

Social Mix in London Early Years Provision

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Report summary

This report investigates whether children in London are attending early years settings with a diverse mix of other children, and whether there are links between the quality of a setting and the characteristics of children who attend. It reviews the evidence on social mix in the early years, reports on attitudes and actions of local authorities and analyses data on patterns of enrolment by ethnicity, SEND status and deprivation level. It also presents case studies of settings which have had particular success in achieving a good social mix.

Why social mix matters

- ▶ Low levels of social mixing between people from different socioeconomic groups and ethnic backgrounds, and between people who do and do not have a disability, can have a negative impact on cohesion in communities and mean individuals miss opportunities to build positive connections and friendships.
- ▶ There is a significant body of research on ethnic and income segregation in UK schools, and efforts have been made to increase the diversity of school intake in some areas.
- ▶ Less attention has been paid to social mixing in early years settings, although it is becoming a more salient issue as more children access free early education entitlements.
- ▶ There is a consensus among early education experts, local authority staff and early years providers that attending a setting with a good social mix is positive for children's learning and development.
- ▶ There is evidence that children from more disadvantaged families do better in early education if they are educated alongside peers from more advantaged families.
- ▶ The majority of London local authorities are not currently taking action to understand or improve social mix in early years settings in their borough.

Social mix in London

- ▶ Although London is a highly diverse city, this does not necessarily translate into individuals having high levels of contact with people who are different to them.
- ▶ There are significant limits to social mixing in London's early years settings, with very different patterns of use by children living in more and less deprived areas, from different ethnic backgrounds, and with and without disabilities:
 - the proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities is three times higher in maintained settings than in private nurseries;
 - 83 per cent of Bangladeshi children attending nursery are in a maintained setting, compared to 39 per cent of Black Caribbean children;

Report summary

- based on setting location, more than two thirds of children in maintained settings are from the three most deprived deciles, compared to less than half of children in private settings and one in six in independent school nurseries.
- ▶ There are also differences in the overall uptake of early education between all these groups, and between different London boroughs.
- ▶ In the case of deprivation and ethnic background, patterns appear to be driven by the hyper-local nature of childcare and by the hours offered by settings. Maintained settings tend to have shorter hours which are difficult for working parents to access, whereas private nurseries are more expensive for full-day provision and are largely accessed by working families.
- ▶ Lack of social mix is connected to the quality of provision, with London children living in poorer areas and children from some ethnic groups considerably less likely to attend settings rated as outstanding by Ofsted. Children from more deprived areas tend to access maintained settings, and these are usually higher quality, but is still a social gradient even once this has been taken into account.
- ▶ Children with special educational needs and disabilities in London are considerably more likely to attend an outstanding setting than their peers. However, their families may face significant difficulties in finding and paying for a provider which can meet their needs.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Monitor the extent of social segregation

There is currently no regular analysis of the extent of social segregation in the early years, despite increased attention on social segregation at schools. This limits the ability to understand the extent of segregation or to take effective action to address the issue.

Central government: should undertake the analysis of the Early Years Census and School Census that was completed for this report to monitor the extent of social segregation in the early years, and make local information available to local and regional government. This should be completed on an annual basis.

GLA: in the absence on this central monitoring, the GLA should regularly undertake this analysis for London and share methodology with local authorities to encourage their own local analysis.

Recommendation 2: Increase the focus on social mix in the pre-school population

The survey results showed that for most local authorities this was not a priority area for work and there is not a shared vision of good practice in this area.

GLA: should support and facilitate the sharing of best practice in monitoring and encouraging social mixing in the early years.

Local Authorities: should incorporate this research and analysis into their work.

Report summary

Recommendation 3: Understand the impacts of segregation through the life course

All levels of government: in addition to a lack of knowledge on the extent of segregation, our knowledge of the impacts of segregation is also limited. A team at London School of Economics, led by Kitty Stewart, is currently undertaking research in this area, and local, regional and central government should be ready to respond to findings from this and similar studies.

Recommendation 4: Increase flexibility in maintained settings

While quality in the maintained sector tends to be high, provision is often limited in its ability to support working parents, meaning it is under-utilised by families with working parents. Settings that include early education within longer sessions in an extended day model are more likely to attract working parents as well as non-working parents.

GLA: The Family and Childcare Trust have reported to the GLA on ways to support settings to develop mixed model provision, where different setting types join together in order to offer a longer day as well as sessions, particularly for working parents. The GLA should use this to inform work with providers to increase flexibility of provision.

Local authorities and the GLA: should work with providers to support the development of flexible provision, including using the mixed model approach. The introduction of an additional 15 hours free entitlement for children with two working parents could mean separation between three and four year olds depending on the number of hours they are entitled to. Local authorities should work with providers to prevent this from happening.

Recommendation 5: Support children with SEND within the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector

While it is encouraging that children with SEND are more likely to attend outstanding settings than their peers, it is concerning that their over-representation in the maintained sector could be down to accessibility issues in the PVI sector.

GLA and local authorities: should provide support to providers on making their settings more inclusive, including looking at admissions. And while the universal base rate proposed in the early years funding formula consultation would mean the same level of funding for maintained and PVI settings, this change could be used to encourage PVI settings to reach the same level of inclusive practice as maintained settings.

Recommendation 6: Encourage integration with the two year old offer

There is a mixed picture as to whether or not the free education offer for the most deprived two year olds is encouraging social mixing. When the two year old offer is integrated within extended day provision, used to support working parents, it can encourage integration.

Report summary

GLA and local authorities: should spread best practice in relation to providing an inclusive two year old offer as there is potential for examples of good practice to be spread, including work with groups less likely to take up their place.

Recommendation 7: Provide accessible information on early education and care

For some groups, there is a low level of knowledge about available services and the potential benefit of these services for children. A lack of awareness influences take up rates and could also influence the quality of provision accessed.

All levels: Central and local government and the GLA should take action to improve information provision to parents, particularly focusing on parents less likely to take up places locally and nationally.

Recommendation 8: Engage parents in early education

Parental involvement in care and home learning helps to boost children's attainment. Settings need to work to include all parents in their services, particularly in deprived areas. This can include involving parents in the running of the setting, helping to build parental skills and making the setting inclusive to local parents.

All levels: Central and local government and the GLA should take explicit action to support providers to better engage parents in their child's early years education through campaigns, programmes and piloting of good engagement practice.

1. Social segregation: what it is and why it matters

Key points

- ▶ Although London is a diverse city, Londoners are proportionately less likely to mix with people from different ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses than people from other parts of the UK.
- ▶ There is relatively little evidence on social segregation in the early years, but research has shown that children from disadvantaged backgrounds do better in early education settings which also include children from wealthier families.
- ▶ In general, children from more disadvantaged areas gain the most from access to high quality early education, and it is an important way for them to 'close the gap' with their peers.

Introduction

Experts agree that social mixing in early years settings has real benefits, and social segregation can undermine the potential of high quality early education to contribute to the reduction of poverty. The benefits of high quality early education for disadvantaged children are stronger where there is a mixture of children from different social backgrounds. Educational establishments have an important role to play in promoting community cohesion: school gates and classrooms provide an opportunity for children and families to meet, and build relationships with, people from backgrounds different from their own. With more and more children accessing early education, it is increasingly important that pre-school settings are offering those same opportunities.

While social segregation in schools has been a topic of interest for some years, much less is known about social segregation in early years settings. Our project aims to produce the most up-to-date evidence on the extent and impact of social segregation in the early years in London, to understand any impacts of social segregation on poverty and to scope policy solutions to this issue.

Following the Oldham, Burnley and Bradford riots in 2001, the government established a Community Cohesion Review Team to seek the views of residents and community leaders across England, identify good practice and make recommendations for actions to improve social cohesion. The resulting report, known as the Cattle Review, found that significant physical division in a number of areas was compounded by the extent of separation in other aspects of daily life, including: educational arrangements; social and cultural networks; community and voluntary bodies, and employment and places of worship. It warned that many communities were living parallel lives, with few opportunities for people of different backgrounds to have meaningful exchanges.

1. Social segregation: what it is and why it matters

A number of academic studies have sought to understand the extent and impact of residential ethnic segregation in the UK – the degree to which people live in areas with others of the same ethnicity (e.g. Peach, 1996; Phillips, 1998; Simpson, 2004). Recent studies using data from the 2011 census found that residential segregation has decreased across most local authority districts in England and Wales (Catney, 2013; Harris, 2014). Where districts have seen a large increase in residential segregation, this was found to have happened in areas with small numbers of people from a particular ethnic group rather than those where ethnic minority groups are largest. Both inner and outer London have seen an increase in residential mixing over the past ten years, an important mechanism for change having been a dispersal from inner urban to more suburban or rural areas, particularly by families. While there is a consistent pattern whereby the White British population is declining in central London districts, the areas which have seen an increase in the White British population are also becoming more ethnically mixed (Harris, 2014).

