

Childcare Provider Satisfaction Survey Report

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Prepared for:

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education

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1 Executive summary

The findings from this year's Childcare Provider Satisfaction survey are very positive for Ofsted. The regulator scores highly both in terms of how it handles new registrations and how it carries out inspections of childcare providers:

1.1 New registrations

- More than nine in ten respondents rated the help that they received during the application process, satisfaction levels are now higher than they were in 2003.
 - 97% agree that Ofsted's staff were courteous and helpful, compared with 83% of respondents in 2003;
 - The data indicates that Ofsted has maintained the quality of its registration visits;
 - Around two thirds of respondents 'strongly agree' that Ofsted inspectors are professional, courteous and that they clearly explain what Ofsted would do next.
- Overall, just over nine in ten (92%) say they are satisfied with Ofsted's registration process, only five percent say they are not satisfied:
 - 93% of childminders and 89% of day-care providers say they are satisfied overall
- When asked about Ofsted's target times for registration, the highest proportion (45%) think the times are 'about right', around 30% say they are fast. However, just under a quarter (22%) of respondents feel they are too long.
 - Just under half (48%) of childminders feel that 12 weeks is 'about right', this compares to only 30% of day-care providers who feel that the longer target time for them (25 weeks) is 'about right'.

1.2 *Recent inspections*

- The findings indicate growing satisfaction with contact with Ofsted before an inspection
 - Around nine in ten agree that the information they received prior to the inspection was helpful and easy to understand, that their enquiry was dealt with to their satisfaction and that the people who dealt with their enquiry were courteous and helpful;
- Ofsted's inspectors receive high praise from respondents
 - Nearly two thirds (63%) 'strongly agree' that the inspector was professional and courteous;
 - 97% agree that the inspector looked at all relevant aspects of their work.
- After the inspection, 96% say it was clear from the report what actions needed to be taken, 63% agree that the report made clear key points or issues for consideration to improve the quality of nursery education provision.
 - Clear majorities of both childminders and day-care providers agree that the report accurately reflected the service provided (93% and 88%, respectively).
- When asked about Ofsted's target times for sending inspection reports, the majority (56%) think the times are 'fast', while just over one third (39%) say they are 'about right';
 - Just under a quarter (23%) of childminders feel that the target for sending reports is 'very fast', this compares to 17% of day-care providers.

2 Introduction

NOP was contracted to collect and collate data relating to provider satisfaction with how Ofsted handles new registrations and how it carries out inspections of childcare providers in England.

The 2005 survey builds on a similar survey that NOP conducted for Ofsted's Early Years Directorate in 2003. Where possible, comparisons with the 2003 survey are included in this report.

2.1 Methodology

The two questionnaires (one for New Registrations and one for Recent Inspections) were created and printed by Ofsted's Early Years Directorate.¹ The questionnaires were despatched by a third party to providers of childminders, sessional day care, creche, full day care and out of school day care providers. Upon completion, the questionnaires were returned directly to NOP.

After the data was scanned it was cleaned to ensure there were no inconsistencies before computer tabulations were produced. Weights were applied to the data to ensure that the proportion of respondents accurately reflect the proportion of childcare providers in each of the 8 regions.

¹ 2,101 questionnaires were sent to childcare providers who have recently been inspected by Ofsted; 1,115 were returned before the cut-off date giving a response rate of 53%. 1,992 questionnaires were sent to newly registered childcare providers; 1,102 were returned before the cut-off date giving a response rate of 55%.

RESULTS

3 The Registration process

3.1 *Contact with Ofsted*

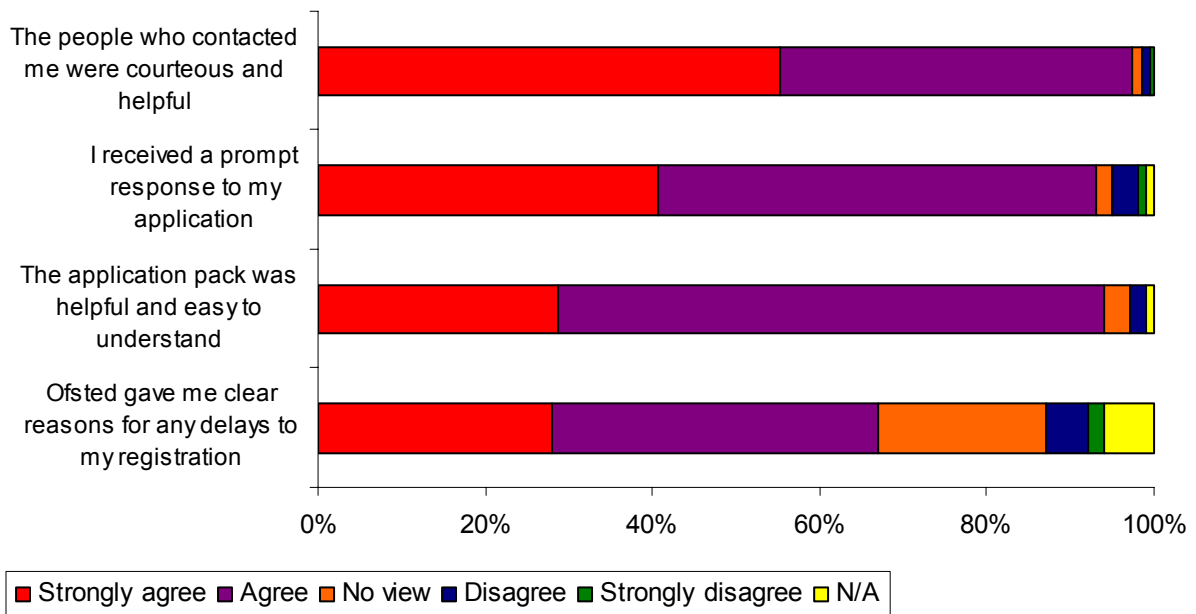
Overall, the response from newly registered childcare providers is extremely positive for Ofsted and marks an improvement since 2003.

