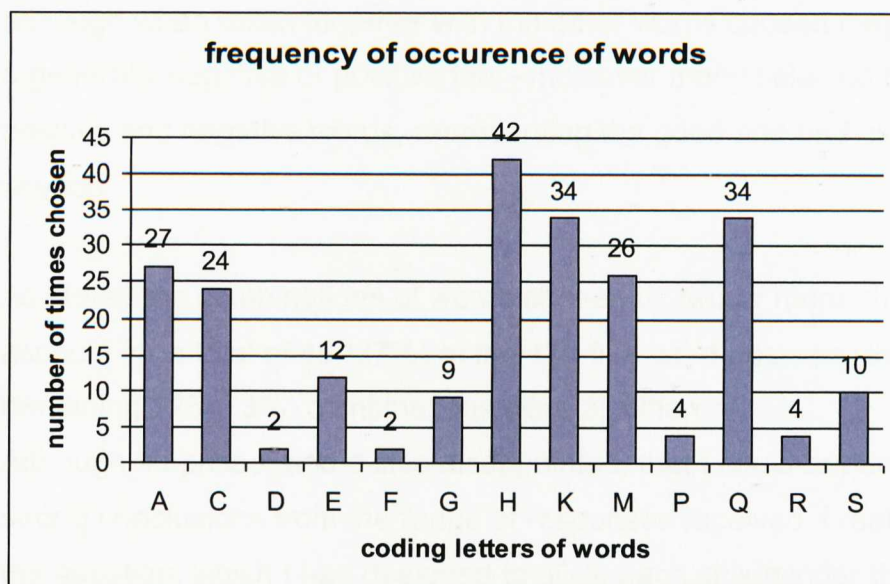


Figure 5.56 Frequency of occurrences of words in the 46 most popular 5 word combinations.

A – qualified, C – appreciated, D – taken for granted, E – comfortable, F – stressed, G – relaxed, H – caring, K – happy, M – professional, P – isolated, Q – confident, R – skilled, S - challenged

Figure 5.57 Index of codes (used in figure 5.56).

Not all of the combinations of words selected by more than one childminder (n=46) reflected entirely positive views of the role. Of these forty-six, four used 'isolated' to describe themselves in their role, two combined it with 'taken for granted' - (comfortable, caring, happy, taken for granted and isolated), and two combined it with 'challenged' - (relaxed, caring, isolated, confident, challenged). I realised that there were two ways of interpreting the word challenged – originally I thought of it as negative in that childminders may be finding their work difficult.

However I realise that the word can also be positive, as experiences can be professionally 'challenging' yet enjoyable, leading to learning and development both professionally and personally. It is impossible to discover in what sense childminders used this word in their answers, although when taken together with the other words chosen may indicate a generally negative or positive feel – however many selected both positive and negative words, representing the good and bad aspects of any job.

As stated the combinations of words chosen by two or more childminders account for a total of 46 (27%) of the 171 five-word answers, the remaining 125 (73%) combinations were all different.

Although surprised, and a little disappointed, that I could not draw any strong conclusions from the range of responses received, I realised that the question, which I had designed to allow each childminder the opportunity to express their individual feelings about their role, had done exactly that. Although expecting only a limited number of combinations, on re-examination of the responses to the pilot study I discovered that the 30 respondents also supplied a wide range of answers which I attributed to the small sample size.

The majority of the responses contained mostly 'positive' words with the occasional 'negative'. Nevertheless I identified five respondents whose combinations contained an above-average percentage of 'negative' words. Although these five accounted for a small minority of respondents, I was interested to examine in greater detail some of their responses to other questions to see if any patterns emerged. I returned to the data.

Respondent number	13	16	97	314	374
No. of words chosen	6	6	4	5	5
No. of negatives words	3 unqualified, tkn for granted, isolated	3 tkn for granted, non- prof, isolated	2 tkn for granted, stressed	5 unqualified, tkn for granted, stressed, isolated, unskilled	4 tkn for granted, stressed, unhappy, isolated
Years as a Ch/minder	6	18	4	2	7
Satisfied/ dissatisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied	Neither	Mostly satisfied	Mostly dissatisfied
Dissatisfied with	Feel inferior	Nothing	Paperwork & OfSTED	Paperwork	Taken for granted
Intention to remain	yes	yes	no	no	no
Training attended	7 courses	4 courses	3 courses	4 courses	1 course

Figure 5.58 A comparison of the respondents who selected the highest number of 'negative' words.