More recently, the focus of debate has shifted somewhat away from the impact of ethnic residential segregation and towards the extent and quality of interactions between people of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Social Integration Commission recently reported that structural and institutional segregation is showing signs of increasing even as Britain becomes more diverse (Social Integration Commission, 2014). Their report used survey data to examine how far people's social interactions reflected the social demographics of their local area. It found that people living in London were proportionally less integrated by social grade and ethnicity than the rest of Britain. This emphasised that the existence of highly diverse areas does not necessarily mean that there are corresponding opportunities for people of different backgrounds to interact and build relationships.

Education and social segregation

Both the Cantle review and the Social Integration Commission identified education as a key arena for encouraging children and parents of different backgrounds to meet, develop cross-cultural relationships and build mutual respect and understanding. The Cantle Review argued that 'all schools owe a responsibility to their pupils to promote, expand and enrich their experience by developing contacts within other cultures, or by ensuring that, as far as possible, they are represented within the school intake' (Cantle, 2001:33). It recommended that all schools should be encouraged to limit their intake from a single culture or ethnicity and instead try to make themselves attractive to families from different backgrounds. Similarly, the Social Integration Commission suggested that schools should work to ensure that their intakes reflect the economic and ethnic diversity of their communities and provide opportunities for their pupils to interact with children belonging to different ethnic groups and income backgrounds (Social Integration Commission, 2015).

1. Social segregation: what it is and why it matters

Much of the research on school segregation in the UK has focused on income segregation and the impact of recent policy developments around parental choice and admissions practice. England ranks in the middle of OECD countries when measuring school segregation according to socioeconomic factors, with approximately 80 per cent of segregation resulting from the uneven spread of children from different backgrounds within the state sector, rather than from the existence of private schools (Jenkins et al., 2006). Opinion on the trend in school segregation is divided; while some studies have found that socioeconomic segregation in schools has been decreasing (e.g. Gorard et al., 2003) an alternative analysis has suggested that this form of segregation is rising in a number of areas, including London (Allen and Vignoles, 2007). A report looking at socially selective primary schools, those whose intakes do not reflect the overall characteristics of the neighbourhoods from which they recruit, found that they were more likely to be located in London and other large urban areas than elsewhere in England (Allen and Parameshwaran, 2016).

Studies have found levels of ethnic segregation in schools in England to be generally higher than in their surrounding residential areas, particularly for primary schools (Burgess et al., 2005; Johnston et al., 2007). When looking at ethnic segregation in secondary schools, Burgess et al. (2005) found that the ratio of school to neighbourhood segregation increases with higher levels of population density, suggesting that where there are more opportunities for choice of school this results in greater segregation, although it is difficult to establish whether this is occurring in London. School segregation also varies significantly across different ethnic groups; levels tend to be highest amongst South Asian populations, particularly for Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils.

Early education and social segregation

While significant effort has been made to understand the extent and impact of social segregation in compulsory education, much less is known about how the phenomenon affects the early years sector. Nonetheless, there are a number of reasons why the early years should be of interest to those who are concerned about social segregation. Early education settings have a similar potential as schools to provide opportunities for children and families from different backgrounds to have meaningful interactions and build cross-cultural relationships. Furthermore, research shows that high-quality childcare has a positive effect on children's educational outcomes, and that the impact is greatest for more disadvantaged children, typically those from low-income families or those at risk of developing special educational needs. The extent to which children from disadvantaged backgrounds are concentrated in particular settings, or types of settings, is of interest given the evidence that a diverse social mix is associated with higher quality provision and better outcomes for children.

There is a growing evidence base demonstrating the positive benefits of high-quality childcare for early development and medium- and long-term educational outcomes. One of the most influential studies for the UK is the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project; a longitudinal study of young children's development which investigated the impact of pre-

1. Social segregation: what it is and why it matters

school education in England. The project collected information on children's progress, as well as background characteristics relating to their home environment, parents and the pre-school setting they attended. It found that high-quality provision enhances all-round development in children, with disadvantaged children benefiting significantly from good experiences in early education (Sylva et al., 2004). These findings are supported by further research, both UK-based and international, which found positive impacts of high-quality childcare on children's social and cognitive development (see Parker, 2013). Though studies consistently find that disadvantaged children benefit the most from high-quality early education (e.g. Melhuish, 2004; George et al., 2012), international research has found that settings which have high proportions of disadvantaged children in attendance tend to be of poorer quality (Pianta et al. 2005; LoCasale-Crouch et al. 2007). This suggests that settings in these circumstances struggle to address the challenge of overcoming the collective disadvantage of the children they care for.

Significantly, the EPPE project was one of a number of studies which suggests that disadvantaged children do better in settings with a mixture of children from different social backgrounds, as opposed to those which cater primarily to children from disadvantaged families (Sylva et al., 2004). An evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative which examined the impact of centre characteristics on children's social and behavioural development also found that children in centres with a high proportion of working households were significantly more co-operative and less anti-social than children from settings with a low proportion of working families (Mathers and Sylva, 2007). In this study, the impact for children of attending a setting with a high proportion of working families was greater than the effect of their own family's employment status.

Similar results have emerged in the USA as a result of an initiative whereby children from low-income families were integrated into high quality settings with middle-income children. Those children integrated into more mixed settings were found to be achieving a better level of language development than other children from low-income families who were also in high-quality provision but attending classes comprised solely of peers from similar backgrounds to their own (Schechter and Bye, 2007). A more recent study found a significant association between socioeconomic classroom composition and language and maths learning, even when controlling for the quality of the institution and practitioners (Reid and Ready, 2013). One possible interpretation of these findings is that parents with a higher socioeconomic status are engaging in the development of their own child's learning, and that greater parental involvement supports learning more broadly in classes with a higher overall socioeconomic status. An alternative explanation is that children in early years settings are learning from other children as well as from their carers, with a mixed setting allowing children with typically lower levels of attainment to be supported by their more advantaged peers, or that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have higher levels of social and emotional need which take staff more time to respond to. Studies looking at peer effects have found that exposure to children with strong language skills and opportunities for interaction are associated with improved language development (Mashburn et al., 2009; Justice et al., 2011).

1. Social segregation: what it is and why it matters

Early education may also be effective at reducing rates of Special Educational Needs (SEN) for children approaching school age. The EPPE project found that the proportion of children in their study identified as being 'at risk' of developing SEN, i.e. scoring below a set threshold in their cognitive and behavioural development, was lower on entry to primary school than it had been on entry to pre-school, dropping from a third of children in the sample to a fifth (Taggart et al., 2006). This reflected the progress that low-attaining children had made, suggesting a positive impact of pre-school on their early development. Similarly, children who did not attend pre-school provision were far more likely to be at risk of SEN than those who did, an indication that early years provision can be an effective intervention for children with lower than expected attainment. The mechanism for this is not clear but it may be that skills learned in early education help children overcome challenges. The study also found that higher-quality provision was significantly associated with greater movement out of 'at risk' status according to cognitive measures, while children moving into 'at risk' status were generally attending poorer quality settings. In addition, access to high-quality childcare has significant social and educational benefits for children with disabilities, as well as removing barriers to employment for their parents which make families with disabled children more vulnerable to poverty (Contact a Family, 2015).

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

Key points

- ▶ There is broad agreement among experts, providers and local authorities that social mix is good for children in the early years, and some people also believe it is positive for families.
- ▶ In general, children from more deprived areas are more likely to attend maintained settings, and children from wealthier areas are more likely to attend private and voluntary settings.
- ▶ This is related to an historic tendency for maintained settings to be located in poorer areas, and the restricted hours available in maintained settings, which can be difficult for working parents.
- ▶ Take up of free early education is lower in London than in England as a whole, and is very low for children with disabilities.
- ▶ Patterns of childcare use vary by ethnicity, but research suggests that much of this variation is accounted for by differing patterns of workforce engagement, income and geography.
- ▶ Some parents report a lack of information about their childcare options, which may limit their choice of settings and overall childcare uptake.

There are a number of factors which may influence the social mix in different early years settings. The type and quality of provision and the hours that settings offer to working parents will influence the intake of a setting, as will the availability of funded places. Practical factors such as location and the cost of any additional hours purchased are likely to be influential in the choice of a childcare provider. Finally, childcare decisions are also shaped by considerations such as career aspirations and attitudes towards parenting and childcare.

This section draws from literature specific to London as well as interviews with experts in the London early years sector – a full list is given in the appendix.

The importance of social mix

There is a consensus among experts, providers and local authorities that having a good social mix in terms of ethnicity, deprivation/income, and special educational need or disability is positive for children, in addition to the overall benefits of attending early education (the views of local authority representatives are covered in more detail in the survey section below). Meeting children who are different to themselves is seen as important to children's personal and social development, and many people believe it reduces the likelihood of prejudice in later life. Some respondents extended the same argument to parents, believing that families often form friendships with others using the same setting, and therefore diverse early years provision can help parents to have more diverse networks, encouraging better social cohesion in the wider community.

