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# *Integrating Self-Assessment into Statutory Inspection Procedures: The Impact on the Quality of Group Day Care Provision*

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## Executive Summary

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### **ES1 Introduction**

ES1.1 This study evaluated materials designed to incorporate self-assessment into statutory local authority annual inspections of child care provision. It arose from work funded by the Department of Health (1992–1998) involving two projects: the *Quality in Day Care Project*, and the *Enhancing Quality Project*. Evidence from earlier work suggested providers and inspectors both liked self-assessment materials developed by the research team. The work described in this report involved collecting evidence on how these materials might be used to improve standards in early years settings in England.

### **ES2 Aims and Methods**

ES2.1 The study had four aims:

- (1) To investigate the effects of self-assessment on quality;
- (2) To evaluate the opinions of providers and inspectors;
- (3) To identify important organisational and staff characteristics that might predict how effectively providers can raise standards;
- (4) To examine the impact of self-assessment on the time required for inspection.

ES2.2 The study involved 256 nursery providers from 17 different local authorities in England. Information concerning sources of nursery funding (private, voluntary or maintained sector) was not collected. However, the random nature of the selection process makes it likely that representative numbers of nurseries from each sector were included in the sample. Providers were randomly allocated to either an intervention or control group. Using subjective ratings made by local authority inspectors, the quality of care provided by nurseries given the Group Day Care (GDC) self-assessment materials (the intervention group) was compared twelve months after an initial annual inspection, with the quality of care provided by nurseries not given the GDC materials (control group).

### **ES3 Results**

- ES3.1 *The effects of self-assessment on quality:* Inspectors' ratings were received on 77 intervention and 70 control nurseries. No significant differences were found between quality scores from the intervention and control groups of nurseries. Inspectors' ratings of quality in nurseries matched parallel ratings made in 36 nurseries by members of the research team.
- ES3.2 *The opinions of providers and inspectors:* Most providers found the self-assessment materials easy to use. Around 20% thought having to do self-assessment made inspections more difficult. Statistical analysis suggested this group may have had more difficulty producing action plans than other nurseries. Three out of four intervention group providers questioned felt their nursery had derived some positive benefits from participating in the study. The most commonly reported benefit was an increase in staff training. Inspectors felt the materials were an effective measure of quality that were generally well received by providers.
- ES3.3 *Important organisational and staff characteristics that might predict how effectively providers can raise standards:* Several organisational characteristics of nurseries were significantly linked to quality of provision. They included good relationships with supervisors, job satisfaction, the degree of decision making staff enjoyed, readiness to innovate and the extent to which staff felt integrated into their nursery. Staff characteristics linked to quality included the number of hours work, amount of in-service training, and experience in the field.
- ES3.4 *The impact of self-assessment on time required for inspection:* The majority of inspectors who expressed a view thought incorporating self-assessment into inspections made the process easier. In particular, inspectors felt that self-assessment helped to foster co-operative relationships with providers, made it easier to give them feedback, and helped practitioners identify weaknesses for themselves. Where self-assessment based inspection procedures took longer to administer than usual local authority procedures, inspectors did not find the materials as helpful.

**ES4**                    **Conclusions**

ES4.1                    Self-assessment, even when part of annual inspection procedures, is unlikely to have a uniformly positive impact on the quality of all provision, at least in the short term. National and international research has consistently linked good quality provision with the extent to which nursery staff have received adequate training. Consequently, in the longer term, the impact of self-assessment on increasing demand for in-service training could contribute to raising standards. The majority of providers and inspectors view self-assessment positively. With the introduction of a new inspection regime, it may be useful to develop appropriate materials to be used as part of new inspection procedures. Were such an initiative to be developed in tandem with planned expansion of local training and the promotion of quality assurance schemes based on systematic evaluation, evidence suggests that the impact on quality over the next few years may be significant.

ES4.2                    Consistent with international research, the study uncovered links between good management practices and the quality of nursery provision. Those responsible for the delivery of training should ensure that available courses include components on good practice in nursery management.

ES4.3                    Evaluation of quality assurance and quality improvement schemes, overdue in England, should not focus exclusively on the impact they may have on quality of provision. Such schemes, where they are effective, are also likely to have important effects on the demand for in-service training, and staff involvement in developing nursery policies and procedures.

ES4.4                    Evidence from this study has served to emphasise once again the multidimensional nature of good quality early years provision. Several factors have been implicated including ratios, group size, training, qualifications, self-assessment and effective nursery management. Policy aimed at improving the quality of early years provision is likely to be most effective when it reflects this holistic view, aiming to influence different factors in a co-ordinated approach.

## 1 Introduction

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### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 This study evaluated the effectiveness of linking child care provider self-assessment with statutory local authority annual inspections. It arose from work funded by the Department of Health (1992–1998) involving two projects: The *Quality in Day Care Project* developed materials for day care providers to use in monitoring, evaluating and enhancing the quality of care they provided. The *Enhancing Quality Project* investigated the help providers required in implementing change following self-assessment, and developed materials that could link self-assessment with local authority inspections of day care providers. The current study was funded to evaluate the impact of those procedures on the quality of care provision. The next two sections describe briefly the two projects that identified the need for the current study.

### 1.2 Quality in Day Care Project

- 1.2.1 The materials developed during the course of this project were designed to:
- help day care providers to assess, monitor and enhance the quality of their provision;
  - reflect the values and beliefs of different groups concerned with day care provision;
  - embrace a wide range of features of the day care environment associated with quality of service provision;
  - be located within a UK context;
  - directly involve child care providers in assessing quality and, in so doing, investigate the value of approaches that encourage providers to examine the quality of their provision for themselves.
- 1.2.2 A degree of consensus exists over the view that quality in early childhood services is both important and highly desirable. However, less unanimity of opinion is evident over what is meant by the term quality in relation to day

care provision. Each group with a stake in early childhood services, be they parents, providers, or policy makers, has their own perspectives on day care services. Consequently, the first phase of the *Quality in Day Care Project* involved ascertaining the views of different groups of stakeholders concerning quality in day care provision (Mooney & Munton, 1998). Besides eliciting stakeholder views of quality in day care provision, the research literature on day care (much of it pertaining to the issue of quality) was reviewed together with the literature on child development. The project team also reviewed the 1989 Children Act and accompanying Guidance and Regulations, good practice guidelines developed by national organisations, and existing instruments designed to assess different aspects of quality in day care provision.

1.2.3 The consultation and review exercise provided a clear illustration of how perspectives on quality in day care differed both between and within groups of stakeholders. Producing a single, universally agreed definition of quality would, therefore, not have been possible. In place of a single definition, the research team constructed a conceptual framework within which quality could be described (Munton, Mooney & Rowland, 1995). Using this framework, the views of stakeholders as expressed during consultation group meetings and findings from the research literature were summarised in preparation for the development of the quality assessment materials.

1.2.4 From reviews of the literature on day care and the quality of school provision it was clear that to enhance quality effectively, materials would need to offer training in relation to different notions of best practice. An examination of the available evidence on education and learning encouraged the adoption of an approach derived broadly from experiential learning. Experiential learning is an umbrella term for a range of different educational practices, most of which emphasise the importance of self-assessment and critical self-evaluation.

1.2.5 The Group Day Care (GDC) self-assessment materials were developed for providers to use themselves to evaluate the quality of their service. A full description of this stage of the project can be found in Mooney et al., (1997).