I was intrigued that only one childminder described their overall level of satisfaction / dissatisfaction as 'mostly dissatisfied' and amazed that after choosing three 'negative' words one described themselves as 'very satisfied' and stated that they were dissatisfied with 'nothing' (QN16)(figure 5.63). Three of the above indicated that they intended to stop childminding and subsequently two have – however the one who

selected five 'negative' words is still a childminder. I can offer no explanation for this.

Although the in-depth analysis associated with question 19 was an onerous task I feel that the effort was justified as it enabled me to see childminding from the practitioner's personal viewpoint in addition to any conclusions which I may draw from data provided by the rest of the questionnaire:

Conclusions

My research question was 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' and many of the issues addressed earlier in this chapter provide the information required to answer this. I have therefore included these issues in the following summary to this chapter.

On comparison, the gender and age group composition of the respondents in my study reflected that of the whole childminding workforce in my LA (figure 5.2). The largest group were aged 35-44 years, but the 25-34 year-olds provided the highest percentage of returns in relation to the size of the group. From the mid-1990s the number of childminders has decreased both nationally and locally although recent reports indicate that numbers are now increasing (Mahadevan, 2011). The results of my study have led me to conclude:

- 1) That the quantity of training provided for, and attended by, childminders has increased. In addition the level of formal qualification for childminders has risen.
- 2) Childminders are remaining in the role for longer than was apparent from previous studies, which may indicate that the role is increasingly viewed as a career choice and less as a mothering role.

- 3) Despite finding some aspects of the role dissatisfying, for the majority of childminders these negatives are outweighed by the positives.

These three conclusions are discussed more fully below.

1) Training and qualifications

In my LA the length of preparation training for new childminders has increased threefold since 1994. Those wishing to be registered to childmind must first complete eighteen sessions (a total of 45 hours) of training. I presume that some preparation training is provided for all new childminders in England, and the data supports this; in 2001 Mooney et al., reported that 36% of respondents to their study had not attended any preparation training; in 2007 the DCSF reported this figure as 17% and my study 5.5%. Similarly the number of those attending 7 hours or more of preparation training was reported as 42% (Mooney et al., 2001b), 72% (DCSF, 2007) and 82% (Barker, 2012).

Since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF, 2008c) the whole childcare sector (private day nurseries, pre-schools, nurseries in independent and maintained schools, and childminders) has delivered education and care using guidance contained in one statutory document. By specifically including childminders in this group, parents and childcare providers have had a raised awareness of the equality of childminders with other forms of provision and prompted LAs to produce training for childminders which was of similar quality and content to that provided for others. Attendance on at least one non-qualification course in the previous twenty four months was reported by 97% of respondents in my study, a huge increase on the figure of 64% discussed by DCSF (2007). This increase could be attributed to the development of more non-qualification training courses.

The majority of respondents (84%) to my study stated that the training offered met their needs. Following this, childminders suggested training they would like provided, many of which had been provided previously. Timing of, and venues for, training were the biggest barriers to

attendance - consequently these conditions must be considered when training is planned. This is even more important now that training is to be paid for by attendees. This final point concerns me greatly as I believe that it will have a negative impact on attendance just as training for childminders was becoming more widespread.

In addition to the increased attendance at non-qualification training, the data showed an increase in those who had gained or were working towards an NVQ Level 3 qualification. Although 39% of respondents to my study had achieved this, the figure was lower than the national (49%), nevertheless 18% (higher than the national figure) were working towards it. Increased government funding for these qualifications has supported this.

To summarise, an increasingly career-orientated and better-trained and qualified childminding workforce is emerging which may be jeopardised by reduced central-funding and a new cost to practitioners.

2) Length of service and changing role

Previous studies reported the number of childminders working for five years or less as: CRC, (1975) – 66%; Mayall and Petrie, (1977) - 56%; Mooney et al., (2001b) – 59%; (NCMA, 2011) – 54%. In my study only 42% of respondents fell into this category, indicating that the majority could be classified as 'career-minders' rather than 'short-termers' undertaking the role only whilst their own children are young.

Nevertheless, in line with the findings of Mayall and Petrie (1977) and Mooney et al., (2001b) 60% of my respondents stated that they started to childmind as it enabled them to work whilst looking after their own children. Despite having previously worked in jobs in Standard Occupational Classification group 6 (including a range of 'caring' roles e.g. childcare) the majority of this group (66%) also started to childmind in order to care for their own children. Besides working for longer in the role, the attitudes of childminders on the most satisfying aspects of their work indicate a change in the way they view it. Mooney et al., (2001b) reported that childminders stated the most satisfying aspects of their role were; working from home, affection from children, and being needed by

children. These statements reflect the essentially 'mothering' nature of the role evident in previous studies (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b). By comparison, the most frequent response in my study was 'caring for children and seeing their achievements'. This represents a shift away from mothering (whilst maintaining the caring nature of the role) and towards education. This is borne out by the words most commonly chosen by childminders to describe their role: caring, happy, confident, appreciated and professional.