More than nine in ten respondents rated the help that they received during the application process.

- 97% agree that Ofsted's staff were courteous and helpful; this compares with 83% of respondents that agreed in 2003;
- 95% agree that the application pack was helpful and easy to understand; this compares with 82% in 2003;
- 94% agree that they received a prompt response to their application; in 2003 around six in ten (58%) agreed that the 'regional centre dealt with their enquiries promptly'.

The proportion of respondents that agree with the statement 'Ofsted gave me clear reasons for any delays to my registration' is lower than for the other three statements. However, two thirds (67%) do agree with this statement – a nine percent increase since 2003. It is also noteworthy that only seven percent actually disagree with this statement (two percent 'strongly disagree'), the other 20% of respondents have no view.

Chart 1: Contact with Ofsted 2005



Base: All respondents (1,102)

The findings indicate that Ofsted is performing well nationwide. More than nine in ten respondents agree with each statement.

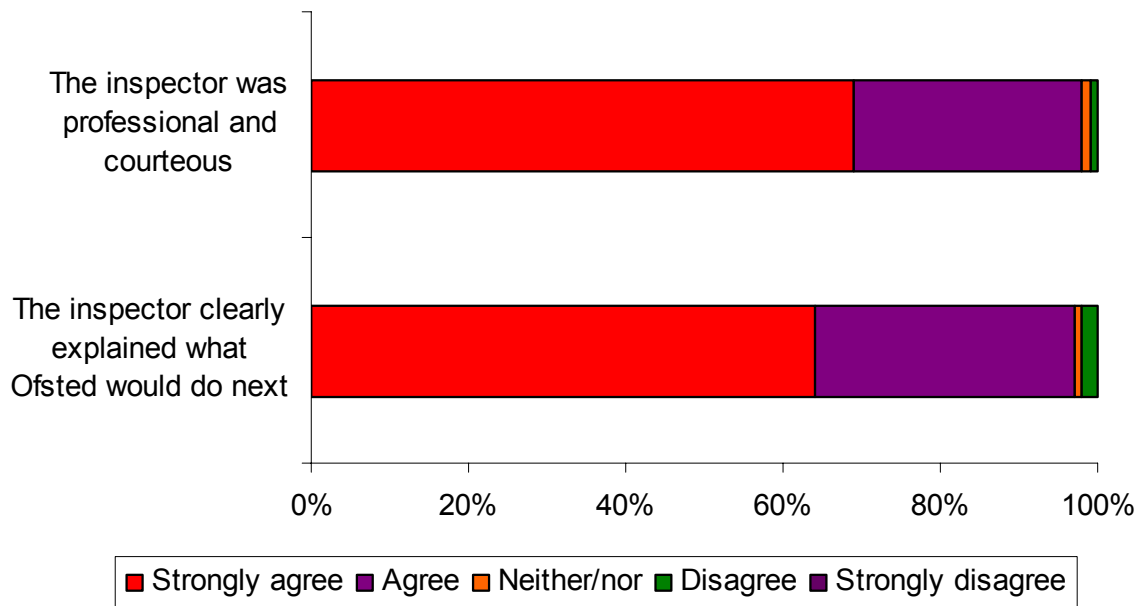
3.2 The registration visit

When asked about the actual visit by an Ofsted inspector respondents continue to demonstrate high levels of satisfaction.

Nearly every newly registered childcare provider agrees that the inspector was professional and courteous and that the inspector clearly explained what Ofsted would do next (98% and 97%, respectively). For both of these statements around two thirds of respondents (69% and 64%, respectively) ‘strongly agree’.

The data indicates that Ofsted has maintained the quality of its registration visits. In 2003, more than nine in ten found the inspectors to be professional and courteous (98%) and that the inspector clearly explained what Ofsted would do next (93%).