The materials comprise a questionnaire and observational checklist. The questionnaire collects information on the structural elements of the day care setting, such as staffing levels, training, policies and procedures. These structural elements are relatively static in the short term. The observation checklist was designed to help providers collect information about the process elements of the day care environment, such as interactions between adults and children. Process elements are not so readily assessed by questionnaires since, by definition, they are dynamic rather than static.

1.2.6 Besides instructions for completion and guidance about how to use the results, the questionnaire and observational checklist include integrated manuals describing examples of best practice. Providers answer questions concerning their own practices and then compare their answers with information contained in the manuals. The manuals explain the relative values, given by different stakeholders, that underlie each item in the materials. In the event of providers choosing to endorse a particular view of quality, the manuals offer explicit service development objectives that are consistent with these stated values. Consistent with the experiential learning approach, the GDC materials offer day care providers clearly defined learning objectives, methods for systematic collection of performance data, an opportunity to self-assess and subsequently reflect on current practice, and clear descriptions of the ideas that underpin the questions asked.

1.2.7 An evaluation of the self-assessment materials involving 120 nurseries showed that, in the short term, the materials were more successful in assessing and monitoring quality of care than they were in improving quality. The results suggested that an important element in evaluating the effectiveness of self-assessment materials as a means to enhance quality concerned how day care providers used the materials. Specifically, the results raised questions about the ability of some providers to implement necessary procedures for evaluation, reflection, action and review without support. The researchers concluded that an understanding of how day care providers implement self-assessment procedures and initiate changes in practice was required to make self-assessment a more effective tool in raising standards. Further, day care

providers may need encouragement, or indeed inducement, to engage effectively with self-assessment materials.

### **1.3 Enhancing Quality Project**

1.3.1 The findings from the *Quality in Day Care Project* suggested that providers needed both support and inducement to implement effectively the procedures of self-assessment. A pilot project was set up to identify areas in which facilitation and support from external sources might be most effective for nursery providers trying to implement change following self-assessment (Munton and Mooney, 1999). The project also set out to develop and pilot materials for external inspection based on GDC Self-Assessment Materials (Mooney and Munton, 1999).

1.3.2 A case study approach was adopted involving eight nurseries and regulatory staff in four local authorities. Over a five-month period, the research team supported nursery staff in the process of self-assessment, identifying priorities for change, developing action plans and reviewing progress. At the beginning of this period, staff were asked to complete standardised questionnaires designed to collect information about aspects of their job, job satisfaction and commitment, working conditions, nursery management and how the nursery responded to change. These organisational and staffing characteristics are variables that research has identified as theoretically important to the introduction and management of change within organisations.

1.3.3 The GDC Self-Assessment Materials were modified for inspection purposes. Modifications were largely confined to format and layout of the materials. To allow for local variations in inspection procedures, the intention was to allow flexibility in the use of the materials so they could be incorporated into existing practices within local authorities. Registration and Inspection staff piloted the GDC Inspection materials and procedures in a total of ten nurseries. Nursery staff were asked to complete a set of self-assessment materials before inspection. Because the inspection and self-assessment materials cover similar areas, inspectors could choose to complete similar

questions to those providers will have completed while assessing their own provision.

1.3.4 Results suggested that nurseries had most problems with the formulation and implementation of effective action plans based on the results of the self-assessment exercise. Results also indicated that not all nurseries were equally likely to implement change successfully following self-assessment. Nurseries in which staff were dissatisfied with their work, less committed to their jobs and resistant to changing their practices were less likely to benefit from the process of self-assessment. The adaptation of provider self-assessment materials for the purposes of inspection proved feasible. Both providers and inspectors were positive about the introduction of self-assessment procedures into annual Children Act inspections. The researchers concluded that further work was required to establish the conditions under which day care provider self-assessment, linked with annual inspection, could be an effective means of improving the quality of day care.

1.3.5 Although evidence from the pilot project suggested that nursery providers and inspectors viewed self-assessment approaches positively, no empirical evidence was available to indicate how they might be used in the UK to address standards. The current study set out to collect this evidence using a sample representative of child care providers in England.

## 2 Aims and Methods

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### 2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The study had four key aims:

- (1) To investigate the effects of using inspection procedures incorporating elements of provider self-assessment on the quality of care provision in nurseries in England;
- (2) To evaluate the opinions of service providers and local authority inspectors concerning innovative self-assessment and inspection procedures;
- (3) To identify organisational and staff characteristics that may predict how effectively providers can formulate action plans and implement change in the context of inspection;
- (4) To establish the impact of using procedures incorporating elements of provider self-assessment on the time and effort required for inspection.

### 2.2 Methods

2.2.1 *Participants.* The strategy specified in the original study proposal was to recruit twelve local authorities in England, each of which would be asked to supply the project team with a list of all nursery providers scheduled to have their facilities inspected during a three-month period. The intention was to have a total of 240 providers in the study, twenty from each local authority. However, several local authorities, in particular London Boroughs, do not undertake as many as twenty inspections in any three-month period. Consequently the team expanded the number of local authorities to be recruited to twenty. Authorities were chosen to reflect variety of authority type (e.g. metropolitan, county etc.) and a mix of urban and rural population. Letters were sent to Directors of Social Services and Directors of Education in twenty local authorities requesting their participation (see appendix A). Of these twenty, seventeen (85%) responded positively to the team's request. A member of the research team met registration and inspection officers in all seventeen local authorities to explain the study in detail and arrange training in

the use of the new inspection materials. The team asked local authority officers for a list of all nursery providers scheduled to have their facilities inspected between 1 April and 30 June 1999. The seventeen participating authorities supplied the names of 256 providers due to be inspected in the three-month study period. Information concerning sources of nursery funding (private, voluntary or maintained sector) was not collected. However, the random nature of the selection process makes it likely that representative numbers of nurseries from each sector were included in the sample. Providers from each local authority list were randomly allocated to either an intervention group (n=130), or a control group (n=126). Lists provided by some authorities contained an odd number of nurseries. Consequently the intervention and control groups were not of equal size.

### 2.2.2

#### *Materials*

*The Group Day Care (GDC) Self-Assessment Materials* - These are self-completion materials designed for use by service providers themselves. A detailed account of how the materials were developed can be found in Mooney, Munton, Rowland & McGurk (1997). Providers evaluate the quality of their service by answering questions concerning their own practices, and then comparing their answers with information contained in an integrated manual. An integrated manual explains the relative values, elicited from different stakeholders, that underpin each questionnaire item. In the event of day care providers choosing to endorse a particular view of quality, the manual offers explicit service development objectives that are consistent with these stated values. For example, on completing a section concerned with nursery staff, a provider may decide to change their current practices by adopting a key worker system. The integrated manual explains the advantages of key worker systems and how they can be operated. The GDC materials are designed to assess quality of care provided by the facility as a whole. They are not intended as a comprehensive assessment of individual members of staff.

*Action Plans: A guide for providers of group day care* - Our previous research into improving the quality of day care provision highlighted the importance of

effective action planning. Nurseries need clear guidance on how to use the self-assessment materials to plan for, and subsequently implement change. Consequently, the research team developed a step by step guide for nurseries on how to produce an action plan. It provides advice on what to do immediately after an inspection, and how to plan and implement change over the following twelve months.