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

As described in the literature review, it appears that children from lower income families do better in settings with a social mix. Nuffield-funded researchers are currently running a longitudinal study looking in detail at whether socially diverse settings are associated with better outcomes for children in the UK, where other factors are held constant.¹

Type and quality of provision

In general, school-based nursery classes are more common in areas with greater levels of deprivation, while private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers are more common in areas where parental employment is higher and there is a greater demand for paid daycare services and childminders providing more flexible childcare (Brind et al., 2014). Children with parents who are working, or working longer hours, are therefore more likely to access care in a PVI setting and then transfer to a school-based reception class at age four. Children living in less affluent areas are more likely to access free early education in a school nursery class, most likely in half-day sessions, although the introduction of the 30 hour funded offer for working families may lead to a change in this pattern.

Unlike PVI settings, schools are obliged to employ a qualified teacher to lead nursery classes, meaning that children are more likely to be receiving early education from more qualified staff if they are in a school-based setting. Consequently, children in the most deprived areas are more likely to be accessing graduate-led care which is comparable, and sometimes higher quality, than that being accessed by more advantaged children (Mathers and Smees, 2014). However, schools typically offer only part-time provision, which does not adequately support parents wishing to return to full-time employment and is therefore less likely to promote a good social mix. In fact, Gambaro et al. (2013) found that children from the most deprived areas are accessing early education in settings with a large overall proportion of children from deprived areas, the proportion being significantly higher in schools than in PVI settings. Research conducted in London for this project has found similar outcomes, which are described in more detail below.

The quality of a setting may also be an indication of the likely social mix, with children from the most deprived areas being generally less likely to be in higher-quality settings. Mathers and Smees (2014) found that provision offered by PVI settings located in the most deprived areas is generally of lower quality than those serving more advantaged areas. This may be related to difficulties with staff retention at low rates of pay, or lack of access to free or subsidised training, as well as the potentially higher needs of the children in the setting. The relationship between quality and disadvantage was strongest when the individual backgrounds of children attending settings was taken into account, suggesting that it is particularly difficult to provide high-quality early education in settings with a high proportion of disadvantaged children. Though the association between quality and deprivation is strongest in the PVI sector, the trend across all types of settings suggests that children from more affluent areas are generally more likely to be

1 <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/segregation-early-years-settings-patterns-drivers-and-outcomes>

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

in high quality settings. Although the proportion of children attending settings rated as 'good' by Ofsted is relatively consistent across areas with varying levels of deprivation, children from most affluent areas are twice as likely to be attending a setting rated as 'outstanding' than those from the poorest areas (Gambaro et al., 2013). Again, a similar pattern emerges in London based on new analysis for this project.

The recent expansion of the free early education entitlement to the most disadvantaged two year olds is likely to have influenced the nature of the intake for settings delivering the offer. Local authorities are required to ensure that, as far as possible, the two year old offer is delivered in settings rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted (DfE, 2014). Prior to the roll out of the offer in 2015, some providers also suggested that the entitlement for two year olds would allow them to achieve a greater social mix of children in settings by making their services more accessible to more disadvantaged families. Some also thought it may have advantages in raising awareness of the benefits of early education and helping to establish an 'early years culture' in areas of low demand (Dickens et al., 2012)

Availability of funded places

Another way of examining the social mix in early years settings is to investigate which groups are less likely to be accessing early education and to therefore be absent from local settings. At present, all three and four year old children in England are entitled to 15 hours of free early education per week (or 570 hours per year over no fewer than 38 weeks). Though high take-up of the offer nationally means that provision for three and four year olds is near universal, take-up in London is generally below average (see table below).

The 15 hour free entitlement is currently also offered to disadvantaged two year olds who meet the eligibility criteria, amounting to approximately 40 per cent of two year olds in England. A child is eligible if they: meet the criteria for receiving Free School Meals; are from a family with a low income; have a current statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care plan; are receiving Disability Living Allowance; are looked after by a local authority; or have moved out of local authority care as a result of an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements order.

Take up of free early education in London (%)

Source (DfE, 2016b)	Two year olds		Three year olds		Four year olds	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
England average	58	68	93	93	97	97
London average	46	57	83	82	93	89
Barking and Dagenham	63	74	80	82	94	93
Barnet	37	46	79	80	86	82
Bexley	55	55	92	88	99	100
Brent	45	54	77	76	90	85
Bromley	63	69	97	94	97	98
Camden	41	57	72	68	71	72
City of London	40	44	69	68	63	46
Croydon	38	52	83	82	93	90
Ealing	49	60	86	83	96	92
Enfield	54	62	80	81	97	91
Greenwich	49	54	89	86	92	91
Hackney	42	47	86	85	96	91
Hammersmith and Fulham	43	51	87	86	86	86
Haringey	40	50	81	77	96	91
Harrow	47	56	80	77	100	94
Havering	48	67	93	90	106 ²	102
Hillingdon	42	49	91	90	101	98
Hounslow	46	61	78	78	91	87
Islington	53	65	84	84	92	87
Kensington and Chelsea	52	55	75	68	77	73
Kingston upon Thames	71	77	86	85	88	86
Lambeth	43	59	84	85	88	85
Lewisham	48	62	79	83	90	87
Merton	53	55	91	86	94	91
Newham	31	55	82	79	103	93
Redbridge	66	70	94	92	100	100
Richmond upon Thames	85	80	95	93	100	101
Southwark	54	68	81	80	89	86
Sutton	50	64	82	84	91	89
Tower Hamlets	26	34	76	75	94	85
Waltham Forest	47	57	83	79	95	88
Wandsworth	33	34	83	81	91	88
Westminster	43	54	63	60	65	62

2 Figures over 100 per cent appear to be due to children attending settings outside their local authority

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

Take up of the free early education entitlement for both disadvantaged two year olds and all three and four year olds is much lower than the national average in London, and some boroughs are performing significantly better than others. Though there are always likely to be parents who would prefer not to access the offer, lower than average take up in London is likely to reflect shortages in childcare in a number of local authority districts. 17 local authorities in London have reported shortages in free early education places in their most recent childcare sufficiency assessments, with many indicating a lack of places for disadvantaged two year olds (Rutter, 2015).

A Talk London project looking at the low take up of entitlements found that while there is a high awareness amongst parents in London of the offer for three and four year olds, knowledge of the offer for disadvantaged two year olds was less widespread (Talk London 2016). Parents are learning about the offer through word of mouth and from childcare centres themselves. In addition, there was some confusion around eligibility and which early years settings were participating in the scheme. A recent survey showed that 32 per cent of families in the UK believe that there is too little information about childcare available, suggesting that parents still have unmet information needs (DfE, 2016a). Awareness of the universal entitlement also varies across different groups and can be a particular barrier for Bangladeshi, Somali and Polish communities (NAO, 2016).

Children with disabilities are generally less likely to be accessing their full entitlement; a recent survey of parents of disabled children found that 40 per cent were not accessing the full 15 hours, compared with four per cent amongst all three and four year olds (Contact a Family, 2015). Parents are not always able to make suitable arrangements for the full 15 hours per week with childcare providers and generally cite the additional costs of meeting the needs of children with disabilities, including provision of one-to-one support, as the main reasons. 11 local authorities in London reported that they lacked enough childcare for disabled children in their most recent childcare sufficiency assessments (Rutter, 2015).

Lower take up rates could also be explained by attitudes towards the offer itself. The Talk London project reported that parents in London feel frustrated with the complexity and length of the application process for the free early education entitlement. Their childcare decisions are also influenced by perceptions about the suitability of the 15 hour offer for working parents, with some reporting that the inconvenience of long placement waiting times and the inflexibility of care, alongside the high cost of additional hours, meant that the disadvantages outweighed the potential benefits.

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

From September 2017, many young children in England will be entitled to a further 15 hours of free childcare per week. This offer is open to families where both parents are working (or the sole parent in a single-parent family is working) and where each parent is earning a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at the national minimum wage and less than £100,000 per year. Though additional funding has been provisioned to support the expansion of early years places, the extended entitlement is likely to place further pressure on areas which are already experiencing a shortage of childcare places. In London, the high cost of property represents a significant barrier for providers looking to expand.

These issues may have a disproportionate impact on low-income families' access to childcare, given that there are significant structural barriers which may prevent schools from expanding their nurseries or increasing the amount of childcare hours they offer to parents. Many settings will need additional investment to expand their premises, for example in order to create rest areas or outdoor and activity spaces, and are likely to require changes to their facilities in order to cater for two year old children, e.g. changes to toilets and nappy changing facilities or smaller rooms (Dickens et al., 2012). Where expansion is not possible, schools will face the choice of whether to offer fewer places for an increased number of hours or maintain their current capacity and decline to offer of extended entitlement. Some under-fives in school nurseries and reception classes use breakfast and after-school clubs, and the ongoing availability of these facilities is important to families. This is discussed in more detail in FCT's recent report with the Child Poverty Action Group, *Unfinished Business*.³

Parental choices

Practical issues which affect parental choices include the availability of suitable childcare, the type of provision to choose, the location of a setting, cost and the duration of care throughout the week and year. A survey in 2010 found the three most important factors for mothers when choosing a childcare provider associated with quality: the most commonly cited factor was the qualifications, training and experience of the staff (seven per cent), followed by a 'warm and caring atmosphere' (59 per cent), and a good Ofsted report (44 per cent) (Daycare Trust, 2010). More than a third of mothers reported that affordability was an important consideration. Location is known to be a key factor when choosing an early years provider, with parents generally looking for settings which are convenient to their home or journey to work (Hall, 2015). As women still tend to have primary responsibility for childcare, parental choices are often influenced by social concepts of mothering, attitudes towards childcare and maternal career aspirations, as well as other financial considerations (Campbell-Barr and Garnham, 2011).