Chart 2: During the visit 2005

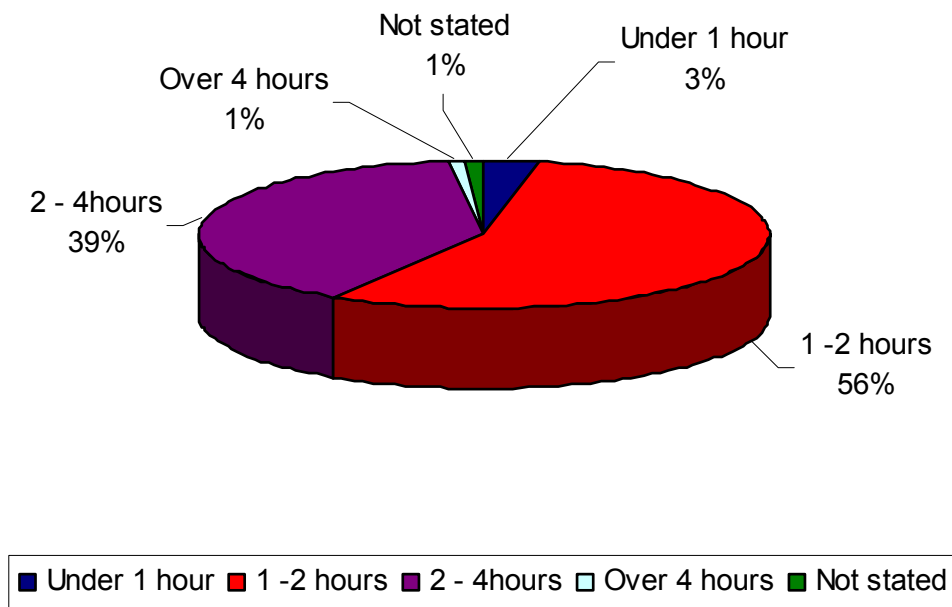


Base: All respondents (1,102)

For this year’s survey another question was asked about respondents’ experiences of the visit from an Ofsted inspector that was not asked in 2003. Childminders and day-care providers were asked separately how long the visit lasted.

As the chart below shows, the majority of visits to childminders lasted between 1 - 4 hours. More than half (56%) of the childminders who were surveyed say their visit lasted between 1 – 2 hours, while two fifths (39%) say it lasted between 2 – 4 hours. Only a very small minority say the visit lasted for less than one hour, or over four hours.

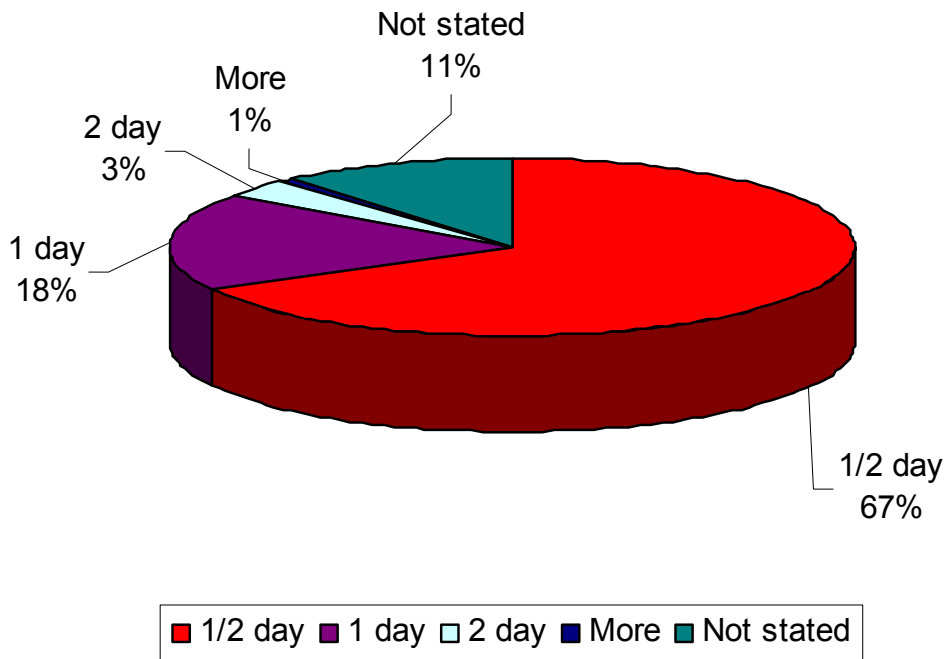
Chart 3: Length of inspector’s visit (childminders)



Base: All Childminders (893)

The length of visits to the majority of day-care providers lasted for either ½ day or 1 day. Two thirds (67%) of the day-care providers surveyed say that the visits lasted ½ day and a little under a fifth (18%) say that they lasted for a day. As the chart overleaf illustrates, very few day-care providers say that the inspector’s visit lasted more than 1 day.

Chart 3b: Length of inspector's visit (day-care providers)



Base: All day-care providers (209)

3.3 After the registration visit

Nine out of ten respondents agree that it was clear from the correspondence what actions, if any, they needed to take before they could become registered (91%). This indicates an increase from the previous survey in 2003 when eight in ten (81%) agreed on this point. A very high number of those surveyed (96%) indicate that, following the visit, the details in the documentation they had received was correct. Again, this represents an increase on that found in 2003 when 86% said that the details in the documentation were correct.

Table 1: After the registration visit year-on-year comparison

	Levels of agreement 2004 *	Levels of agreement 2003 *
Base	1,102	2,679
It was clear from the correspondence what actions, if any, I needed to take before I could become registered	91%	81%
The details in the documentation I received were correct	96%	86%

* The combined total of all who say 'strongly agree' and 'agree'

The final question that respondents were asked in this section is a key one for Ofsted as it asked childcare providers in England about their satisfaction with the registration process.

Again, the findings are extremely positive for Ofsted. Just over nine out of ten (92%) are satisfied with the registration process overall. Only five percent say they are not satisfied.

As this is such a key question it is worth noting the differences between the different childcare providers. Although clear majorities of both childminders and day-care providers say they are satisfied with the process of registration (93% and 89%) there are some differences to note.