*The GDC inspection materials* - Derived closely from the GDC self-assessment materials, the inspection materials are designed for use by local authority personnel undertaking statutory annual inspections of nurseries. The design of the GDC materials enables inspectors, should they so wish, to complete the same questions asked of providers when assessing their own provision. Should inspectors feel it inappropriate to go through all the items, they can choose to complete any subset of the questions they judge to be relevant.

*The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS; Harms & Clifford, 1980)* - The ECERS is an observation schedule designed to assess early childhood settings, including day care centres. It has been used widely in studies of quality in day care, including studies conducted in the UK (e.g. McCail 1991; Finch, 1993; Vernon and Smith, 1994). It was used as an externally validated measure of quality. It is, however, important to note that ECERS does have limitations concerning validity. Development and standardisation of the ECERS were carried out in the USA. For many people, the notion of quality implicit in ECERS is at best only partial. Despite its limitations, however, few alternative instruments designed to assess aspects of child care environments related to quality are available (Statham and Brophy, 1992). More rigorous accounts of how ECERS may map on to different definitions of quality can be found in Statham and Brophy (1992), and Munton, Mooney and Rowland (1995).

*Staff and organisational characteristics* - The research team collected data concerning staff characteristics and organisational characteristics by asking nursery staff to complete self-report questionnaires. The questionnaire

incorporated fifteen self-report items asking about personal characteristics (age, work experience, qualifications, and intention to remain in post) and conditions of employment (job title, hours worked, leave entitlement, contact time with children). Staff attitudes concerning seven key organisational characteristics identified by Organisational Development theory as predictors of effective change implementation were assessed using standardised self-report scales piloted in nurseries as part of a previous project. Scales were taken either from the literature on organisational behaviour, or from a study of job satisfaction and turnover among child care staff in the USA (Phillips, Howes, & Whitebook, 1991). Phillips et al developed their scales from the Early Childhood Work Attitudes Survey (Jorde-Bloom, 1986). Responses to all measures taken from the Phillips et al study are made on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). High scores therefore indicate positive attitudes.

- (1) *Your immediate superior*: the Your Immediate Superior Scale (Cross, 1973) is a general scale of satisfaction with supervisors, although items appear to focus on personal relations rather than supervisory or technical ability. The scale is made up of eight items, each having a three-point response scale, 'Yes' (3), 'Don't know' (2) and 'No' (1). High scores indicate satisfaction with superiors.
- (2) *Job satisfaction*: the Job Satisfaction Scale (Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979) is a self-report measure containing fifteen items. Responses are made on a seven-point scale ranging from 'I'm extremely dissatisfied' (1) to 'I'm extremely satisfied' (7). High scores indicate greater job satisfaction.
- (3) *Control at work*: Control over activities at work was measured using a six-item scale taken from the Phillips et al study.
- (4) *Degree of decision making*: A decision-making autonomy scale was taken from the Phillips et al study. The scale has nine items.
- (5) *Attitudes towards supervisor*: A measure of supervisor relations was taken from the Phillips et al study. The scale has nine items.
- (6) *Readiness to innovate*: The Readiness to Innovate Scale (Payne & Pheysey, 1971) is an eight-item self-report measure of employee perceptions concerning the ability of organisations to change plans,

methods and programmes of work. Responses are made on a four-point scale ranging from 'definitely false' (0) to 'definitely true' (3). High scores suggest a greater readiness to innovate.

- (7) *Integration*: A six-item integration measure was taken from the Phillips et al study.

*Perceived impact of participating in the study* - Structured telephone interviews were used to collect information from officers in charge concerning the perceived impact of participating in the study. The research team randomly selected thirty nurseries from the intervention group with whom to conduct interviews. Interview questions asked about perceived benefits of participating in the study, whether changes in nursery practice, policy or other aspects of nursery operations had been implemented as a result, and how nursery staff had reacted to participating.

*Subjective ratings from inspectors of the perceived impact of participating in the study* - The research team sent short questionnaires out to inspectors. Questions asked about the perceived benefits of participating in the study, whether changes in nursery practice had been implemented as a result, how easy it had been to use the inspection materials, and how nursery staff had reacted to participating. Following the second of two annual inspections in all participating nurseries, inspectors were asked to make subjective ratings of the quality of provision using a questionnaire designed specifically for the purpose (see appendix B).

### 2.2.3

#### *Procedure*

*Design* - The study used a between groups design. Using subjective ratings made by local authority inspectors, the quality of care provided by nurseries given the GDC materials (the intervention group) was compared, twelve months after an initial annual inspection, with the quality of care provided by nurseries not given the GDC materials (the control group). Monitoring a control group enabled estimates to be made of the extent to which the quality of provision in the intervention group of nurseries could be attributable to new

inspection procedures rather than other, extraneous variables. The study design can be summarised in five key stages:

*Stage 1:* Three months prior to their annual inspection, local authority inspectors sent nurseries in the intervention group copies of the GDC questionnaire, observation checklist and guidance on action planning. Centres in the control group were not given copies of any materials. Staff in intervention centres were instructed to begin completing the materials within two weeks of receiving them. Written instructions encouraged people responsible for completing the questionnaire to circulate the results among staff once they had finished. Nurseries were asked to instigate discussion to enable all members of centre staff to see and comment on questionnaire responses. Similar instructions encouraged people completing the observation checklist to circulate it between staff and initiate discussion of the responses.

*Stage 2:* Building on our previous research in the field of Organisational Development (OD) (Munton & Mooney, 1999), staff in intervention nurseries were asked to complete self-report questionnaires that included the standardised scales described in the previous section. The research team used the data to test predictions from OD concerning nurseries likely to raise the quality of their provision as a result of self-assessment, action planning and change implementation.

*Stage 3:* Staff in intervention centres were told that their statutory annual inspection, carried out by their local authority, would take place around twelve weeks after they have received their self-assessment materials, and that the inspection would involve local authority officers rating items taken from the same self-assessment materials. Nurseries were asked to return completed copies of the self-assessment materials to the local authority inspector at least two weeks before their scheduled inspection visit. During the same period, a series of one-day training sessions were held to advise local authority inspectors on how to use the new inspection materials.

Control group centres were inspected according to usual local authority procedures.

*Stage 4:* Following receipt of their inspection report, nurseries in the intervention group were asked to follow the twelve-month programme of action planning and change implementation outlined in the booklet *Action Plans: A guide for providers of group day care*. Action plans set out how nurseries intended to implement changes they had agreed with inspectors. Nurseries were asked to submit copies of action plans and minutes of planning meetings to inspection officers at regular intervals.

*Stage 5:* Inspectors undertook a second annual inspection in both control and intervention group nurseries. They were asked to make subjective ratings of the quality of provision, and the extent to which nurseries had successfully implemented changes agreed following the previous inspection.

*Assessing quality* - Subjective ratings made by inspectors were used as the measure of quality in the study. As noted in the previous section, ratings were made using a scale designed specifically for the purpose. To check on the validity of quality ratings made by inspectors, members of the research team carried out ECERS ratings in a sub-sample of 36 nurseries. In each of the 36 nurseries, a member of the team carried out an ECERS assessment at the same time as inspectors conducted their annual inspections. If inspectors' estimates of quality are valid, ECERS scores and inspectors' ratings should be broadly comparable.