3) Satisfaction with the role

The majority (74%) indicated they were either mostly, or very satisfied in their roles and 10% stated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This figure is lower than that reported by Mooney et al., (2001b) but nevertheless is a substantial proportion of the respondents.

Interestingly, of the 16% (n=31) who claimed they were mostly, or very dissatisfied, only eight stated an intention to stop childminding. Perhaps they still had young children of their own?

The words selected by childminders to describe how they feel were overwhelmingly positive. Whilst Mooney et al., (2001b) reported 40% of respondents indicated low-status as a main source of dissatisfaction, the main aspect with which they appear dissatisfied today is the increase in the amount of paperwork they believed they needed to complete. Albeit burdensome, paperwork appears to raise the status of childminders in their own eyes and those of parents and so even this negative has a positive aspect, in that low-status is virtually unreported in my study.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This study developed as a result of my interest in the work of the childminder following my appointment as an Advisory Teacher working for a Local Authority in the North of England. Over time my role and hence job description have changed, and I am now an Early Years Consultant. However my interest in childminders remains as does the part of my role allowing me to continue supporting them (e.g. assessing their suitability to claim NEF, and writing and delivering training). As discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, childminding is an under-researched area of childcare provision (Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Jackson and Jackson, 1979; Moss, 1987; Owen, 1988; Mooney et al., 2001b). As an employee of the LA it was logical that my study was positioned in the field of service development, an area identified by Moss (1987) as open to further research, and one with which my day-to-day work is closely involved.

The research process

As I come to the end of writing this thesis the comments of Wellington et al., (2005) reflect my thoughts succinctly:

Viewing the contents and chapter headings in this book (and many others) would seem to imply that the process of working for a doctorate is a linear, mechanistic one. This is far from the truth – in reality the doctoral ‘journey’ is likely to be non-linear, messy, cyclical and always unpredictable.

(p. ix)

In addition I would add daunting yet very satisfying. In my view it is almost impossible to fully prepare for the experience of pursuing a doctoral qualification.

“Messy” and “cyclical” seem perfectly to describe developing several chapters at once, drawing together links and continually distilling and refining until the final point is reached. Along the way I have developed patience and persistence, and an understanding that some of my preconceptions were shown to be wrong by the insights I gained as my work progressed.

The research and field questions

My research question, stated at the beginning of this study, was ‘How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?’ To answer this I used nineteen field questions in the form of a questionnaire. I classified these questions according to their content: personal questions, career questions, training and support questions, and questions on views of the role. These headings are detailed below for clarity. In chapter five of this study I analysed in-depth the responses received from the 201 childminders who took part, and data obtained from the interviews conducted with two of them. Here I shall briefly discuss the salient points from the personal, career, and training and support questions before concentrating more fully on the answers received to the questions regarding views of the role, as these answers are the most pertinent to my research question.

Personal questions

Of 434 questionnaires sent, 201 were returned. Nonetheless, the age and gender composition of the respondents reflected that of all the childminders registered in the LA and so could be considered a representative sample.

Those aged 35 years and under were more likely to hold formal qualifications. Over a third of all respondents had achieved a Level 3 qualification, and a further sixth were working towards this, even though currently there is no statutory requirement in England for childminders to

hold any formal qualifications. The largest group of respondents to this study came from the 35-44 years age group, and 4% of the total respondents were male.

Career questions

Previous studies (CRC, 1975; Mayall and Petrie, 1977; Mooney et al., 2001b) found that the largest group of childminders had been in the role for five years or less (66%, 56%, and 59% respectively), findings confirmed by NCMA (2010) who stated a figure of 54%. My study found that although 42% of respondents had been childminding for this length of time, the majority had been in the role longer. This difference could be attributed to a change in the way that childminders view the role; is childminding becoming a career *per se* rather than a solution to earning money whilst caring for one's own children (the main reason given for starting the role in previous studies and my own)? Such a change may have been helped by the development of, and funding for training – driving the professionalisation of the role of all childcare workers (Mooney et al., 2001b; Greener, 2009; Martin, 2010).

Training and support questions

The importance of training and support for childminders is well-documented (Moss, 1987; Fischer and Eheart, 1991; Pence and Goelman, 1991; Kontos et al., 1996; Helburn et al., 2002; Doherty et al., 2006). The respondents to my study stated that they received support primarily from the LA childminder co-ordinators, closely followed by other childminders. Mooney et al., (2001b) reported the same support but in the reverse order, indicating that little has changed in the last ten years in the area of support. Conversely the training offered to, and attended by, childminders has increased greatly.