Table 2: Overall satisfaction with registration process by provision type

	Total	Childminder	Day-care
Base	1,102	893	209
Strongly agree	49%	50%	44%
Agree	43%	43%	44%
No view	2%	2%	4%
Disagree	3%	3%	5%
Strongly disagree	1%	1%	1%
Not stated	1%	*	2%
All agree	92%	93%	89%
All disagree	5%	4%	6%

* Denotes figure less than 0.5%

As the table shows, the proportion of day-care providers who 'strongly agree' that the registration process was satisfactory is lower than the proportion of childminders who say the same (44% compared to 50%). Further to this, the proportion of day-care providers that disagree with the statement is slightly higher (six percent compared to four percent of childminders).

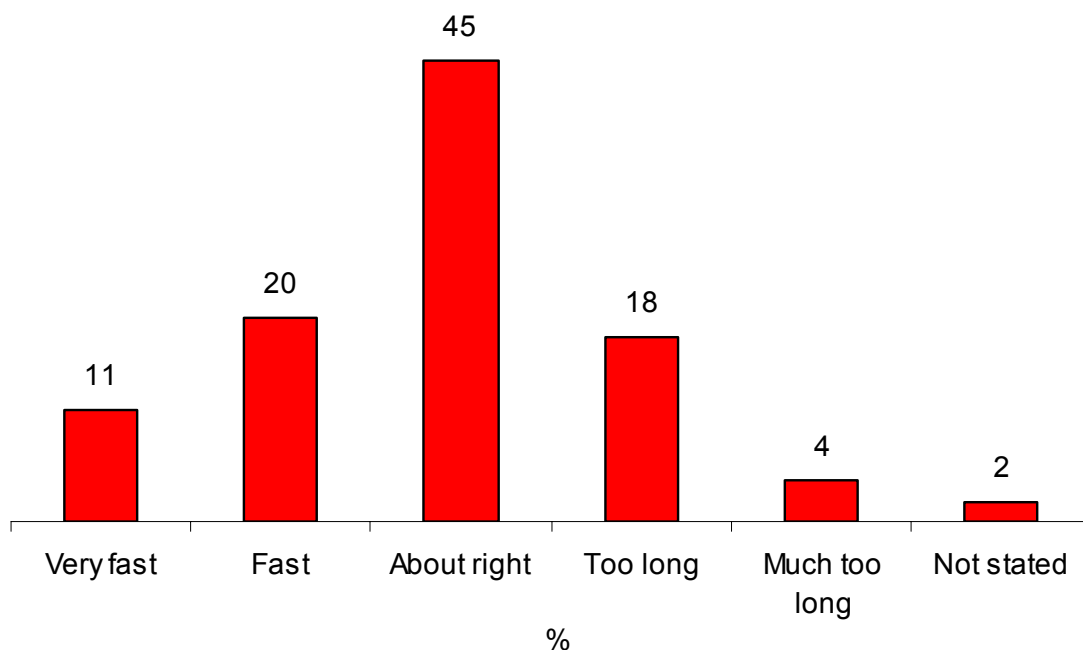
3.4 Awareness of targets

After receiving their application form, Ofsted aims to make a decision on most applications to register a new childcare provider in 12 weeks for childminders and in 25 weeks for day-care providers. The final section of the New Registrations questionnaire asked respondents for their opinions on these targets.

Two thirds of those surveyed (68%) say that they were aware of Ofsted's target when they applied for registration, just under a third (31%) were not aware of the targets.

- Nearly three quarters (71%) of childminders were aware of the targets when they applied for registration; this compares to 57% of day-care providers who say they were aware

When asked for views about the target times for registration, the highest proportion (45%) think the times were 'about right'. Three in ten (31%) say they were fast (11% very fast and 20% fast). However, it is important to note that around a quarter (23%) of respondents feel they are too long (18% 'too long' and four percent 'much too long').

Chart 4: Views of target times for registration

Base: All respondents (1,102)

On this question there are some interesting differences by childcare provider type, as the table overleaf illustrates. The findings indicate that day-care providers are not as satisfied with the target time for registration.

- Just under half (48%) of the childminders surveyed feel that 12 weeks is 'about right'; this compares to only 30% of day-care providers who feel that the longer target time for them (25 weeks) is 'about right'
- The proportion of day-care providers that say 25 weeks is 'too long' is more than twice as high as the proportion of childminders who say the same (41% compared to 18%).

Table 3: View of target times for registration by provision type

	Total	Childminder	Day-care
Base	1,102	893	209
Very fast	11%	11%	9%
Fast	20%	21%	15%
About right	45%	48%	30%
Too long	18%	15%	31%
Much too long	4%	3%	10%
Not stated	2%	2%	4%
All fast	30%	32%	25%
All too long	23%	18%	41%

* Denotes figure less than 0.5%

When asked whether Ofsted's stated target times reflect the actual time taken, the majority (86%) feel that the target times *do* reflect the amount of time actually taken.

- The differences by provider type are fairly small; 87% of childminders feel that the targets are met, while a slightly lower proportion (82%) of day-care providers say the same.

All of the respondents who feel Ofsted's targets do not reflect the actual time taken were asked about how many weeks it was before they received a decision.

As only nine percent of respondents feel Ofsted's target does not reflect the actual time taken the base size on this question is very small (99 overall), so it is only possible to provide indicative, rather than definitive findings.

Out of the 80 childminders who felt the target time of 12 weeks does not reflect the actual time taken:

- 13 say that it took between 1 – 10 weeks to receive a decision;
- 25 say that it took between 11 – 20 weeks;
- Only two say it took more than 21 weeks.