³ <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/extended-schools-failing-meet-parents'-childcare-needs>

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

Childcare decisions are typically shaped both by individual preferences and the options available to them. This has particular implications for low income families or those living in disadvantaged areas, who are likely to have less control and choice over factors relating to childcare decisions (Hirsch et al. 2011). The employment opportunities open to parents, or more commonly mothers, may not guarantee sufficient income to make childcare worthwhile or offer the flexibility which allows parents to combine work and caring responsibilities. As noted above, parents may not perceive the local supply of childcare to be of sufficient quality or have access to settings which offer funded places or flexible hours. Finally, parents may not have sufficient or accurate information about the options available to them or have access to social or online networks through which parents often receive word-of-mouth recommendations (Hall, 2015). Interview respondents often reported that word of mouth was an important driver for parents choosing their setting.

There is also evidence to suggest that parental choices may be limited by their perceptions of what type of setting is appropriate for them. A study in 2015 found that when making childcare decisions, parents often expressed a strong preference for a particular type of provision based on their perception of its quality and suitability (Hall, 2015). For example, there is evidence to suggest that parents on low-incomes may be more reluctant to choose provision from a childminder or nanny, viewing centre-based provision as more trustworthy or appropriate (Dickens et al., 2012). A study into the childcare choices of working class and middle class parents found that working class parents were relying almost exclusively on state or voluntary sector provision, suggesting a reluctance to engage with PVI sector providers (Vincent et al. 2008). Alternatively, issues around cost or flexibility of PVI provision may present a greater barrier to access for families in disadvantaged areas.

Ethnic background can be an influential factor in attitudes towards childcare and perceptions over what type of childcare is most appropriate and likely to meet a child's individual needs. Research shows that patterns of childcare use vary for people from different ethnic backgrounds, suggesting that there are different choices and constraints which shape their decisions. For example, women from Bangladeshi or Pakistani communities generally have less engagement with the labour market and are more likely to spend longer periods caring for children or older dependents (Hirsch et al. 2011). Where minority ethnic groups have been found to make less use of formal childcare services, possible reasons include feeling uncomfortable having their child being cared for by someone outside of the family (Bell and Casebourne, 2008) as well as broader reservations about the extent to which services are able to meet cultural or language needs (Craig et al. 2007).

2. Social mix in London early years provision: literature and expert interviews

Patterns of childcare usage amongst minority ethnic groups are by no means homogenous; experiences will vary according to particular constraints or practicalities. For example, a study from 2007 found that Black Caribbean mothers were most likely to be using formal childcare whilst in employment, in part because a higher proportion were from lone-parent families (Dex and Ward, 2007). In fact, research looking at the uptake of early years provision found that while rates varied across families of different ethnic backgrounds, ethnicity did not have a significant impact on uptake after controlling for differences in socioeconomic profile (Speight et al., 2010). This is likely to be a significant factor in London, where ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geographical location are related in complex and multi-faceted ways.

Parents who do not speak English are often from minority ethnic groups, and may find it practically difficult to access information about settings and to enrol their child. Some settings make an effort to recruit staff who speak the languages used by local families, although London's hyper-diversity and the generally small size of settings make this difficult to achieve fully. Interviewees drew attention to families feeling excluded if settings are based in church halls or other religious buildings (even if the provider is in fact secular), and to parental concerns about the religious or cultural appropriateness of food served in a setting. Some providers try to show that they welcome families from all backgrounds, and generally to provide a more vibrant experience for children, by celebrating festivals from different faiths and giving all children food from a variety of cultures and traditions.

Data on segregation in London early years provision

Key points

- ▶ Children from poorer areas, and children from South Asian and Black African ethnic groups, are more likely to attend maintained childcare settings
- ▶ Maintained settings are generally of higher quality than PVI settings – but there is a social gradient in quality for both types, with children in poorer areas less likely to access high quality provision
- ▶ Children with special educational needs and disabilities using early education are more likely to be in outstanding provision than their peers, but may face problems finding a provider who can meet their needs

Data sources

Most data in this section is drawn from the Early Years Census and the Schools Census. For under-fives the Schools Census includes children at state school nurseries, but excludes children in reception classes. In practice, this means that it includes all two and three year olds, and some four year olds. The Early Years Census includes two, three and four year olds from settings that have children on roll who receive free childcare (regardless of whether each individual child receives free childcare, and therefore including two year olds not entitled to the free offer). In practice, this means that it includes local authority maintained settings, and almost all private and voluntary nurseries and nurseries attached to independent schools, but only some childminders – this is because not all childminders register to provide the free childcare hours.

There are over 7000 childminders registered in London offering an average of just over five places each, but only about 1600 children aged two, three and four receiving their early education from a childminder in the Early Years Census. It is not clear how representative these children are of children cared for by childminders as a whole, so they are not included in this report. Nannies and au pairs are not included in this analysis as they do not deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Data on individual providers

It is relatively easy to retrieve and process data based on the types of provision being accessed by different groups of children. It is harder to make comments on the social mix within individual providers based on the available data. This is partly because providers are often small, so there will be a very low number of children in different SEND or ethnic categories: data is therefore suppressed to protect children's identity. A further issue is that deprivation measures cannot be used within providers. This is because the IDACI – the income deprivation affecting children index – ranking available is based on the address of the setting rather than the addresses of the children.

Data on segregation in London early years provision

Deprivation metrics

Deprivation in the early years is primarily measured through two metrics: whether children are entitled to free school meals, and the IDACI profile of their setting. Free school meals entitlement is based on family income, and applies only to children in school nurseries: free meals are not centrally funded in other settings. IDACI ranks areas based on various indicators of deprivation that have an affect on children, including what proportion of children aged under 16 are in families receiving benefits, or which have an income less than 60 per cent of the median and receive child tax credits. Deprivation levels measured by IDACI are on average higher in London than in the rest of England, but there is significant variation between and within boroughs.

In this report, IDACI data is based on lower super output areas (LSOAs: small geographical areas with about 1500 people) and presented in deciles, where one is the most deprived. It is presented on a per-child basis but relates to the address of the setting, not the child. Although there is little London-specific data on distances travelled to childcare, survey respondents and interviewees (see below) generally reported that childcare is highly localised, with most children travelling only a short distance to settings – there are exceptions to this when parents use childcare close to or at their workplace.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity data is presented in census categories. The ethnic profile of young children in London differs slightly from the profile of older children and adults, because of different age structures in different groups. For example, more than 10 per cent of Bangladeshi and Black African people in London are under the age of five, compared to 6 per cent of white British people and less than 5 per cent of Chinese people.

Special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have various classifications and descriptions of need, depending on the nature of their needs and the timing of their assessment. In this report, all SEND classifications are grouped, but this single grouping includes children with a very wide range of experiences. Attending an early years setting may increase the chance of a child being identified as having SEND: this is because children who do not use early education may only have issues picked up when they reach compulsory school age.

Assessing quality

Ofsted, the education regulator, is responsible for assessing the quality of all settings which deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Settings may be rated as 'good', 'outstanding', 'requires improvement', or 'inadequate', with the largest group being rated as 'good'. Our data on Ofsted ratings excludes the small number of new settings which have not yet been inspected. In general, maintained (school) settings have higher Ofsted grades than private and voluntary providers. This may reflect their higher levels of funding historically, and their higher use of qualified teachers.