**3.1 The effects of using inspection procedures incorporating elements of provider self-assessment on quality of care in nurseries in England**

3.1.1 At the beginning of the study, 256 nurseries from 17 different local authorities were randomly allocated to either an intervention group (n=130), or a control group (n=126). To assess the impact of the self-assessment based inspection procedures on quality, ratings made by local authority inspectors in control and intervention nurseries were compared. Ratings were made following the second of two annual inspections conducted in each nursery over the course of the study.

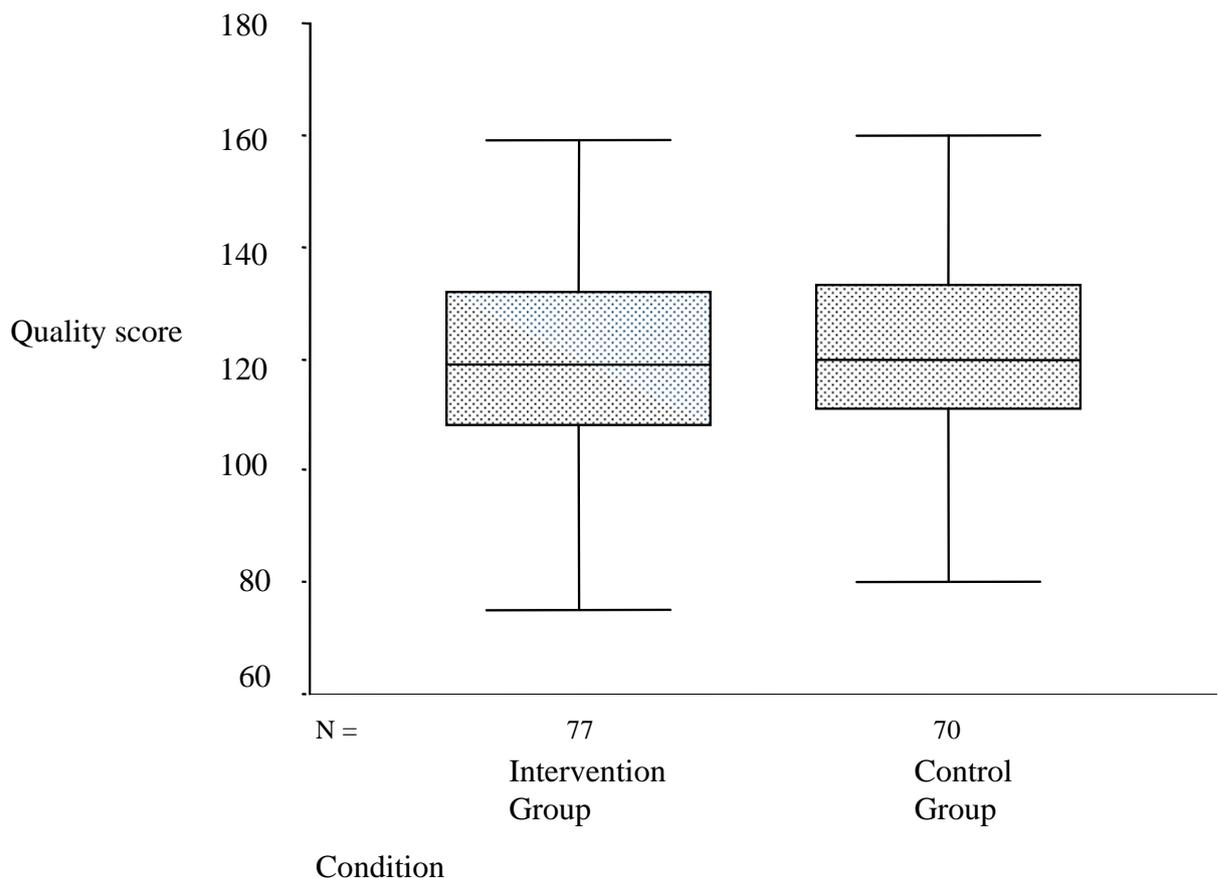
3.1.2 Inspectors returned ratings sheets from 77 intervention nurseries (59% of the original sample), and 70 control nurseries (56% of the original sample). Overall, quality ratings from 147 (57%) of the 256 nurseries originally included in the study were received from inspectors. To the best of our information, in no cases was the failure to receive quality ratings due to nurseries actively withdrawing from the study. Rather it was more often due to changes in inspection schedules arising from increased workloads. Twenty-five nurseries did not complete the study as a result of two local authority inspection units withdrawing their support due to pressures of work. Ten nurseries were not inspected during the study period, four nurseries closed, and a further nine were withdrawn from the study by their local authority inspection units. One nursery withdrew their co-operation. Thus for 48 of the 256 settings in the original sample, results were not obtained due to the actions of inspection units rather than nurseries. Thus 71% (147/208) of nurseries not withdrawn from the study through the actions of their local authorities provided useable data. Where nurseries failed to respond to requests for information, data are not available for comparing responding with non-responding nurseries.

### 3.1.3

Quality scores from the intervention and control groups of nurseries were compared using t-tests of the differences between two means. A comparison of mean quality scores (intervention group  $\theta = 119.71$ ,  $sd = 18.07$ ; control group  $\theta = 119.66$ ,  $sd = 18.82$ ) showed no differences between the two groups ( $t = 0.19$ ,  $df = 145$ ,  $p = ns$ ). Figure 3.1 shows a box and whisker plot of total quality scores from the two groups of nurseries. Further comparisons between the two groups on each of the 24 items on the quality rating scale were made. No significant mean differences were found on any of the items. In all cases, standard deviations were also similar.

**Figure 3.1**

*Quality scores from control and intervention group nurseries*



3.1.4 Inspectors were also asked to rate the extent to which providers had successfully implemented changes agreed following their previous annual inspection. Scores ranged from 3 (mimimal) to 7 (excellent), with a mean of 5. Again, no significant differences were found between intervention and control group nurseries (intervention group  $\theta = 4.97$ ,  $sd = 1.19$ ; control group  $\theta = 4.98$ ,  $sd = 1.34$ ;  $t = -0.70$ ,  $df = 128$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

3.1.5 To check the validity of quality ratings made by inspectors, members of the research team conducted simultaneous ratings of quality in 36 nurseries using the ECERS. The correlation between ECERS scores and inspectors' ratings of quality was statistically significant ( $r = .70$ ,  $p > .001$ ). The rating scale designed for inspectors had good internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha (.97).

### **3.2 The opinions of service providers and local authority inspectors concerning innovative self-assessment and inspection procedures**

3.2.1 *The opinions of service providers.* The research team designed a short questionnaire to assess the reactions of nursery staff to the self-assessment based inspection procedures that formed the intervention (see appendix C). Questionnaires were posted to providers following their submission of action plans to their local authority inspection units. Of the original sample of 130 intervention nurseries, 121 were still involved in the study at this point. Questionnaires were posted to the 121 participating nurseries. Two letters reminding them to return completed questionnaires were sent subsequently. Seventy-four nurseries returned questionnaires, a response rate of 61%. Tables 3.1 to 3.3 describe the results. In all but two nurseries, responsibility for completing the materials was taken on by senior managers.