Out of the day-care providers who felt the target time of 25 weeks does not reflect the actual time taken:

- Two say it took between 1 – 10 weeks;
- Four say that it took between 11 – 20 weeks;
- Three say it took more than 21 weeks, worryingly two respondents say it took more than 51 weeks to receive a decision.

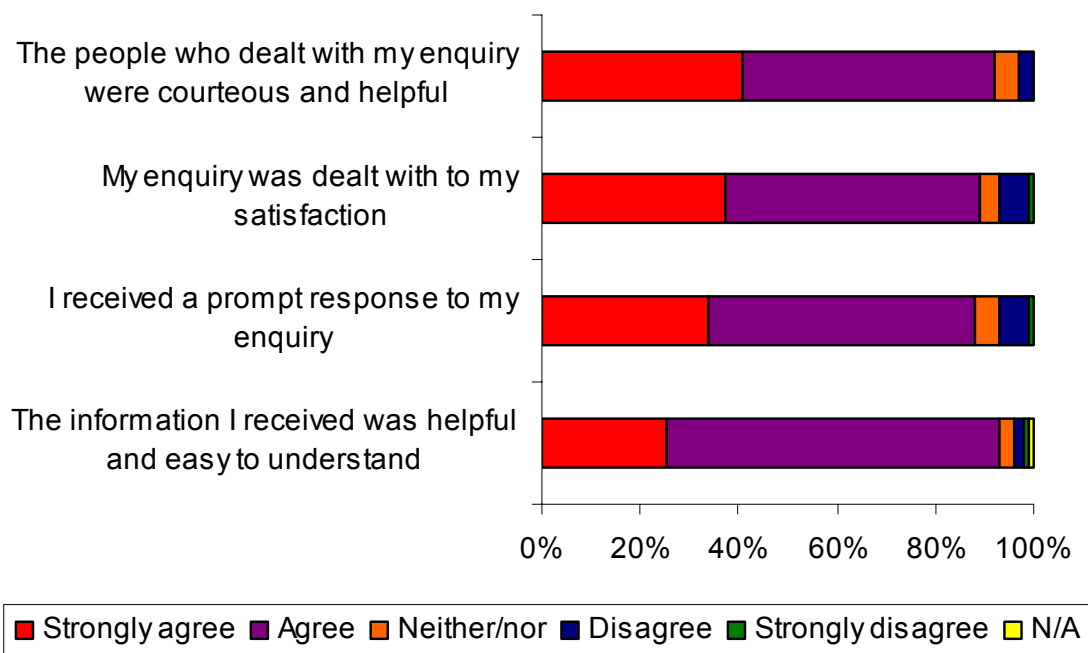
4 Inspection process

4.1 Contact with Ofsted

As with the New Registrations, the response from childcare providers that have had recent inspections is very positive for Ofsted and marks an improvement since 2003.

More than nine in ten agree that the information they received before their inspection was helpful and easy to understand and the people who dealt with their enquiry were courteous and helpful (both 92%). Slightly lower proportions agree that their enquiry was dealt with to their satisfaction and that they received a prompt response to their enquiry (89% and 88%, respectively).²

Chart 5: Before the inspection



² The base for Q1 was 'All respondents'. Q2, Q3 and Q4 were only answered by those respondents that needed to contact Ofsted before their inspection and so these results are based upon 'All who answered'.

Base: All respondents (see foot note)

The findings indicate that respondent satisfaction has increased significantly for each of these statements since these questions were asked in 2003.

Table 4 illustrates this trend. It is extremely positive to note that the proportion of respondents that agree with the statement 'my enquiry was dealt with to my satisfaction' has increased by 30% since 2003.

Table 4: Before the inspection year-on-year comparison

	Levels of agreement 2004 *	Levels of agreement 2003 *
Base:	1,115	2,679
The information I received was helpful and easy to understand	92%	79%
I received a prompt response to my enquiry	88%	56%
My enquiry was dealt with to my satisfaction	92%	62%
The people who dealt with my enquiry were courteous and helpful	89%	70%

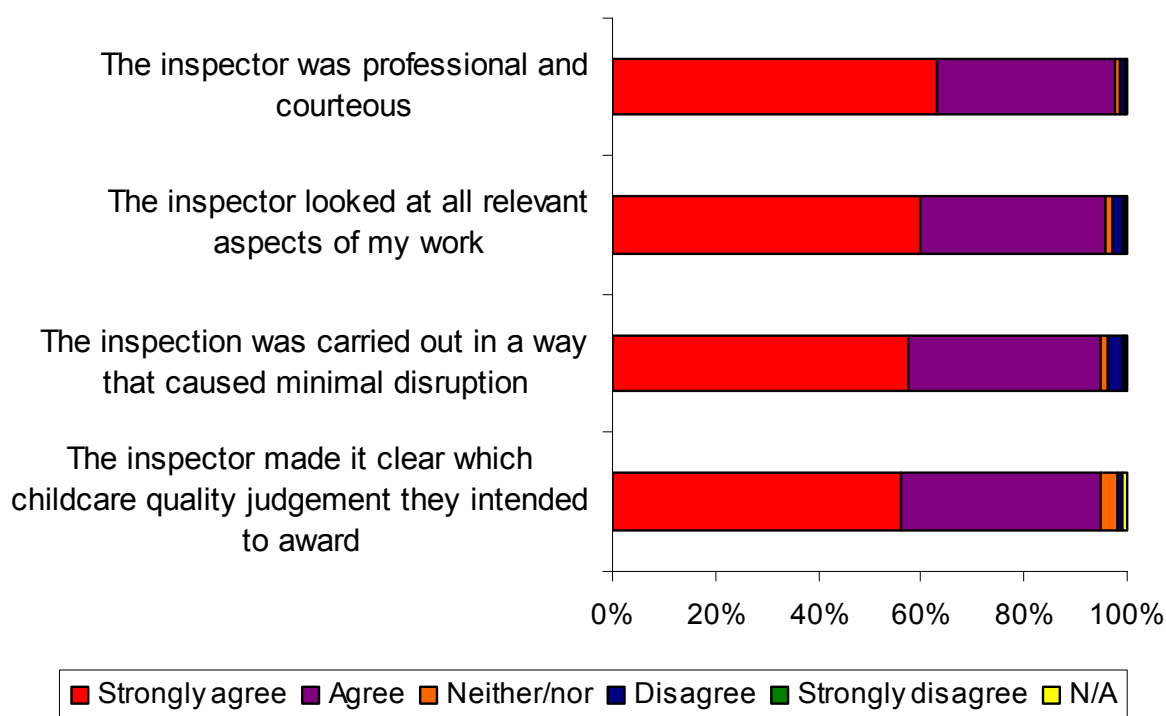
* The combined total of all who say 'strongly agree' and 'agree'