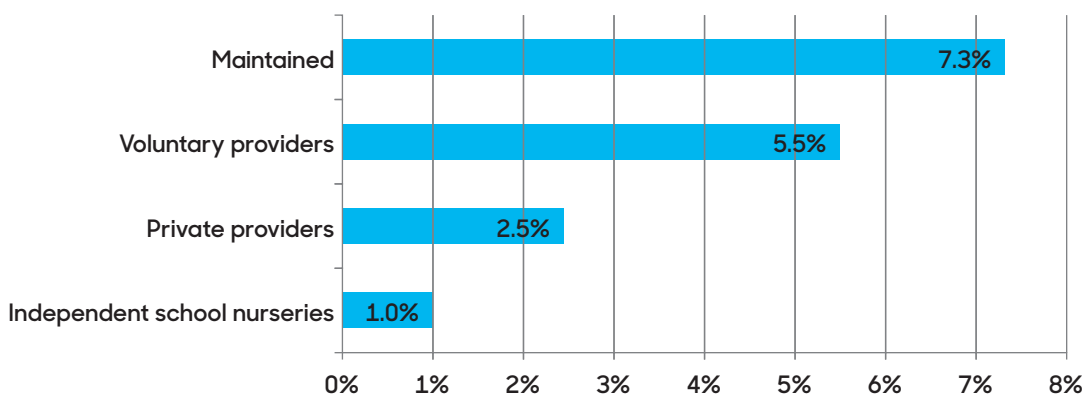
Data on segregation in London early years provision

Social mix by type of setting

Special education needs and disabilities

Overall, 5 per cent of children aged two to four in London early years settings have a special need or disability. The likelihood of a child being recognised as having a special need may be increased by attending early education, but children with more severe needs and disabilities may find it hard to find a suitable setting. The proportion of SEND children varies significantly by setting type:

% children with SEND



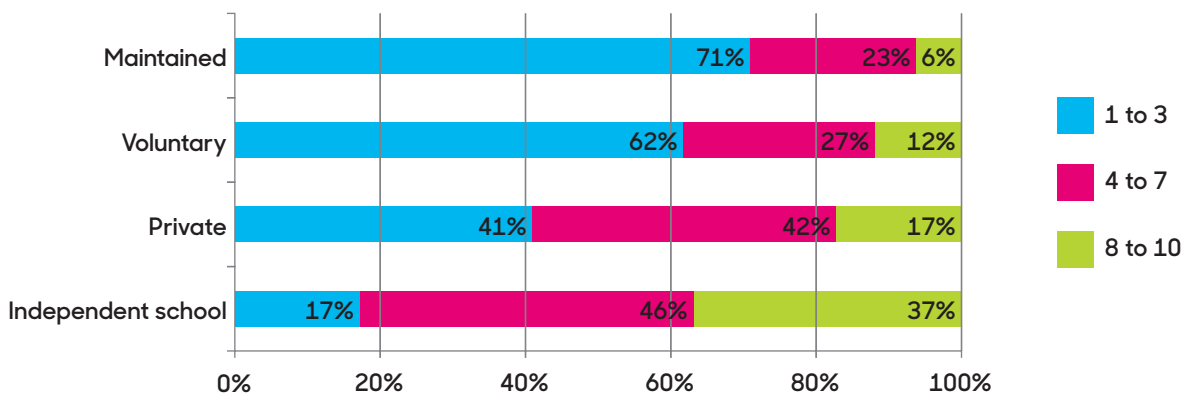
Although voluntary providers have a fairly high proportion of children with SEND, they are a small part of the sector overall. Of all children with SEND in non-domestic settings, 72 per cent are in maintained settings, 20 per cent with private providers, 7 per cent with voluntary providers, and less than 1 per cent in independent school nurseries.

Deprivation

There are striking differences in deprivation levels according to the type of setting. 71 per cent of children are living in the most deprived tenth of areas, compared to 17 per cent of the least deprived. 23 per cent of children in the least deprived areas attend an independent school nursery, compared to 0.5 per cent of the most deprived tenth.

Data on segregation in London early years provision

Deprivation levels by IDACI decile of setting. 1-3 = most deprived



More than two thirds of children in maintained settings are from the most deprived three deciles, compared to less than half of children in private settings and one in six in independent school nurseries. This pattern is likely to be related to parental employment – as noted above, it is difficult for two parents to work while only using maintained childcare.

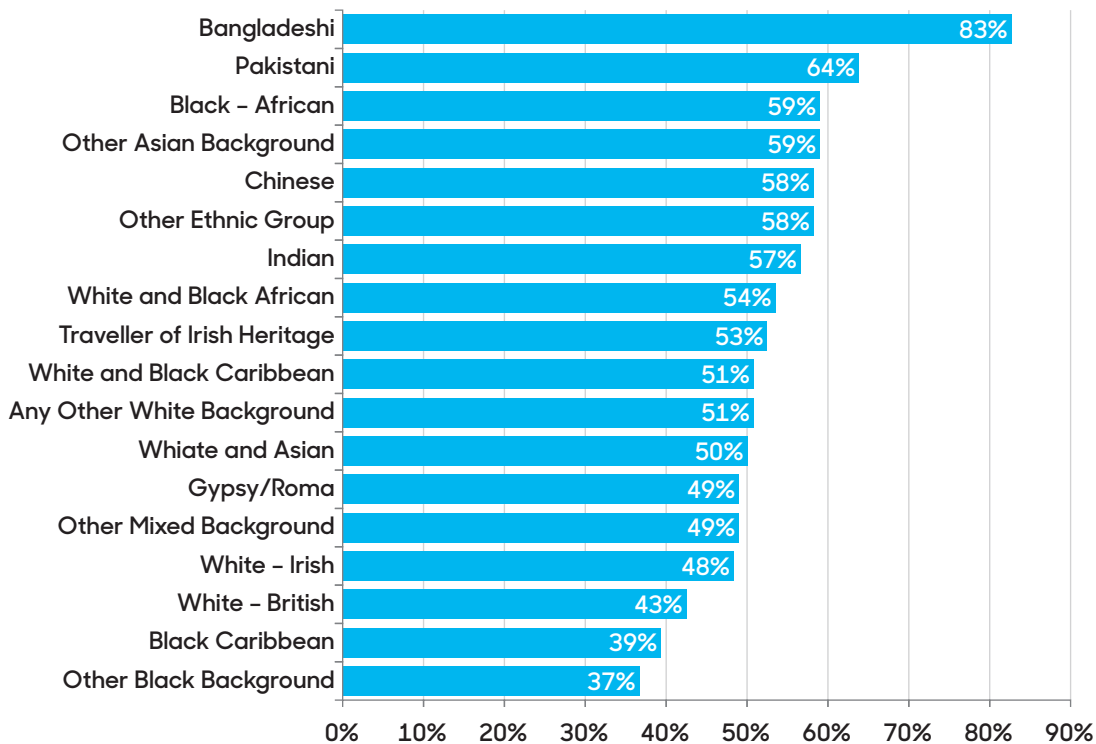
Ethnicity

As noted in the literature review, there are differences in take up of the free childcare offer among children from different ethnic groups. When families do take up early education, there are significant differences in the types of provision accessed. In particular, some groups are much more likely than others to receive early education in a maintained setting.⁴

⁴ Data in this and subsequent sections excludes children for whom ethnicity data is not recorded.

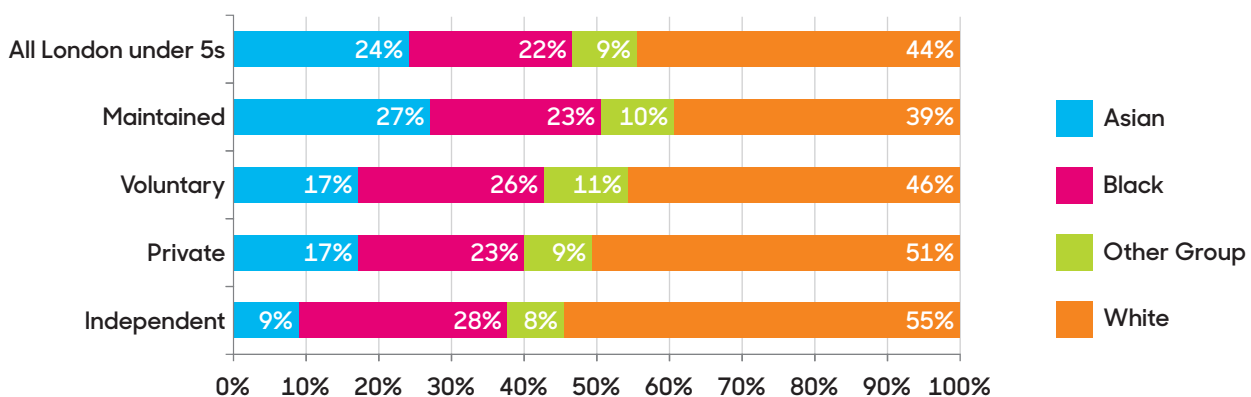
Data on segregation in London early years provision

Uptake of maintained settings (% of children who use childcare)



Within setting types, there are significant differences in ethnic profile. In particular, white children are somewhat overrepresented in private and voluntary settings and in the small group of independent school nurseries, and Asian children are overrepresented in maintained settings. Not all children attend an early years setting, and attendance rates differ by ethnicity – Black children are particularly likely to make use of early years provision and are slightly overrepresented in all settings types.