**Table 3.1***Components of the self-assessment based inspection procedures: nursery views on ease of use*

Component	<i>How easy (%)</i>				
	Very easy	Quite easy	OK	Quite Difficult	Very difficult
Questionnaire	12	51	34	3	0
Observation checklist	9	38	39	12	2
Production of action plan	26	42	25	7	2

Base: Intervention nurseries returning questionnaires ( $N = 74$ )**Table 3.2***Nursery views on the impact of the self-assessment based procedures on inspection*

Impact	<i>Number of nurseries</i>
	Made annual inspection easier
Made annual inspection more difficult	13
Made no difference	27
No opinion	1

Base: Intervention nurseries responding to the question ( $N = 64$ )

**Table 3.3***Nursery views on the efficacy of the action planning guide*

	<i>Number of nurseries</i>
<hr/>	
Efficacy	
<hr/>	
Very useful	19
Quite useful	31
Not at all useful	3
<hr/>	

Base: Intervention nurseries responding to the question ( $N = 53$ )

- 3.2.2 *Perceived impact of participating in the study from service providers.* Structured telephone interviews asking about the perceived impact of participating in the study were conducted with senior members of staff from 27 of 30 nurseries who had been randomly selected from the intervention group. Interviews were conducted following each nursery's second annual inspection visit. Twenty-one of those questioned (75%) felt the nursery had gained something from participating in the study. Half (14/27) thought the study had prompted them to make changes in the way things were done in their nursery. The most commonly reported change was an increase in staff training (12/27 nurseries). Four nurseries (15%) said staff had negative attitudes towards self-assessment procedures.
- 3.2.3 *The opinions of local authority inspectors.* The research team designed a questionnaire to assess the reactions of inspectors to the self-assessment based inspection procedures that formed the intervention (see appendix D). One section of the questionnaire asked specifically for views concerning how nursery staff had reacted to participating, and whether the materials provided an accurate reflection of quality in early years provision. Questionnaires were sent to 85 inspectors. Two letters asking department heads to remind staff to

return completed questionnaires were sent subsequently. Forty questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 47%. However, some inspectors undertook more than one inspection using the new scheme. Inspectors returning questionnaires had undertaken 69 inspections, accounting for 57% of the total. Most inspectors (25/37) felt the materials provided an accurate reflection of quality. Inspectors also felt the reactions of providers were generally positive (Table 3.4)

**Table 3.4**

*Inspectors' views on the reactions of nursery staff to self-assessment*

	<i>Number of inspectors</i>
<hr/>	
Nursery staff reactions	
<hr/>	
Very positive	2
Quite positive	18
Neither positive nor negative	7
Quite negative	10
Very negative	2
<hr/>	

Base: Inspectors responding to the question ( $N = 39$ )

**3.3 Organisational and staff characteristics that may predict how effectively providers can formulate action plans and implement change in the context of inspection**

3.3.1 The research team collected data concerning organisational and staff characteristics by asking nursery staff to complete a self-report questionnaire (see appendix E).

3.3.2 To examine potential relationships between organisational characteristics, quality and the ability to implement change, inspectors' ratings of quality and

the extent to which nurseries had successfully implemented change over the 12 month study period were correlated with scores on seven self-report scales. The scales were: Your immediate superior; Job satisfaction; Control at work; Degree of decision making; Attitudes towards supervisor; Readiness to innovate; Integration. Table 3.5 describes the correlations. A full discussion of the results appears in section 4.3 of the report.

3.3.3 To examine potential relationships between staff characteristics, quality and the ability to implement change, inspectors' ratings of quality and the extent to which nurseries had successfully implemented change over the 12 month study period were correlated with several self-reported characteristics of staff including:

- Age;
- Qualifications;
- In-service training;
- Conditions of employment.

3.3.4 To examine potential relationships between staff characteristics, quality and the ability to implement change, inspectors' ratings of quality and the extent to which nurseries had successfully implemented change over the study period were compared using either one-way analysis of variance (for categorical variables) or correlations (for continuous variables).

Ratings of quality tended to be higher in nurseries employing older staff ( $F = 3.73$ ,  $df = 5, 390$ ,  $p > .01$ ). Age was not significantly related to the successful implementation of change. Experience of working in early years settings was also related to quality but not the ability to implement change ( $r = .13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Length of service with current employer was not a significant predictor of either outcome variable.



**Table 3.5***Correlations between measures of quality, implementing change and organisational characteristics*

	Your immediate superior	Job satisfaction	Control at work	Degree of decision making	Attitudes towards supervisor	Readiness to innovate	Integration	Success in introducing change	Total quality score
Your immediate superior	1.00								
Job satisfaction	-.70**	1.00							
Control at work	-.45**	.64**	1.00						
Degree of decision making	-.57**	.73**	.60**	1.00					
Attitudes towards supervisor	-.61**	.73**	.57**	.63**	1.00				
Readiness to innovate	.42**	-.47**	-.37**	-.49**	-.46**	1.00			
Integration	-.56**	.72**	.48**	.65**	.63**	-.51**	1.00		
Success in introducing change	-.16**	.13*	.07	.15**	.03	-.20**	.15**	1.00	
Total quality Score	-.16**	.12*	.06	.22**	.12*	-.22**	.20**	.65**	1.00

\* $p > .05$ , \*\* $p > .01$ . Minimum  $N = 306$

Staff qualifications were not related in any systematic way to either quality or ability to implement change. However, in-service training was related to both outcomes. Staff who had received some in-service training in the previous twelve months were more likely to work in nurseries rated as providing better quality care ( $t = 4.94$ ,  $df = 358$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and to have implemented change more successfully ( $t = 3.3$ ,  $df = 307$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Finally, some conditions of employment were associated with ratings of quality. Staff who were required to work longer hours each week were more likely to be employed in nurseries with poorer ratings of quality ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, staff whose employers did not offer them paid sick leave (around 36% of the total) were more likely to work in nurseries rated as providing poorer quality care ( $t = 3.40$ ,  $df = 386$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

### **3.4 The impact of using procedures incorporating elements of provider self-assessment on time and effort required for inspection**

3.4.1 As described in section 3.2.3, the research team designed a questionnaire to assess the reactions of inspectors to the self-assessment based inspection procedures that formed the intervention (see appendix D). The first section of the questionnaire asked for opinions concerning the training inspectors received in the use of the GDC Inspection Materials. The second section asked specifically for views concerning the self-assessment based inspection process, including the perceived benefits of participating in the study, and how easy it had been to use the inspection materials. Tables 3.6 to 3.8 describe the results.

**Table 3.6**

*Views of inspectors on the training they received in how to use the self-assessment based inspection materials*

Component	<i>How good was training</i>			
	Very good	Good	OK	Poor
Questionnaire training	2	16	15	2
Observation checklist training	5	16	14	1

Base: Inspectors responding to the questionnaire item ( $N = 35$  &  $36$ )

In general inspectors felt they would have liked more training in the use of the materials. Most of the training sessions provided as part of the study lasted for no more than half a day. Seventeen out of 36 who expressed an opinion felt one full day would be sufficient, while 11 thought two days would have been more appropriate.

**Table 3.7**

*Inspectors' views on the impact of the self-assessment based procedures on inspection*

Impact	<i>Response</i>	
	Yes	No
Made inspections easier	19	15
Easier to raise issues with providers	21	13

Base: Inspectors responding to the questionnaire item ( $N = 34$ )

Responses to open ended questions about what inspectors found easier when using the self-assessment based procedures included:

- giving feedback to providers;

- looking at process aspects of provision through observation;
- clearly articulated sections allowed more focussed approach;
- identifying good practice;
- staff felt less threatened;
- encouraged providers to prepare for inspections in advance;
- helped practitioners identify areas of weakness for themselves;
- encouraged practitioners to prepare relevant documentation in advance.