4.2 During the inspection visit

After being asked about the 'time before their inspection' respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the inspection itself.

As with the newly registered childcare providers, Ofsted inspectors receive high praise from respondents that have recently had an inspection.

- 97% agree that the inspector was professional and courteous, in fact more than six in ten (63%) 'strongly agree' with this statement;
- 97% agree that the inspector looked at all relevant aspects of their work, again six in ten (60%) say they 'strongly agree' with this statement;
- 96% agree that the inspection was carried out in a way that caused minimal disruption, just under six in ten (58%) 'strongly agree' with this description of the manner in which inspectors carry out their task;
- 95% agree that the inspector made it clear which childcare quality judgement they intended to award, and why.

Chart 6: During the inspection

Base: All respondents (1,115)

Year-on-year, these findings represent stable levels of satisfaction:³

- In 2003, the proportion of respondents that said the inspector was professional and courteous and looked at all relevant aspects of their work was exactly the same (97%)
- The proportion of respondents that agreed that the inspector looked at all relevant aspects of their work has increased by one percent since 2003 when 96% agreed with the statement

³ In 2003 respondents were not asked whether 'the inspector made it clear which childcare quality judgement they intended to award, and why', so year-on-year comparison is not possible.

- The proportion of respondents that agreed that the inspection was carried out in a way that caused minimal disruption has increased slightly since 2003 when 94% agreed.

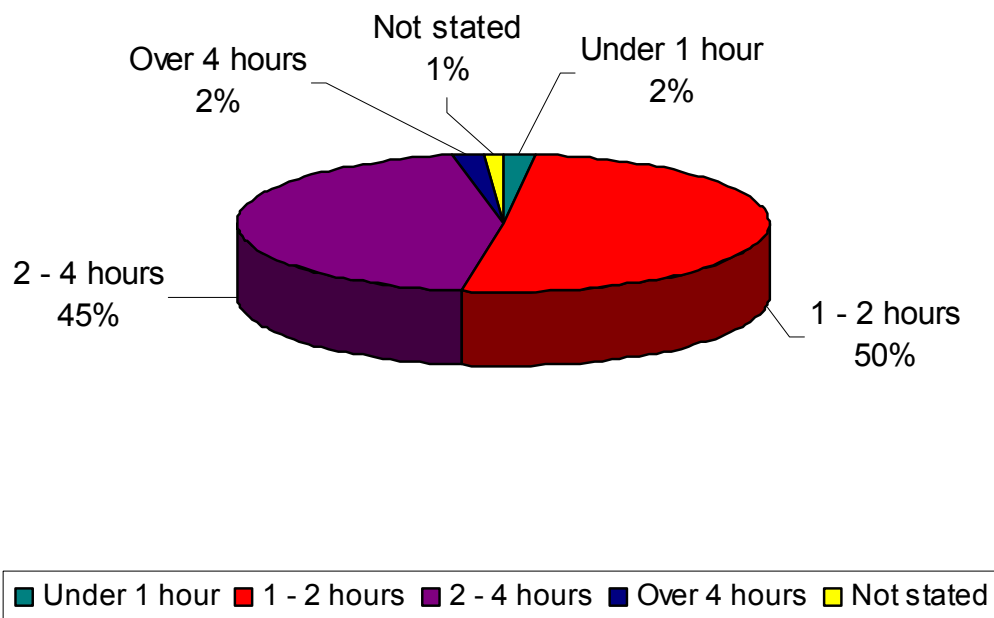
Table 5: During the inspection year-on-year comparison

	Levels of agreement 2004 *	Levels of agreement 2003 *
Base:	1,115	2,679
The inspector was professional and courteous	97%	97%
The inspector looked at all relevant aspects of my work	97%	96%
The inspection was carried out in a way that caused minimal disruption	96%	94%
The inspector made it clear which childcare quality judgement they intended to award	95%	N/A

* The combined total of all who say 'strongly agree' and 'agree'