Ethnic background of children by type of provision



Data on segregation in London early years provision

Quality and social mix

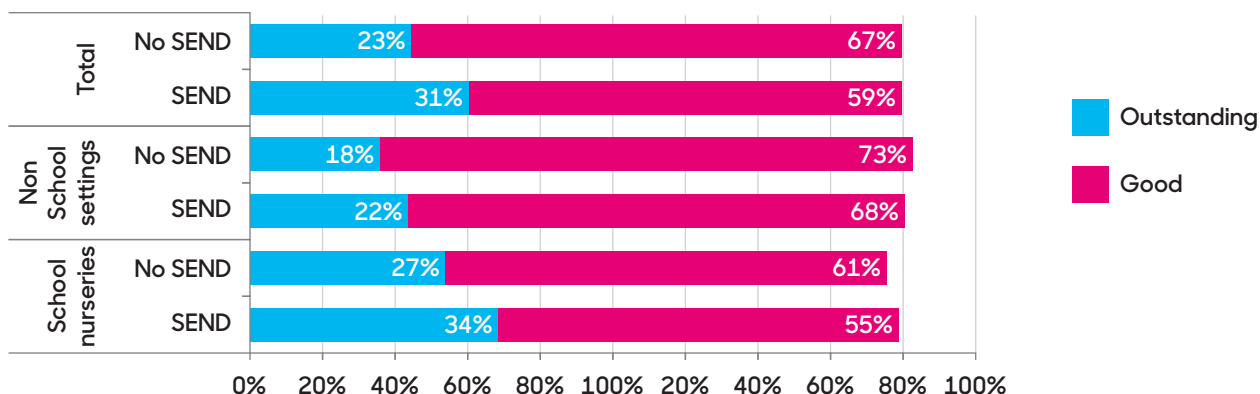
In this section, data is presented for school nurseries, and for non-school settings – this includes all private, voluntary and independent providers and the small group of local authority day nurseries which are not attached to schools. These local authority day nurseries account for just under 1 per cent of children who use childcare in London. The school/non-school distinction is therefore similar to, but not exactly the same as, the maintained/PVI distinction.

Special educational needs and disabilities

In general, Ofsted ratings are higher for school settings than for non-school settings. Within both types of settings, children with a special need or disability are more likely to receive an education in an 'outstanding' setting than their peers, although the likelihood of being 'outstanding' and 'good' settings combined is similar for both groups.

Children with SEND are more likely to attend schools settings, which means that overall they are considerably more likely to attend an outstanding setting than children who do not have SEND:

Likelihood of attending a 'good' or 'outstanding' setting by SEND status



It is likely that many children with SEND initially attend higher quality settings, perhaps because these settings are more able to meet their needs, but there may also be a phenomenon where outstanding settings are more able to ensure that children receive the appropriate SEND classification.

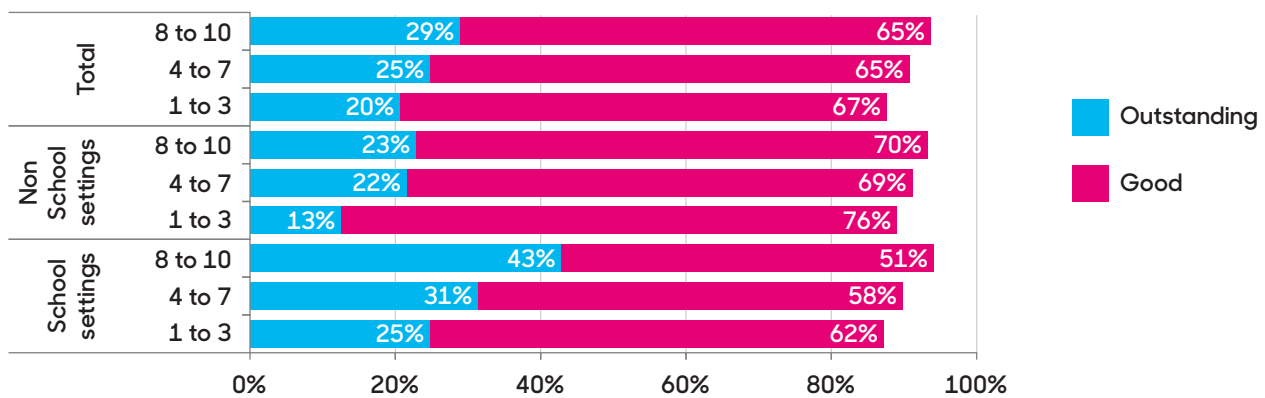
Deprivation

As described earlier in this chapter, children from more deprived areas in London are more likely to attend a maintained school setting than children from less deprived areas. In general, school settings are more likely to have an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating than other types of settings.

Data on segregation in London early years provision

However, there is a strong social gradient within both types of settings. Settings based in poorer areas are less likely to be rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' than settings based in richer areas, whether they are schools or otherwise. Overall, this social gradient means that children attending a provider in a poor area are less likely to receive a good or outstanding education than providers in wealthier areas, even when their higher use of schools is taken into account:

'Good' or 'outstanding' setting by IDACI deciles. (1-3 = most deprived)



This pattern presents a real disadvantage for working families living in poorer areas: unless they can access informal childcare from family or friends their hours are likely to prevent them from using a school setting, and their location means they are less likely to be able to access a high quality private setting.

Ethnicity

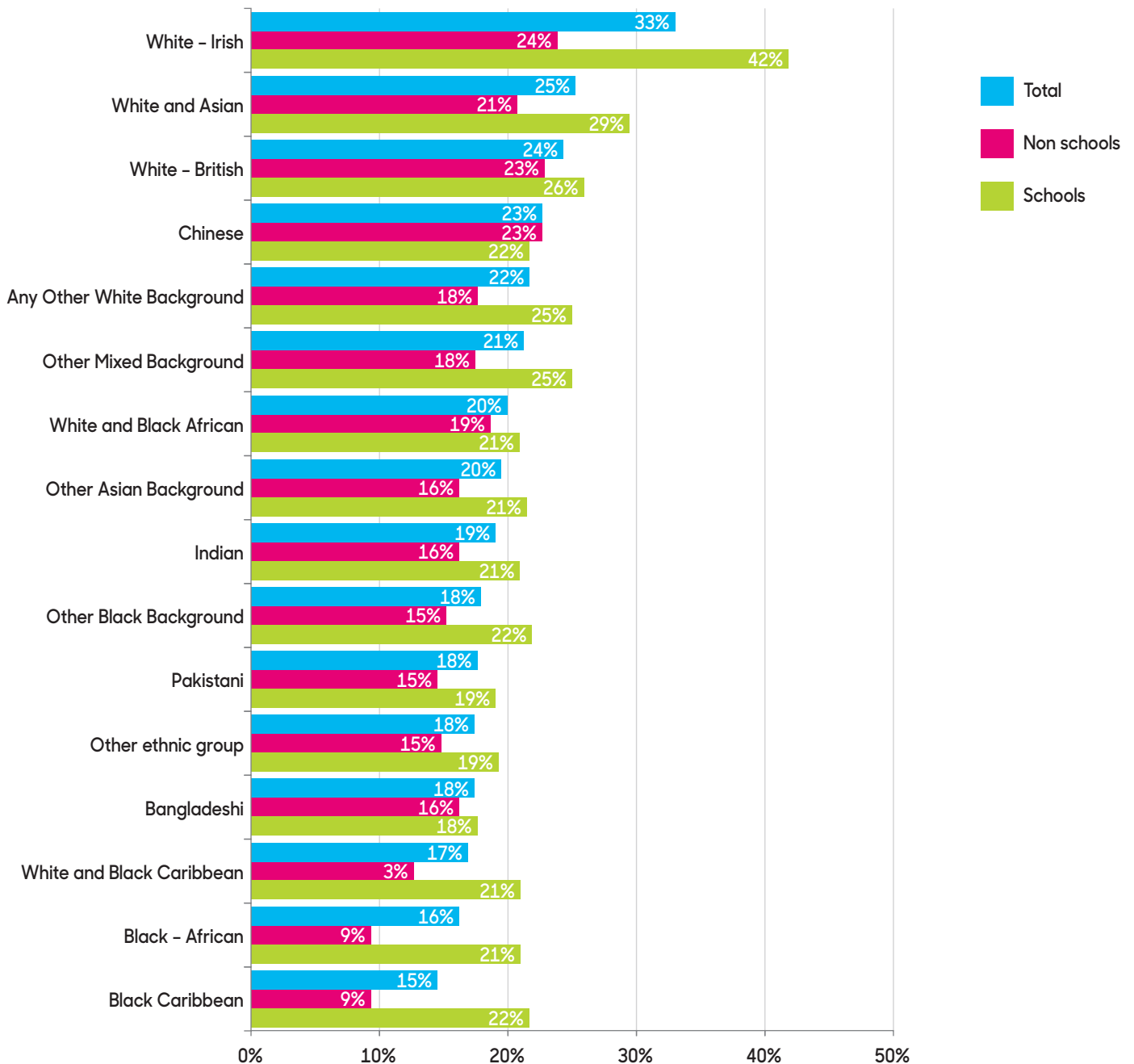
There are very significant differences in the proportion of children from different ethnic groups in school settings, as described above. There are also major differences in the likelihood of children attending an outstanding setting, whether or not they attend a school.

Consistent with the overall pattern of the data, the quality of schools attended is notably higher than non-school settings for all ethnic groups except Chinese.⁵ However, the gap is much smaller for white British children, who receive a broadly similar quality of education regardless of the type of setting attended.