Asked if they found any aspect of the self-assessment based inspection procedures difficult, half of those responding (18/36) said ‘yes’. Difficulties included:

- more time consuming than usual procedures;
- unused to doing systematic observations;
- insufficient focus on infant care;
- materials not always consistent with format of local inspection reports;
- summarising data from the inspection materials;
- provider perceptions not always consistent with own observations.

**Table 3.8**

*Inspectors’ likes and dislikes concerning self-assessment based procedures*

Opinion	Response	
	Yes	No
Anything you particularly liked	29	9
Anything you particularly disliked	19	11

Base: Inspectors responding to the questionnaire item ( $N = 34$ )

Responses to open ended questions about aspects of the procedures inspectors particularly liked included:

- opportunities to share views with staff;
- chance for staff to identify issues for themselves;
- very thorough, systematic assessment of quality;

- focus on observations;
- collaborative relationship fostered with provider;
- helped to focus on providers' training needs;
- explanations of why aspects of provision were being examined.

Responses to an open ended question about what inspectors disliked included:

- providers and inspectors doing separate evaluations;
- time taken to conduct inspections;
- insufficient focus on very young children;
- dealing with providers' complaints about time taken to self-assess;
- no consultation with parents included;
- no report format based on the materials included.

**4.1 The effects of using inspection procedures incorporating elements of provider self-assessment on quality of care in nurseries in England**

4.1.1 Results failed to find any significant differences between intervention and control group nurseries on measures of quality. By the end of the twelve-month period of the study, the quality of provision in intervention nurseries was no different to that in control group nurseries. Similarly, based on inspectors' ratings, no group differences were evident in the extent to which nurseries successfully implemented changes agreed following their previous annual inspection. Self-assessment based inspection procedures had no discernible impact on quality, nor on the ability to implement change, over a twelve month period.

4.1.2 The finding that providers failed to improve the quality of their provision as a result of using self-assessment is entirely consistent with research conducted in the US. For example, in an evaluation of a national accreditation scheme, Whitebook, Sakai and Howes (1999) concluded that accreditation alone is unlikely to bring about improvements in quality. However, the same authors concluded that such self-assessment based schemes could make a positive difference when allied with improvements in other staffing factors including pay, adult:child ratios and reductions in staff turnover.

4.1.3 On the basis of the evidence described in section 3.3, it would appear that self-assessment procedures are only likely to make a difference to the quality of provision in nurseries where staff are able to make good use of such tools. Self-assessment is likely to be effective only when other important features of nurseries and nursery staff are in place. Early years settings are complex environments. Strategies to improve quality need to reflect that complexity. Initiatives designed to raise standards, such as self-assessment, that are implemented without regard to other features of settings that might influence their impact are unlikely to deliver measurable improvements. The significance of organisational and staff characteristics in relation to the

effectiveness of self-assessment procedures are discussed at length in section 4.3.

4.1.4 Another significant finding to emerge from this part of the study concerns checks on the validity of quality ratings made by local authority inspectors. Results suggest that inspectors have views on quality that are entirely consistent with assessments made using a validated research tool, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). Ratings made by inspectors in 36 nurseries correlated very highly with assessments made by members of the research team. On the basis of this evidence, it would appear local authority inspectors are very good judges of what constitutes quality in nursery settings. Furthermore, the measure of quality designed by the research team for use by inspectors would appear to have very good internal consistency, a key characteristic of effective measurement tools. This instrument, or a variation of it, could provide a simple, but potentially very useful tool for quantifying inspectors' assessments of quality in early years provision. For example, EYDCPs seeking baseline data against which to measure the impact of initiatives designed to deliver improvements could make good use of quantitative data on quality.

## **4.2 The opinions of service providers and local authority inspectors concerning innovative self-assessment and inspection procedures**

4.2.1 Service providers generally found the self-assessment materials easy to use. Evidence from the questionnaire survey suggests the observation checklist caused more difficulties for staff than the questionnaire component. Interestingly, nearly 10% of nurseries reported having difficulties with producing action plans. Given how important effective planning is to implementing change and by implication, raising standards, it may be useful to explore in greater detail why some providers still had problems with action plans. All but three providers who responded found the booklet produced by the team useful when it came to putting together action plans. Making the booklet widely available, either through EYDCPs, local authorities or OFSTED, could support efforts to improve quality in the nursery sector.

- 4.2.2 Almost a third of nursery providers who responded felt having self-assessment as part of annual inspections made the process easier, although more (27/64) thought it made little or no difference to the effort required. Twenty per cent of providers (13/64) felt having to do self-assessment made inspections more difficult. Interestingly, this group did not find using the materials any more difficult than other nurseries. However, they did report having more problems producing action plans following their annual inspection. Evidently these data need to be interpreted in the light of variation in existing local authority inspection procedures. Relative to some local practices, completion of the GDC self-assessment materials required a considerable amount of additional time and resources from providers.
- 4.2.3 Three quarters of the random sub-sample of 27 nurseries questioned in telephone interviews felt they had gained from having been part of the intervention group. Half reported having changed some aspect of their nursery's procedures as a result. However, the most commonly reported change concerned staff training. Nearly half of those interviewed thought staff had received more training as a direct result of having taken part in the self-assessment procedures. Of course this is an entirely subjective view; staff in both intervention and control group nurseries could have enjoyed greater access to training over the twelve months of the study period. But although subjective, this view is consistent with the idea that self-assessment may have a positive impact on quality over the longer term by encouraging staff to access training. Research has consistently established links between staff training and quality of provision.
- 4.2.4 Inspectors were of the view that the GDC materials provided an accurate reflection of quality. Around half of those who responded (20/39) felt providers were generally positive in their views of the self-assessment based inspection procedures. Commonly reported complaints from providers usually focused on the amount of extra time required to complete the self-assessment materials and produce action plans. Again, provider reactions need to be seen in the context of local variations in inspection procedures. For many, completing the GDC materials and submitting an action plan will have taken a great deal more time than they would have been used to.

4.2.5 Several local authorities have already approached the research team with requests for copies of the GDC materials. The team will examine how best to make the materials widely available to those interested in using them as part of local quality improvement initiatives.

### **4.3 Organisational and staff characteristics that may predict how effectively providers can formulate action plans and implement change in the context of inspection**

4.3.1. In an earlier project, the research team identified several characteristics of work environments that theories of Organisational Development (OD) suggested may predict the ability to adapt working practices successfully (Munton & Mooney, 1997). Results from this study are generally consistent with predictions derived from OD theory. Inspectors were asked to rate how successful nurseries had been in introducing changes agreed following the previous year's annual inspection. Scores on five out of seven self-report measures of organisational characteristics were significantly correlated with inspectors' ratings (Table 3.5). Staff in nurseries rated as having successfully introduced change were more likely to:

- have good relationships with their immediate superior;
- be satisfied with their job and conditions of employment;
- perceive themselves as having a say in decision making processes in the nursery,
- believe that their nursery was keen to introduce new ideas;
- feel committed to their employer.