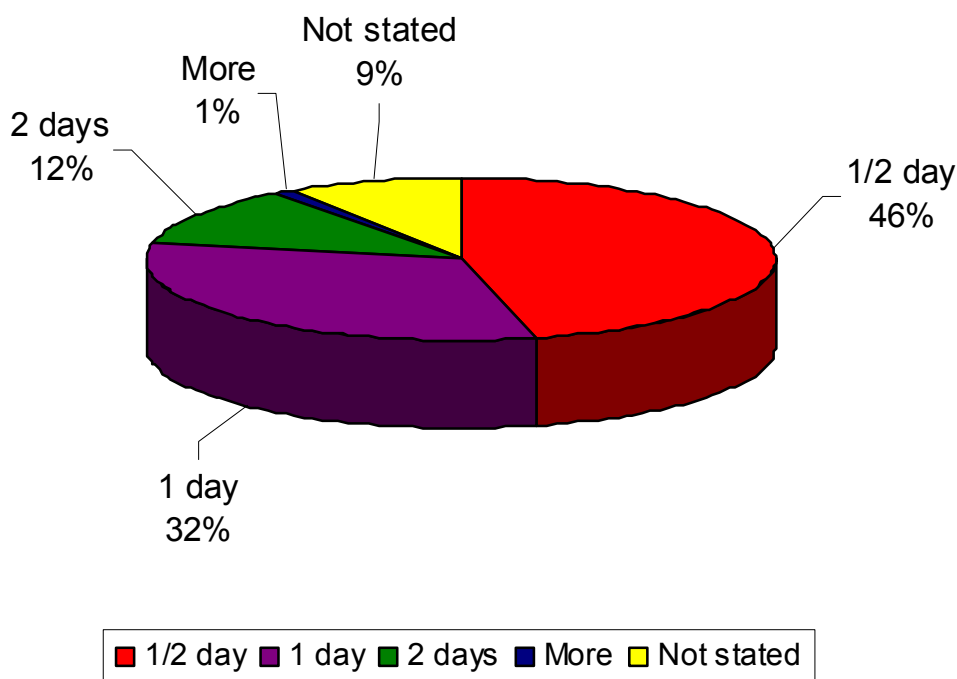
After assessing both the inspector and the inspection that they received childminders and day-care providers were asked separately how long the inspector's visit lasted.

More than half (51%) of childminder inspections that were carried out lasted between 1 – 2 hours and 45% lasted between 2 – 4 hours. Only two percent of inspections lasted for less than an hour, and the same proportion of respondents had inspections that lasted for more than 4 hours.

Chart 7: How long did the visit last? (childminders)

Base: All childminders (914)

Just under half (46%) of the day-care providers who were surveyed say the inspection lasted for $\frac{1}{2}$ day, a third (32%) say their inspection lasted for 1 day, while 13% say that it lasted for 2 days or more.

Chart 7b: How long did the visit last? (childminders)

Base: All day-care providers (201)

The final question in the 'During the Inspection' section of the questionnaire, asked whether the inspector made clear which nursery education judgement would be awarded. This question was only answered by those respondents whose inspection also covered funded nursery places for 3 – 4 year olds.

Overall, 84% agree that this was the case during the inspection. In fact, more than half (51%) say they 'strongly agree' with this statement. Only five percent disagree with this statement.

- 65 out of 72 day-care providers agree with this statement (43 'strongly agree')
- 32 out of 44 childminders agree with this statement, while only three disagree.

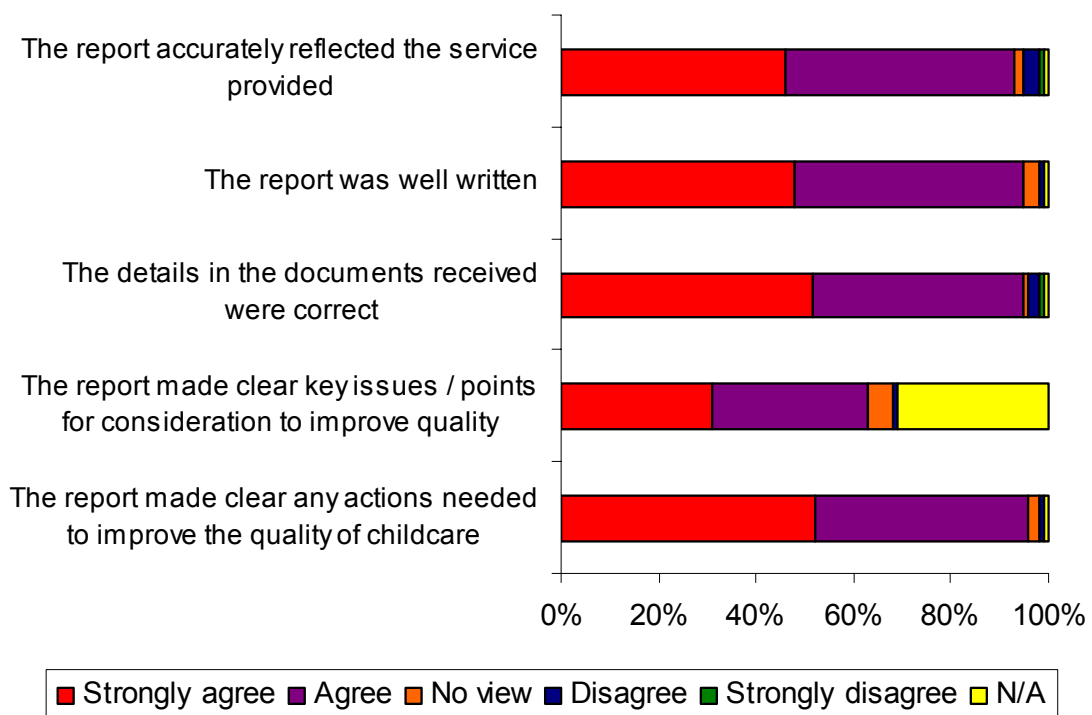
4.3 After the inspection visit

After the inspection, virtually all the sample (96%) indicated that it was clear from the report what actions, if any, needed to be taken as a result of the inspection, to improve the quality of childcare. A reduced majority, a little less than two-thirds in fact (63%) agree that the report made clear the key points or issues for consideration to improve the quality of nursery education provision.