5 Data for Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma people is excluded from this analysis as it is available for less than sixty children in each group

Data on segregation in London early years provision

% children attending an outstanding setting, by ethnicity



Black children from both Caribbean and African backgrounds who attend a non-school setting are notably unlikely to receive outstanding provision – this is a particular concern for Black Caribbean children as they are highly concentrated in this type of setting. Although school nursery quality is generally higher than non-school quality, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian children all have a low likelihood of attending an outstanding school nursery compared to children from other ethnicities.

Promoting social mix: provider case studies

The following case studies are examples of early years settings in London which have had particular success in welcoming children and families with and without additional needs, from different ethnic groups, or with differing income levels.

Sutton Opportunity Pre-School: including children across the needs spectrum

The Sutton Opportunity Pre-School is a 42 place nursery in South London, offering morning and afternoon sessions. A lunch club is available for children who attend for the full day, or for children wishing to extend either the morning or afternoon session. About half of children who attend have additional needs and children's levels and types of need vary considerably. It was founded as a charity 25 years ago and currently operates from a council-owned building. It has been rated 'outstanding' at its last three Ofsted inspections.

The pre-school has an ethos of full inclusivity: 'everyone is involved in everything'. They believe that children with additional needs have a right to be educated alongside their peers, and that all children benefit from learning about differences between people. All children use Signalong (a type of sign-supported communication) for some activities, including singing and rhyme time. Regardless of their needs, all children go on external trips, for example to a children's farm.

The pre-school has a sensory room with comfortable places to sit or lie down, and gently moving lights and images - it is usually used by one member of staff and one child at a time. This is particularly important for some children with additional needs, but staff report that it can be helpful for all children when they are upset. The building is on the edge of a large park and has an attractive outdoor space for play. A play service run by the council is located on the same site.

Provision for children with additional needs is necessarily expensive: staff costs are high as a significant proportion of children need one-to-one care, and staff often need to be trained to respond to specific health needs of individual children. This additional support is generally funded through children's Education Health and Care Plans, but the process is bureaucratic and slow, and staff spend a considerable amount of time preparing documentation to submit to the decision-making panel. All local parents can apply for a place at the nursery, but children with additional needs are often referred by the portage service.

Staff at Sutton Opportunity Pre-School report that their inclusive approach has wider benefits for families, reducing prejudice which is based on fear and helping parents feel more comfortable interacting with disabled people. Children with more severe needs often go on to attend special schools for their primary and secondary education, so the pre-school is an important opportunity for them to form friendships with non-disabled peers.

The pre-school runs regular coffee mornings for parents to meet each other, and families sometimes choose to work together on fundraising initiatives. Some of the members of the advisory committee and board of trustees are parents of children who attend the pre-school, and links to the local community are strong.

Promoting social mix: provider case studies

Coin Street Community Builders, Lambeth: accessible childcare for all families

Coin Street Community Builders is a social enterprise with the set aim of making their neighbourhood a great place to live, work in and visit. Their Family and Children's Centre includes an 84-place day nursery open between 8am and 6pm across 50 weeks of the year and a holiday play scheme which operates during school holidays. One of the main ambitions of the organisation is to ensure that a real cross-section of the local community area are accessing the services they provide.

Though in the past staff at Coin Street had found that the group of parents accessing the family support services was far more diverse than those using the nursery, they have since been on the lookout for ways to make their childcare provision more accessible to families in the local area. This has involved a lot of work helping parents to find out more information and have a better understanding of the nursery provision. They have located their crèche, used by parents accessing other services in the centre, nearby to their regular nursery so that all parents can get to know the provision and feel some sense of ownership over the nursery. The centre also works to ensure that they have a diverse staff which can cater to the range of languages spoken in the local area.

In order to ensure their childcare services are as accessible as possible for families on lower incomes, Coin Street staff use information such as regional price averages and fee rates from other local settings to set prices for their nursery, which are reviewed annually. Their social mission of attracting a cross-section of the local community has to be balanced against the need to remain financially viable and to attract and retain high-quality staff. In addition, the nursery has set criteria for enabling access to children on their waiting list which is aimed at facilitating access for children with additional needs in the local area.

Coin Street is one of eight settings in Lambeth designated as an Enhanced Nursery, through which they receive additional resources from the local authority in order to be able to offer places for children with significant additional needs. As well as giving the nursery an opportunity to gain experience in meeting different needs, this has helped them to develop a good reputation among parents as being able to meet specific additional needs, e.g. supporting children with hearing impairments or children on the autistic spectrum. This forms an important part of the nursery's objective of providing an inclusive early years setting for their community.

Promoting social mix: provider case studies

1st Place Nursery, Southwark

1st Place is a children's centre with services for families and full day nursery provision in Southwark, South London, working across three sites. It was initially built to serve the Aylesbury Social Housing Estate – as this estate has been regenerated the social mix of the setting has changed, but it still has a high proportion of families experiencing deprivation and other challenges.

Staff believe that the social mix of families using the setting broadly reflects the ethnic and social diversity of the local area, and note that some immigrant communities have become more likely to use their services over the last few years. Families are often signposted to the centre and to the free two year old offer by community family workers and health visitors.

As a charity, the organisation is 'here for all families'. Staff believe that a good social mix is beneficial for children and for their parents, as the nursery is an important way for families to build new social links. They have observed that, despite the 'outstanding' Ofsted grade for some of their sites, a few parents do not choose the setting as they are reluctant to have their children mix with 'rough' children from the local area, or are concerned that some nursery staff speak with a South London accent.

Full day care is inevitably expensive, and this means that families who use full-time nursery provision tend to be in full-time work and wealthier than others in the local area. Payment from the council for the three and four year old funded offer is less than the setting's unit delivery costs, so they are unable to offer funded-only places for this group unless they are already in the settings through the two year old free early education offer, although the funding significantly reduces costs for families using longer hours of care.

Children's Centre activities, including stay-and-play sessions, English classes, functional skills training, parenting support, legal advice, and counselling sessions tend to attract a wider range of parents and can be an important way for parents to find out about nursery provision if they had not previously considered it. In some cases, parents start by using children's centre activities, take up a free two year old place, and then progress to full-time nursery when they return to work.

The centre feels that the offer of free early education for two year olds, which is offered without the need for parents to pay for additional hours as it is funded at a higher level by the council, has improved the social mix of children attending in the early years. They are optimistic that the 30 hour offer will be funded at a rate that reflects their costs, and believe that this will support more parents into work and increase socioeconomic diversity.

The local authority perspective on social mix

Key points:

- ▶ Local authorities believe that social mix in early years settings is important because:
 - it prepares children for living in a diverse community and city;
 - it promotes tolerance and understanding between groups, and reduces prejudice based on fear of the unknown; and
 - it supports families to build friendships and connections with people they would not otherwise encounter.
- ▶ Authorities report that the price of childcare at different settings and the location of settings are the most significant barriers to social mixing in early education
- ▶ Most local authorities are not undertaking specific work to promote social mix in the early years, although some are working to increase uptake of the free offer among under-represented groups, which would be likely to improve some aspects of social mix.

Surveys

A survey was sent to Directors of Children's Services in all London boroughs (a copy is included in the appendix). Sixteen responses were received from fifteen local authorities,⁶ with a reasonable mix of inner and outer London authorities, and surveys were generally completed by staff in the early years team. The aim of the survey was to gather views on the extent of social segregation in London early years provision and the potential impact on children, families and early years providers. We also sought to establish whether there are any initiatives in London seeking to encourage a good social mix in early years settings and to identify any examples of good practice.

Our survey sought to explore the factors which could potentially influence the social mix in early years settings, including across different types of provider. To do this, we asked respondents about what they saw as the most significant factors and whether, in their experience, there were settings which were likely to have a particularly poor or particularly diverse social mix. We also asked whether they thought the free early education entitlement for two year olds has had any impact on the social mix in early years settings. Given that the offer is targeted at the most disadvantaged children, an understanding of where and in which types of provision funded two year old places are being offered is of interest when looking at the mix of socioeconomic backgrounds within early years settings.

⁶ One borough supplied two responses from different professional perspectives

The local authority perspective on social mix

Factors influencing the social mix

Our survey offered respondents a choice of potential factors influencing the social mix in London early years settings, namely:

- ▶ the availability of funded places;
- ▶ the price of hours outside the free entitlement;
- ▶ the location of a setting;
- ▶ settings' admissions policy or choices;
- ▶ the hours a setting offers to working parents;
- ▶ parents' awareness of their childcare options; and
- ▶ other.

Respondents were most likely to choose the price of hours and the location of a setting as being factors which have a significant impact on social mix, closely followed by the availability of funded places. Around half of responses also stated that the hours a setting offers to parents, admissions policy or choices and parents' awareness of their childcare options would have a significant impact. It was also suggested by some that all of the above factors were likely to have an impact to some extent.

A number of other factors were suggested by respondents as potentially having an influence over the social mix in early years settings. These included:

- ▶ local authority strategies for placement of vulnerable children and children in need;
- ▶ parents perception that entry to a particular nursery will give their child a better chance of gaining a place in their chosen primary school;
- ▶ different cultural perceptions around the nature and purpose of formal childcare; and
- ▶ the social mix of staff.