4.3.2 Similar attitudes were significantly correlated with inspectors' ratings of the quality of provision in nurseries. Interestingly, the ability to implement change successfully was highly correlated with quality scores ( $r = .65$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Consistent with OD theory, our evidence suggests a close link between the ability to plan and implement change in working practices and the delivery of good quality care provision.

4.3.3 Several staff characteristics were significantly associated with the ability of nurseries to implement change, and the quality of their provision. Nurseries that employed older, and thus usually more experienced staff tended to score higher on inspectors' ratings of quality. Staff who had received some in-

service training over the twelve months prior to the survey were more likely to work in better quality nurseries able to implement change. In terms of conditions of employment, staff who worked shorter hours and who were entitled to paid sick leave were more likely to work in nurseries providing better quality care.

4.3.4 Taken as a whole, our findings provide evidence of clear links between organisational and staff characteristics in nurseries, and the quality of provision children receive. The findings are consistent with evidence from the US suggesting that quality in early years settings is somehow contingent on features of the adult work environment (e.g. Stremmel, Benson & Powell, 1993; Cost Quality and Outcomes Team, 1995). Bloom (1996) concluded that this research is consistent with the belief that *'we cannot have quality outcomes for children without having a quality work life for the adults who care for children'* (p.302).

4.3.5 The same evidence also suggests that self-assessment materials, however well received by some providers, are unlikely on their own to guarantee improvements in the quality of provision. If self-assessment is to be an effective mechanism for raising standards, attention may need to be paid to the characteristics of work environments into which it is being introduced. Research on effective school improvement strategies has come to the same conclusion (Dalin, 1983; Walters & Henkelman, 1990; O'Connor, 1991; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994; Schmuck, 1995). On that basis, EYDCPs, and other bodies involved in delivering training, might be well advised to consider offering courses on the principles of effective management in early years settings. Such courses could be a highly effective precursor to providers getting involved in accreditation, quality improvement and self-assessment initiatives. From a policy perspective, it might be useful to examine what courses of the type described are currently available, and how effective they are. The findings of such an investigation could provide useful information on best practice for both EYDCPs and other trainers.

**4.4 The impact of using procedures incorporating elements of provider self-assessment on time and effort required for inspection**

- 4.4.1 The introduction of self-assessment based inspection materials clearly has implications for the time and effort required for inspection. To begin with, inspectors felt the need for additional training, especially in techniques associated with systematic observations in nurseries. For materials of the kind developed for this project, a two-day training course would probably meet the needs of most experienced inspectors.
- 4.4.2 Current inspection procedures among local authorities vary a great deal. In some authorities we have worked with, nursery inspections may only involve one person spending half a day in a setting. At the other extreme, we are aware of authorities in which inspections can involve a team of two or more people spending two to three days in a nursery. Inspectors' views of the self-assessment based inspections procedures they were asked to implement in this study need to be interpreted accordingly.
- 4.4.3 Over half of the inspectors responding felt the self-assessment based materials made inspections easier relative to their usual procedures. Many improvements revolved around the issue of feeding back inspection findings to providers. For many inspectors, self-assessment makes the job of discussing strengths and weaknesses with providers much easier. Having clearly articulated standards backed up by attributable models of good practice encouraged providers to view inspectors' judgements more objectively. Self-assessment had the potential to make inspections more collaborative and less confrontational. However, because of the intense pressure of work felt by many inspectors, where the new procedures were more time consuming than usual practice, they were perceived as less helpful.
- 4.4.4 Consistent with the views of providers, inspectors believed that self-assessment based inspection procedures had a significant impact on staff training. Providers felt the process led to an increased demand from staff for training, just as inspectors felt they were better able to help providers identify training needs. This may be a significant route by which self-assessment can lead, in the longer term, to improvements in the quality of care offered by early years providers. Were it to be the case, effective communication between OFSTED inspectors and local EYDCPs concerning the extent to which self-

assessment based inspections highlighted specific training needs of providers could help target training resources.

## **4.5 Conclusions**

4.5.1 Evidence from this study suggests that self-assessment, even when part of statutory inspection procedures, is unlikely to have a uniformly positive impact on the quality of all provision, at least in the short term. Consistent with research from the US and Australia, it would appear that improvements in quality are closely linked to the ability of providers to plan and implement changes in working practices. Where providers do not have key organisational characteristics such as participatory management styles, a committed workforce satisfied with their working conditions, opportunities for in-service training and a positive attitude towards innovation, encouraging self-assessment is unlikely to have a significant impact on quality. Self-assessment is likely to be most effective in helping good quality providers get better.

4.5.2 However, self-assessment may have an impact on the quality of provision in the longer term. Evidence from providers and inspectors suggests that self-assessment based inspection procedures are an effective means to identifying training needs and encouraging staff to seek additional in-service training. Given established links between staff training and quality, this may be a route by which self-assessment can have a positive impact on standards.

4.5.3 Evidence from research into the impact of accreditation schemes suggests that some nurseries encouraged to evaluate their own practices can improve the extent to which they actively involve staff in developing new policies and procedures. Self-assessment can be the first step towards developing more participatory management styles which have, in this and other studies, been significantly associated with better quality provision.

4.5.4 Findings from this study have implications for the way in which the evaluation of quality assurance and quality improvement schemes, both of which are based on self-assessment procedures, might be conducted. Currently little or no evidence has been collected in the UK concerning the effects such schemes may have on service provision. However, evaluation should not focus solely on measuring the quality of care provision. To do so would be to ignore some potentially important effects. Accreditation schemes may, in the short term,

influence both staff training and key organisational characteristics linked to quality. Evaluation that looked only at quality of provision may fail to uncover these potentially important outcomes.

4.5.5 Consistent with other recent research reviews, we have collected yet more evidence in favour of taking a multidimensional view of quality. Several factors have been linked to quality including ratios, group size, training, qualifications, self-assessment, and organisational characteristics. Research aimed at trying to identify the unique contribution of any one factor in isolation has almost inevitably been inconclusive. However, put all these factors together and we can begin to build a model of what effective early years provision may look like. Good early years settings are likely to have well trained, well paid, committed staff working mostly with small groups of children under conditions of low ratios. Staff have supervisors who value their opinions, they feel they contribute to the development of nursery policies and procedures, and are involved in processes of continuous self-assessment and evaluation which leads to the regular introduction of innovative practice. Targeting only one contributory factor is unlikely to guarantee good quality provision. Tackling several factors in a co-ordinated approach may be a much more potent recipe for improving standards. Policy concerned with quality in early years provision is certainly likely to be most effective when it reflects this holistic view.

4.5.6 Providers and regulators had a positive view of the benefits to be derived from incorporating self-assessment into statutory inspections. They felt it made inspections more straightforward, and helped with the processes of identifying and addressing strengths and weaknesses in provision. With the introduction of a new inspection regime, it may be useful to develop appropriate materials to be used as part of new inspection procedures. Were such an initiative to be developed in tandem with planned expansion of local training and the promotion of quality assurance schemes based on systematic self-evaluation, evidence suggests that the impact on quality over the next few years may be significant.

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## Appendix

# A Letter to Directors of Social Services and Directors of Education

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Dear

### **Integrating self-assessment into inspection procedures: The impact on the quality of group day care provision**

The consultative document, *Regulation of Early Education and Day Care*, has signalled the government's intention to review inspection procedures in an effort to create a new, more uniform, regulatory regime. The document highlighted several key issues, including the need to establish national standards, the role providers might play in inspection, and how Action Plans might be incorporated into the inspection process.