Preparation training, now compulsory in my LA, has increased threefold since 1994; furthermore the number of hours of this training attended in

my study was higher than in previous studies (Mooney et al., 2001b; DfE, 2010).

Since the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) there have also been more non-qualification courses provided for, and attended by, childminders working within the LA, and 86% of respondents state that the training meets their needs. It is important that these opportunities remain in these changing times to enable childminders to continue developing their practice to provide high-quality provision for children in their care. Whilst planning training for childminders it must be borne in mind that timing of courses has been, and still is the most commonly given reason for non-attendance (Mooney et al., 2001b; Barker, 2012).

Childminders' views of their role

So 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?'

It is evident from the findings of my study that the majority of respondents are satisfied in their role (74%), with 16% stating they were very satisfied and 58% stating mostly. In addition 10% were ambivalent, stating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. However Mooney et al., (2001b) reported that respondents to their study were more satisfied than mine. What has changed in the ten years between these two studies to affect the feelings of satisfaction of childminders? The most likely answer to this is the major development in policies affecting all childcare workers (Mooney et al., 2001b; Sylva and Pugh, 2005; Vallendar, 2006; Hohmann, 2007; Pugh, 2010). These include the inspection of childcare provision by OfSTED, the introduction of National Standards for providers, and the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) to name but a few. The most frequently named aspect of the childminding role with which respondents were dissatisfied was the amount of paperwork they believed they needed to complete. Although it has been stated that large amounts of paperwork are not required by the EYFS it is clear that childminders believe the opposite to be true. It is highly likely that the

introduction of national standards and the inspection regime of OfSTED must have played a part in increasing the paperwork required to work as a childminder - the interviewees stated that being prepared for their OfSTED inspection influences their decisions on how much paperwork they feel they need to have ready. In response to the depth of feeling about paperwork expressed by respondents to this study I believe it would be well-received if, following the review of the EYFS (Tickell, 2011) and the subsequent production of the new framework coming into force in September 2012, guidance on essential paperwork was given.

Interestingly, when the results of the study by Mooney et al., (2001b) are compared with the findings in this study, two striking differences are apparent. Whilst the most stated dissatisfaction in the older study is low status (Mooney et al., 2001b) it is hardly mentioned in my study findings. Conversely paperwork is identified in this study as a highly dissatisfying aspect of the role yet is not mentioned at all by Mooney et al., (2001b). An indication perhaps that although the increased amount of paperwork means more work for childminders, it has nonetheless enhanced their status in their own eyes. Of course other factors will also contribute to this process, for example the increase in training provided. The use of the same statutory document as all early education and care providers - the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c) has provided a degree of parity with them. These feelings of raised status are reflected in the top five words chosen by childminders to describe themselves in their role: caring, happy, confident, appreciated and, above all, professional. Similarly the four words least selected were: non-professional, unhappy, unqualified and unskilled.

The aspect of the role that respondents found most satisfying was working with children – 40% stated this was the case and this also came out strongly from the interviews I conducted and reported in this thesis. In other words the satisfaction arose from the job itself. This is a marked contrast with the findings of Mooney et al., (2001b) whose respondents stated that working from home was what they found most satisfying

(implying that the satisfaction was derived from mere convenience rather than the job itself) and further, implies a greater enthusiasm for the job than has been apparent in the past. Again this represents a shift in the way that childminders who participated in this study see their role – away from a job to suit their family circumstances to one where working with children provides the most satisfaction. From job to career maybe?

The responses of the childminders in my study were grouped together, for each question, in order to analyse them and ultimately to draw some conclusions based on their responses. This was possible for all but one of the field questions used. However question 19 proved extremely difficult to manage in this way. The question asked respondents to select five words that described how they felt in their role. From the 197 responses, I received 170 different combinations. Although I expected some differences in the combinations of the words chosen I was amazed at the range of combinations received. Despite all working as childminders the responses revealed that as a diverse group of individuals they all have their own unique perceptions and range of feelings about their role as a childminder.

Limitations of this study

I undertook this study whilst employed full-time and hence chose to concentrate in depth on childminders solely within the Local Authority in which I was employed. Consequently any findings are derived from that LA alone, and at one point in time.

In addition this study was self-funded which clearly limited my resources and influenced my choices of research methods. For example a further reminder questionnaire would have been possible.

In my examination of questions used in previous research I discussed my decision not to address respondents' ethnicity. Whilst standing by this decision on the basis that it would have added more data to an already large study, on reflection, interesting comparisons may have arisen.