"Sometimes surprising factors might come into play for example parents believing that by getting into a particular nursery their child will have a better chance of getting into the school of their choice, even though, with the exception of independent provision, this is not the case."

Types of setting

Most respondents believed that there are particular settings in London which are likely to have either a very diverse or a very poor social mix. Location was cited a number of times as being a strong indication of the social mix within a setting. Responses recognised that intake was likely to closely reflect the demographics of the local area, particularly given that the catchment area for early years settings tends to be relatively small. For example, settings located in an area of high deprivation would be less likely to have a socioeconomically diverse intake.

The local authority perspective on social mix

"Some provision is located within high density social housing and consequently are more likely to reflect the population who are eligible for social housing."

Some respondents felt that private provision in their area was less likely to have a socioeconomically diverse intake than maintained or voluntary provision, suggesting they were less likely to be caring for children who are only accessing their funded entitlement.

"Private nurseries have very few children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Of 92 FSM [free school meals] applications submitted in one term, only 2 came from children attending private nurseries."

However, others stated that private providers in their area were reasonably diverse and cited other characteristics as being more significant. Settings with a specific religious or cultural background and those offering hours primarily targeted at working parents were suggested as being more likely to have a poor social mix, while children's centres were claimed by a number of respondents as being more likely to attract a diverse social mix.

Impact of the two year old offer

Around half of respondents felt that the free early education entitlement for two year olds had improved the social mix in their local provision, either by allowing entry for the most disadvantaged children into settings they might not previously have been able to access and by encouraging families who are less likely to be accessing early education for their children to take up the offer.

Amongst those who did not feel the two year old offer has had a significant impact on the social mix in their local provision, the reasons given included:

- ▶ providers offering places for two year olds being more likely to be working with a more disadvantaged cohort already, e.g. schools and children's centres;
- ▶ some groups still being less likely to take up the offer; and
- ▶ the need to create the number of places necessary meaning that funded two year olds are concentrated in those settings willing to take them.

"We have provision in a number of primary schools for disadvantaged two year old children only; because of the need to provide the number of places that we need to, it has not been possible to have mixed social groupings in these settings."

The impact of social segregation in early years settings

The survey asked respondents to describe what kind of impact they thought a high level of social segregation in early years settings would have on children, families and early years providers. Almost all responses stated that a high level of social mixing in the early years had positive impacts, both for the children and families that use childcare services and for social cohesion more broadly.

The local authority perspective on social mix

"Practitioners and families are more aware of their local community and able to build relationships amongst themselves and their children. Settings and schools are one of the few places where different events bring communities together."

Impact of social segregation on children

Many responses noted that a poor social mix would limit opportunities for young children to make friends from different backgrounds and would not give children the best preparation for living in a diverse community. It was felt by some that children in a more diverse setting would have a wider range of experiences and the opportunity to meet a variety of different role models. By contrast, one respondent suggested that a lack of opportunity for mixing with people from different backgrounds was unlikely to have an impact on children themselves, given their young age, but was more likely to affect parents.

"Children may lack a range of peer models and experiences especially in such areas as PSE [personal and social education] and communication. We believe the roots of future social integration are established at an early age."

Other responses stated that a high level of social segregation could have a negative impact on children's attainment and outcomes. One respondent cited research which found that a good social mix in schools helped to improve attainment for disadvantaged children, although they noted that this was likely to be dependent on practitioner skill and leadership, as well as the capacity of the setting to meet the needs of all pupils. Another response stated that early education was an important part of 'closing the gap' in attainment between disadvantaged children and their peers, with a good social mix helping to raise expectations across the board.

Impact of social segregation on families

Looking at the impact of a high level of social segregation on families, responses generally referred to its impact on community cohesion and the potential for increased social isolation. It was suggested that childcare settings provide an opportunity for people from different backgrounds and cultures to meet, meaning that a highly segregated early years sector would limit opportunities to mix with other families and to develop a knowledge and understanding of other groups in their community.

"Children and parents coming together for this shared experience benefits community cohesion and can reduce isolation"

One respondent noted that families would be more likely to feel stigmatised or alienated if they were, or felt they were, the only one of a particular social class or ethnic background using a service. Another response claimed that early education provides an important opportunity to eradicate the stigmatisation of children and families who are experiencing poverty. Similarly, it was suggested that a highly segregated early years sector would do little to encourage an understanding and tolerance of difference amongst families using childcare services.

The local authority perspective on social mix

Impact of social segregation on providers

A number of respondents suggested that the social mix in a setting may affect the aspirations and expectations around progress that practitioners have for the children they care for. For example, expectations for settings with a high proportion of children from more deprived areas might be lower than those for a setting with a predominantly affluent intake. This could then have an impact on outcomes for more disadvantaged children.

"Providers' expectations of parents and children can negatively (or positively) impact on how the service is delivered and in turn affects the outcomes for children"

Another common theme was sustainability, with some respondents indicating that a poor socioeconomic mix would have financial implications for early years settings. This is in reference to a common practice amongst early years providers of cross-subsidising places for children accessing the free entitlement only through fees charged for additional hours. One respondent noted that the financial implications of a poor social mix could have a knock-on effect for the quality of practice in those settings.

"Providers in areas of disadvantage will struggle financially, will pay staff less which can affect quality."

It was suggested by one respondent that a good social mix would help to support inclusive practice by encouraging providers to develop skills to support children with additional needs, while another noted that it could help early years staff to develop practice which values and respects different communities.

Action taken by local authorities

The survey asked about the data collected by local authorities which would help give them an understanding of the social mix in their local early years settings. Almost all respondents indicated that they collected data on children less likely to be accessing the free early education entitlement and groups of children with lower than expected attainment when they reach school. More than a third of respondents stated that they collect data on the social mix in different types of early years provision.

A majority of respondents directed us towards the equality and diversity policy or similar strategy held by the local authority which informs their work in the early years. One respondent reported that they had a strategy in place but were unclear about how this would relate to day-to-day practice in early years settings. Some responses also stated that they have an SEN or inclusion policy for the early years.

The local authority perspective on social mix

Most respondents had not undertaken any work to identify social segregation in the early years or to promote a good social mix in local settings. The work that was described in the remaining responses included:

- ▶ Activity to increase take-up in under-represented groups.
- ▶ Placement strategies and brokerage services for vulnerable children.
- ▶ Creation of early education places, including places for two year olds.
- ▶ Identifying local area needs.
- ▶ Data analysis and strategies in place for 'closing the gap'.
- ▶ Support for inclusive early years practice.

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Appendix 1 – Survey to early years leads in all London boroughs

Social segregation survey to local authorities

The Family and Childcare Trust, supported by the Greater London Authority, is carrying out research into social segregation in the early years in London. By social segregation, we mean the extent to which children are clustered in early years settings with other children from similar backgrounds to their own.

The aim of the research is to identify patterns of social segregation in London and examine potential impacts on children, families and early years providers.

This survey is being sent to early years teams in all London boroughs with the aim of gathering views on social segregation in early years provision, establishing whether there are systems in place to encourage social mixing in early years settings and identifying good practice.

Thank you in advance for your help. If you have any questions about the survey or would like further information about the research, please contact [contact details].

Your local authority:

Your role and team:

Your email address:

We will use your contact details solely to contact you regarding this project. You will not be added to any mailing lists.

Appendix 1 – Survey to early years leads in all London boroughs

These questions refer to the social mix in early years settings. When thinking about social mix, you might like to consider how children from different social, ethnic and economic backgrounds or those with SEN or a disability are accessing early years provision.

What factors do you think have a significant impact on the social mix in early years settings?

Please select all that apply.

- The availability of funded places
- The price of hours outside the free entitlement
- Location of the setting
- Settings' admissions policy or choices
- The hours a setting offers to working parents
- Parents' awareness of their childcare options

From your experience, are there particular settings which are likely to have either a very diverse or a very poor social mix?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain briefly.

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What impact do you think the free early education entitlement for disadvantaged two year olds has had on the social mix in early years settings in your local authority?

.....

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What impact do you think a high level of social segregation in early years settings has on:

- Children?
- Families?
- Early years providers?

Appendix 1 – Survey to early years leads in all London boroughs

Do you think there are positive impacts of high levels of social mixing in early years settings?

Yes

No

Please tell us why

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Does your local authority collect data on any of the following?

Groups which are less likely to take up the free early education entitlement

Groups which have lower than expected attainment when they reach school

The social mix within different types of early years provision

Has your local authority undertaken any work to identify social segregation in the early years or to promote a good social mix in local settings?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe briefly.

.....

.....

Does your local authority have an equality and inclusion or social cohesion strategy which informs your work in the early years?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details. If it would be helpful to share any documents to support your answers here (for example, strategies or details of particular pieces of work) please feel free to provide a weblink or send them directly to us.

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Are there any other examples of good practice in your local authority you feel would be relevant to this research? If so, please tell us about them.

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