A large majority (95%) agree that the details in the documentation they received were correct (for example name, registered person, type of day care). This represents a 19% increase on the same finding for the previous year when the figure for this issue was 84% (this is the only question in this section to have been repeated).

When asked if they agree whether ‘the report was well written’, a large majority (95%) agree and a similarly high number agree that the report accurately reflected the service provided’ (92%).

Chart 8: After the inspection



Base: All respondents (1,115)

Looking at the findings by provider type shows that day-care providers are far more likely to agree that ‘the report made clear key issues or points for consideration to improve the quality of nursery education provision’ than childminders (81% compared to 59%).

Eight percent of day-care providers feel that the details in the documents that they received from Ofsted were not correct. Only two percent of childminders say the same. In fact, more than half (54%) of childminders ‘strongly agree’ with this statement (compared to 42% of day-care providers).

With regards to the report that respondents receive from Ofsted, clear majorities of both childminders and day-care providers agree that it accurately reflected the service provided (93% and 88%, respectively). Again, day-care providers are more likely to disagree with this statement (eight percent compared to three percent of childminders) – however, it should be noted that the proportions of respondents that disagree are very small.

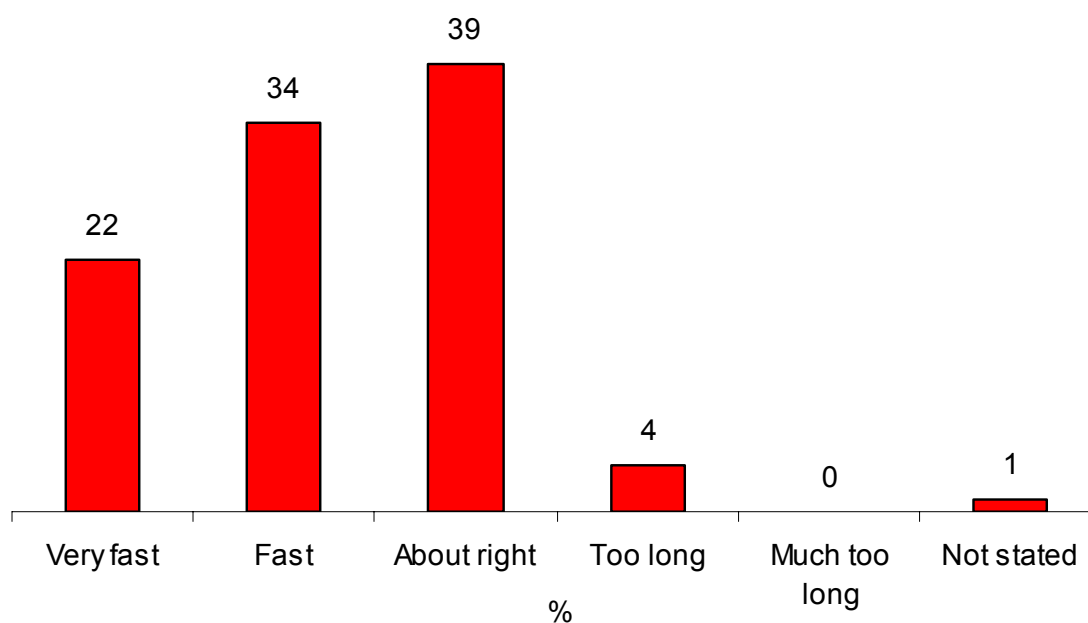


4.4 Awareness of targets

Respondents were asked for their view of Ofsted's target for sending inspection reports.

The majority (56%) think they are fast (22% 'very fast' and 34% 'fairly fast'). Two in five (39%) feel they are 'about right' and very few, just four per cent feel the target was 'too long'.

Chart 9: Views of target times for sending reports



Base: All respondents (1,115)

On this question there are some slight differences by provider type. Unlike the question about registration decisions in the New Registrations questionnaire the differences in levels of satisfaction are not as significant.

- Just under a quarter (23%) of childminders feel that the target for sending reports is 'very fast'; this compares to 17% of day-care providers that say the same
- Day-care providers are slightly more likely to say that the target is 'about right' (41% compared to 38% of childminders)

Table 6: View of target times for sending reports by provision type

	Total	Childminder	Day-care
Base	1,115	914	201
Very fast	22%	23%	17%
Fast	34%	34%	36%
About right	39%	38%	41%
Too long	4%	4%	5%
Much too long	*	*	-
Not stated	1%	1	2
All fast	56%	57%	53%
All too long	4%	4%	5%

* Denotes figure less than 0.5%

When asked if the target reflects the actual time taken to send the report, approximately nine in ten (88%) agree, just eight percent disagree.