My contribution to the field

As stated, my study provides a summary of the views of childminders in one LA at one point in time, and although a limitation it is also a contribution to the field by offering precisely that – a comprehensive survey of a group of workers in the same field within a distinct locale. Besides the views of the respondents I amassed a range of data including length of service, previous jobs and reasons for becoming childminders. These and other data provide a perspective on the childminding workforce which enhances the information collected on the childminders' views of their role.

This study could be used as a basis for study by others in different LAs, and I would expect similarities to arise. A comparison between the works would be interesting.

Recommendations for practice and implications of my study

Through the investigation of my research question 'How do childminders in one Local Authority view their role?' key issues emerged. These issues form the basis of my recommendations for practice as follows:

- 1. I suggest that the Local Authority should maintain and aim to increase the number of childminders who are graded 'good' or 'outstanding' by OfSTED. Based on the findings from this study I recommend that relevant, accessible training is provided free of charge for all childminders by the Local Authority in which they are based.*

The number of non-qualification courses offered to childminders in my LA increased following the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008c); these have been well attended, with 97% of childminders attending at least one course in the twenty-four months prior to this study and 84% attending between 3 and 15 courses each. The ratio of childminders to

trainers means that space on courses is limited and if more courses were available I am sure that these too would also be filled - 32% of respondents to my questionnaire stated that a barrier to their attendance on training was that courses were full. In addition the formal qualification levels of childminders, despite not being compulsory, have also risen. This indicates a dedication to training from the childminding workforce. Recent changes within my LA mean that training courses (excluding statutory courses such as safeguarding training) are now charged for all childcare practitioners and I believe this will dissuade childminders from attending, a trend that has already begun to emerge. Setting-based practitioners can benefit from the dissemination of training attended by colleagues whereas as lone workers this option is not open to childminders – to access the messages from training, childminders must attend all training themselves which now carries a huge cost implication.

2. I recommend that the Local Authority is pro-active in its efforts to retain the qualified, skilled, motivated and experienced childminding workforce.

When asked to select words to describe how they felt in their role as childminders the most frequently chosen words were 'caring', 'happy', 'appreciated', 'confident' and 'professional'. In addition the findings of this study revealed that 50% of childminders stay in the role for 7 years on average; one year longer than found in previous studies (Mooney et al., 2001b). This may indicate a change in perception of their role to that of a career rather than a short-term job. 50% of childminders stated that 'working with children and seeing their achievements' was the most satisfying aspect of their role. I suggest a workforce with such a positive and caring attitude is an asset to the LA.

Therefore, these findings suggest it is vital to provide the opportunity for childminders to express their views and that these are acknowledged and addressed. The study revealed 62.5 % of childminders said that paperwork (62.5% was their major dissatisfaction. This particular

concern is due to a misconception, as the amount of paperwork required is not as burdensome as some believe (DCSF, 2008c) and with training can be managed quite readily.

3. I suggest that childminders should be recognised by the Local Authority for the unique service which they provide to the childcare sector.

Based on the findings of my study, I suggest such local authority recognition could be realised in a bespoke level of training and support that takes account of the specific needs of home based childcarers but is equitable to levels of training and support for setting based early years providers.

The wider implications of this study suggest there is a need to disseminate the findings which I intend to do as follows:

1. I will share the findings with the Senior Management Team and other colleagues in my LA, leading to both a raising of the profile of childminders and an enhancement of childcare provision in the LA.

Initially these recommendations will be disseminated to the Senior Management Team, colleagues, all childminders and other childcare sector workers by means of a briefing paper produced for use in team meetings and conferences.

2. Publication in

- a) academic peer-reviewed journal
- b) sector-based practice journals for the benefit of a wider audience.

Suggestions for further research

Whilst undertaking this study, ideas for future research opportunities came to light.

This study set out as a survey of all childminders within one LA. Postal questionnaires were chosen to collect data from such a large number of possible respondents as discussed in detail in the methodology chapter. A small number of interviewees were selected to enhance the data collected by the questionnaires; again this is discussed earlier in this study. Future studies, using interviews as the main method of data collection would provide interesting and valuable comparisons with this study.

To select possible interviewees I consulted the list of respondents indicating a willingness to take part in a focus group, (I originally planned to use focus groups to enhance the questionnaire data). No men volunteered. Rather than approach a male childminder to ask directly if he would be interviewed, but decided that as the majority of childminders in my LA were women (96%) interviewing two women was more representative of the workforce. Future research could include interviews with both male and female childminders comparing their perspectives on the role.

Eliciting the opinions of parents and children would enhance the data I gathered on the views of the childminders. Although Mooney et al., (2001b) asked parents what they looked for when choosing a childminder, no study has gone beyond this. In particular I would be very interested to discover whether parents are interested in the qualifications of childminders especially considering the number who have achieved or are working towards a Level 3 qualification. Furthermore, to my knowledge there have been no studies asking children about their experiences in the care of their childminder.

It would be very interesting to repeat this study following the introduction of the revised EYFS, which is to be implemented in September 2012, to see if childminders views of their role have changed, particularly in light of the comments in the report on the EYFS (Tickell, 2011) which recommends:

That as with Ofsted, local authorities avoid creating burdens for practitioners arising from requests to collect unnecessary data and information, and to keep paperwork that is not required by the EYFS. Instead, they should find other ways of testing the strength of practitioner's ability to support children's development.

(p.48)

Final comments

At this point it is important to acknowledge that many issues affecting childminders, for example low-pay and low-status, affect other childcare workers in the Private Voluntary and Independent sector; similarly the issue of lone-working affects nannies who are employed in the homes of the children in their care. However the focus of my study was solely on childminders and so the effects on other childcare workers are not addressed.

At the beginning of this study I explained how, following a visit to the home of a childminder, I was immediately impressed by her dedication, and the high standard of provision available for the children in her care. Undertaking this research project has not changed my mind.

The findings from this study shows that childminders are generally satisfied in the role and value the free training and support offered by the Local Authority in the last three years. Suggestions for further training were made by respondents and these have been shared with the LA Senior Management Team. For the foreseeable future support for

childminders will continue free-of-charge, however attendance on training courses within my LA now carries a financial cost for participants (www.traded.learning@kirklees.gov.uk) – I am very concerned that this will dissuade some from attending. Unfilled training courses may be cancelled and as a result training opportunities will be fewer. This would surely be a retrograde step and childminders would become once again the ‘poor relation’ of early years childcare providers.

Following an article in Nursery World magazine (Gaunt, 2011) regarding the possible splitting of OfSTED into two separate groups of ‘education’ and ‘care’, one of my respondents sent me an e-mail:

Ofsted would wish to put childminders into the care sector and not the education sector and we have just been placed there. Whatever chance we have in getting people to recognise childminders as professionals would be completely removed. This would also mean that schools would be even less easy to engage for transitions than they are already.

Personal e-mail received 19th April 2011.

This encapsulates the challenges that childminders have faced to attain this parity and how finely balanced their position seems to be. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this study highlights the fact that childminding has previously been under-researched and marginalised – will this be the case in the future?

At a locality update event two days after receiving the e-mail, the originator spoke to me asking, “Jo – What are we going to do about this?” referring to the split of OfSTED. This approach affirms in some way that undertaking this study appears to have underpinned, in the eyes of the childminders, my role not only as an Early Years Consultant but as an advocate for childminders within the LA.

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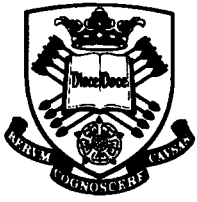
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Dear Jo

Re: The changing role of the childminder in England.

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that your application be approved

This is subject to receipt of a signed hard copy of Part B (Declaration) of the School of Education Research Ethics application form which is available at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/education/ethics>. This hard copy is then held on file. This ensures that we comply with university requirements about signatures

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Gillott'.

Mrs Jacquie Gillott
Programme Secretary

Appendix 1**Research Ethics****~ Unforeseen Event Report Form ~**

This report form is for use if and when an unforeseen event occurs, during a research project's lifetime, which has significant ethical implications and/or which might challenge the ethical conduct of the research and/or which might provide the grounds for discontinuing the research project. The form should be completed by the Principal Investigator of the research project (or by Supervisor in the case of supervised-student research projects) and agreed with the Head of Department.

Guidance notes are included at the end of the report form (the form's boxes can be expanded).

1. Research Project Title:	The changing role of the childminder in England.
2. Academic Department:	Educational studies
3. Principal Investigator/Supervisor:	Jo Barker / Dr Jools Page and Prof Jerry Wellington
4. Is this a supervised-student project?	Yes
5. Who initially discovered the unforeseen event?	Jo Barker and Jools Page during supervision
6. When was the unforeseen event reported to the Head of Department?	Reported to Chair of SoE Ethics committee on 16 th October 2010
7. When did the unforeseen event occur?	16.10.10
8. Where did it happen?	

9. What actually happened and what was the impact of the unforeseen event?
Following discussions with my supervisor at an EdD study school weekend it became clear that my research would be better informed by a change of method from focus groups to a life historical approach with the use of individual in-depth interviews of no more than 3 participants .
10. Why did the unforeseen event occur?
In depth interviews will provide more appropriate in depth data than the focus groups originally planned.
11. Describe what action(s) have been taken to address the impact of this specific unforeseen event:
I have written to all those who volunteered to take part in the focus groups to explain that these will not be taking place and to thank them for their interest. Participants had not been identified and focus group data had not been collected. Therefore no one was inconvenienced or their time wasted.

12. Describe what action(s) have been taken or are planned to limit the risk of a similar event re-occurring (add any general notes here to qualify the information given elsewhere in the report):

I will bear in mind the points that have come to light during this EdD research to ensure that I build on my learning to inform any future research projects

Agreed and authorised by:

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor:

Insert name here

Signature:

Date:

insert date here

Name of Head of Department:

Insert name here

Signature:

Date:

insert date here

Guidance Notes:

1. Unforeseen events should be reported to the Head of Department as soon as possible: normally within **5 working days**.
2. Once complete this report should be kept in the project's main written record of research evidence (e.g. project file, site file) for reference and a copy sent to the U-REC's Secretary (Mr Richard Hudson, Quality Assurance Manager, University of Sheffield, Research Office, New Spring House, 231 Glossop Road).
2. Advice and guidance on completion of the report, analysis of the unforeseen event and potential actions may be obtained from the U-REC's Secretary.

Appendix 2

Study author and title	Community Relations Council (1975) <i>Who Minds?</i>	Mayall and Petrie (1977) <i>Minder, Mother and Child</i>	Mooney et al. (2001b) <i>Who Cares? Childminding in the 1990s.</i>	DfE (2010) <i>Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2009</i>
Question focus				
Personal	Own children	Age Gender Ethnicity Marital status Own children	Age Gender Ethnicity Educational qualifications Marital status Own children	Age Gender Ethnicity Qualifications gained Qualifications being worked towards
Career	Number of years as a childminder Number of children minded Hours minding Charges per day	Previous jobs Reason for becoming a childminder Number of years as a childminder Number and ages of children minded Hours worked Charges per hour	Previous jobs Reason for becoming a childminder Number of years as a childminder Number of children minded Hours worked Charges per hour	Number of registered places Fees Term time, school holidays or both

Study author and title	Community Relations Council (1975) <i>Who Minds?</i>	Mayall and Petrie (1977) <i>Minder, Mother and Child</i>	Mooney et al. (2001b) <i>Who Cares? Childminding in the 1990s.</i>	DfE (2010) <i>Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2009</i>
Question focus				
Support and training	Services offered by Local Authorities – “would you like any of them?” (p.71) Advantages and disadvantages of being a registered minder	Have you attended training Do you think childminders need special training	Non-qualification training attended in the last three years Hours spent on preparation to child mind training Who childminders turn to for help Reasons training not attended	Amount of training attended in last 12 months Hours spent on preparation to child mind training

Study author and title	Community Relations Council (1975) <i>Who Minds?</i>	Mayall and Petrie (1977) <i>Minder, Mother and Child</i>	Mooney et al. (2001b) <i>Who Cares? Childminding in the 1990s.</i>	DfE (2010) <i>Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2009</i>
Question focus				
View of role	<p>What does your work as a childminder entail Is play an "important part of your work"?</p> <p>(p.70)</p> <p>"Can you think of anything else that would make your work easier or more enjoyable?"</p> <p>(p.70)</p>	<p>What childminders find most satisfying about childminding</p> <p>What childminders find most dissatisfying about childminding</p> <p>Intention to remain a childminder</p>	<p>What childminders find most satisfying about childminding</p> <p>What childminders find most dissatisfying about childminding</p> <p>How do childminders see themselves</p> <p>What would be your main reason to stop childminding?</p> <p>Childminders rating of aspects of their work</p>	

Study author and title	Community Relations Council (1975) <i>Who Minds?</i>	Mayall and Petrie (1977) <i>Minder, Mother and Child</i>	Mooney et al. (2001b) <i>Who Cares? Childminding in the 1990s.</i>	DfE (2010) <i>Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey 2009</i>
Question focus			Satisfaction with working as a childminder	
View of role		Facilities in home of childminder e.g. indoor or outdoor toilet.	What parents look for when choosing a childminder.	
Unused	Facilities in home of childminder e.g. shared kitchen, bathroom or toilet.	Facilities in home of childminder e.g. indoor or outdoor toilet.	Minders views of whether Mothers should work	

Appendix 3

Questionnaire

1. Are you currently a registered childminder?

Yes No

If no, do you intend to work as a childminder again in the next 12 months?

Yes definitely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes maybe	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How many years have you been a childminder?

Please specify _____

3. What was your main reason for becoming a childminder? (*Please choose one*)

To be at home with own children	<input type="checkbox"/>
To work with children	<input type="checkbox"/>
To work from home	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	

4. What was your job before you became a childminder (*if applicable*)?

5. How many hours per week do you work as a childminder?

Up to 15 hours

16 – 25 hours

26 – 35 hours

36 - 45 hours

45+ hours

6. How many children, in which age group, do you mind? *(Please indicate the number next to the age)*

0 – 1 years

1- 2 years

2 – 3 years

3 - 4 years

4 – 5 years

5+

7. Who supports you in your role as a childminder? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Another childminder

Childminder Co-ordinator

NCMA

Health visitor

Childminder support group

Childminder network group

Other (Please specify)

8. To what extent are you satisfied / dissatisfied with your role as a childminder? *(Please tick one)*

Very
dissatisfied

Somewhat
dissatisfied

Neither
satisfied or
dissatisfied

Mostly
satisfied

Completely
satisfied

9. What is the most satisfying aspect of childminding for you?

10. What is the most dissatisfying aspect of childminding for you?

11. Do you intend to continue working as a childminder for at least the next 12 months?

Yes

No

If no, would you tell me your reason?

13. What childcare qualifications (if any) have you gained and what (if any) are you working towards? *(Please tick all that apply)*

	Achieved	Working towards	Qualification/ course title
Level 1			
Level 2			
Level 3			
Level 4			
Level 5			
Level 6			
Level 7			
Level 8			

14. To be a childminder, how many hours preparation training did you attend?

None

1 – 6

7 – 12

13 – 20

21+

15. What non-qualification training have you attended in the last 2 years? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Safeguarding

EYFS principles into practice

First aid

Look, listen and note for childminders

SEF

Other(s) please specify

16. Are there any reasons why you have not attended training? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Time of courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	Suitable courses not available	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Courses full	<input type="checkbox"/>	No need for further training	<input type="checkbox"/>
No difficulties experienced	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Other (please specify)

17. Does the training provided meet your needs?

Yes No

18. Is there any further training you require?

Yes No

If yes, please specify

19. Please circle 5 words that best describe how you feel in your role as a childminder.

qualified	appreciated	comfortable	caring
unhappy	professional	unqualified	supported
semi-skilled	isolated	happy	stressed
non-professional	unstressed	skilled	challenged
unskilled	parental	taken for granted	teacher

20. And finally

Your age

16 -24	<input type="checkbox"/>
25 -34	<input type="checkbox"/>
35 - 44	<input type="checkbox"/>
45 - 54	<input type="checkbox"/>
55 - 64	<input type="checkbox"/>
65 +	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gender

Female

Male

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

If you would be willing to take part in a focus group to discuss some of these issues further please complete the section below and I will contact you. (Your details will only be used to contact you - at no time will you be identified).

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____ Daytime / evening

(Please indicate when you would prefer to be contacted)

Appendix 4

Courses attended by childminders

Anti-bullying	Child abuse and neglect
Special Educational Needs	Outdoor play
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Information Technology
Celebrating diversity	Sound surprises
Healthy eating	Quality Improvement Standards
Risk assessments	Empathy and persona dolls
Grants and business support	Baby signing
Developing a listening culture	Get ready for your OfSTED Inspection
Quality Assurance	Every Child a Talker
Food safety / hygiene	Treasure baskets and heuristic play
Allergies	Babies into books
Health and safety	Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
Behaviour management	Observation, assessment and planning
Creativity	Developmental movement
Looked after children	Heritage language
Welfare requirements	Playwork

Appendix 5

Suggested training

Courses required	Number of respondents
Updates	23
Anything new	12
EYFS	8
Safeguarding	8
Look, listen and note / observation	7
SEN / Makaton	6
Behaviour management	6
Food hygiene	4
Observation, assessment and planning	3
NVQ	3
SEF	3
Forest school / outdoors	2
Brain development	2
Beyond level 3	2
I T	2
Any childminder specific training	2
Healthy eating	2

Courses required	Number of respondents
Don't know	1
ECAT	1
Accounts	1
Assertiveness	1
CAF	1
Storytelling	1
Empathy dolls	1
Same courses offered to settings	1
Divorce and it's effects on children	1
Paperwork made easy	1
Child development	1

Results from questionnaire survey of childminders July / August 2010
by Jo Barker.

434 questionnaires sent out - 201 replies received

198 respondents answered this question – Is there any further training
that you require? 113 said no, 85 said yes and a total of 106
suggestions were received.