We are writing to seek your cooperation in a research project, funded by the Department for Education and Employment. The project aims to evaluate the impact of incorporating self-assessment and action planning into annual inspection procedures on the quality of day care provided by nurseries. We have scheduled the project to run for two years from November 1998.

The project builds on a programme of work undertaken at the Thomas Coram Research Unit on the quality of child care provision. The programme has consisted of two substantive projects, funded by the Department of Health and approved by the Association of Directors of Social Services. The *Quality in Day Care Project* ran from 1992 to 1996. It successfully developed self-assessment materials for nursery workers to use for assessing the quality of their own provision. A second project, *Enhancing Quality*, successfully modified these self-assessment materials, originally designed for nursery staff, for use by local authority inspectors. Results of a pilot study suggested that incorporating self-assessment into inspection procedures may encourage good practice among providers, and establish supportive relationships between inspectors and inspected. Inspection staff participating in the pilot responded very positively to the materials they were asked to use. The project we are seeking your support with is a full-scale evaluation of the procedures linking self-assessment and inspection. It will establish the extent to which the procedures described can influence the quality of day care provided by nurseries.

We are inviting twelve local authorities in England to participate in the project. In each area, we will ask that local authority officers supply the project team with a list of all nursery (i.e. full day care) providers scheduled to have their facilities inspected between 1 May and 31 July 1999. Up to twenty providers will be selected, at random, from the list. Half of those selected will be allocated to a control group, and half to an intervention group. Changes in the quality of care provided by nurseries given self-assessment materials (the intervention group) will be compared, twelve months after an initial annual inspection, with changes in the quality of care provided by nurseries not given the self-assessment materials (the control group).

We anticipate that additional work for you and your officers will be minimal.

We will contact you in the week beginning 23 November to discuss the research in a little more detail, and to ask if you would like to be part of the project. Meanwhile, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Tony Munton  
Project Director

## Appendix

### B

## Quality rating scale used by inspectors

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### ANNUAL INSPECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT: Improving the quality of day nursery provision

#### NURSERY INSPECTION RATINGS

NURSERY ID:

DATE INSPECTED:

Once you have completed your inspection, please complete this short rating scale. **For each of the 25 items, please tick (T) one number from 1 to 7.** (*If you have used the Thomas Coram materials to do your inspection, the line in italics after each question tells you where to find the relevant information*).

1 Inside Areas (cleanliness, safety, displays, room layout)  
*(Observation Checklist pages 24-25)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Outside Areas (safety, layout, suitability, space)  
*(Observation Checklist page 26)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Gross motor equipment (quality, quantity, variety)  
*(Questionnaire pg 4 Section 1 Q23)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Mealtimes (social atmosphere, staff involvement, promotion of self-help)  
*(Observation Checklist - mealtimes)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
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1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Personal care routines (hygiene, social atmosphere, promotion of self-help)  
*(Observation Checklist - personal care routines)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Health and Safety (fire prevention, safety checks, first aid, diet, trips out)  
*(Questionnaire page 15, Section 4 - Health and Safety)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Language materials (quality, quantity, variety & accessibility of books, tapes, games)  
*(Questionnaire page 4, question 23)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Imaginative play props (quality, quantity, variety & accessibility)  
*(Questionnaire page 4, question 23)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Reasoning/problem solving materials (quality, quantity, variety & accessibility of board/card games, etc)  
*(Questionnaire page 4, question 23)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Fine motor equipment (quality, quantity, variety & accessibility of beads, puzzles, bricks etc.)  
*(Questionnaire page 4, question 23)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Art materials (quality, quantity, variety & accessibility of pencils, crayons, paints, dough, clay etc.)  
*(Questionnaire page 4, question 23)*

Inadequate                    Minimal                    Good                    Excellent

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

Musical instruments (quality, quantity, variety & accessibility)  
*(Questionnaire page 4, question 23)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The way staff use language with children (open-ended questions, labelling, conversation)  
*(Observation Checklist - core questions 6, 7, & 8)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The extent to which activities and materials reflect awareness of equal opportunities issues  
*(Observation checklist page 25, questions 18 & 19)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The quality of staff/child interactions during outdoor activities  
*(Observation Checklist - core questions on any outdoor activities)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The quality of staff/child interactions during indoor activities  
*(Observation Checklist - core questions on any indoor activities)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How staff deal with issues of distress and discipline  
*(Observation Checklist - pages 21 & 22)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The amount of reading and pretend play in the planned curriculum  
*(Questionnaire page 13)*

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The range of activities in the planned curriculum  
(*Questionnaire pg 13*)

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The flexibility of the planned curriculum (sensitivity to children=s needs)  
(*Questionnaire pages 12-14, questions 13-21*)

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

How children are organized into groups (size and age range)  
(*Questionnaire pages. 11-12, questions 7-9*)

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Provision for children with special needs  
(*Questionnaire page 25, Section 7*)

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The extent to which parents are actively encouraged to be involved with the nursery  
(*Questionnaire page 19, Section 5*)

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The extent to which the personal and professional needs of staff are met  
(*Questionnaire page 5, Section 2*)

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
------------	--	---------	--	------	--	-----------

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6                    7

25 The extent to which the provider has successfully introduced any changes agreed following last year=s annual inspection

Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Any other comments:**

**Appendix**

**C Questionnaire to assess the reactions of nursery staff  
to the self-assessment based inspection procedures**

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**Nursery ID:**

**ANNUAL INSPECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT:  
Improving the quality of day nursery provision**

**THOMAS CORAM RESEARCH UNIT**

**Your views on having self-assessment as part of annual inspection**

Now that the first round of annual inspections using the new self-assessment materials is over, we would like to thank you very much for helping us. We would also like to get your views on the project so far. This short questionnaire asks for you about the materials themselves, your inspection, and the booklet on action planning. If you want to make any other comments, please write on the questionnaire, or call me or Caroline Bell at the Unit (0171-612-6962).

Thank you very much for taking the time to help us

Tony Munton

1. Who filled in the Group Day Care **Questionnaire** before the inspection visit?  
(eg. Owner, officer-in-charge, deputy, member of staff).

- 
2. How easy was it to use the self-assessment Group Day Care **Questionnaire**? Please tick one of the options below

- VERY EASY (1)  
QUITE EASY (2)  
OK (3)  
QUITE DIFFICULT (4)  
VERY DIFFICULT (5)

**Comments:**

3. Who filled in the Group Day Care **Observation Checklist** before the inspection visit?  
(eg. Owner, officer-in-charge, deputy, member(s) of staff).

How easy was it to use the self-assessment Group Day Care **Observation Checklist**? Please tick one of the options below

- VERY EASY (1)  
QUITE EASY (2)  
OK (3)  
QUITE DIFFICULT (4)  
VERY DIFFICULT (5)

**Comments:**

5. Did completing the self-assessment materials prior to your annual inspection make a difference to the inspection visit? *Please tick one of the options below*

MADE ANNUAL INSPECTION EASIER (1)

MADE ANNUAL INSPECTION MORE DIFFICULT (2)

MADE NO DIFFERENCE (3)

**Comments:**

6. Following your inspection, how easy did you find it to produce your nursery Action Plan? *Please tick one of the options below*

VERY EASY (1)

QUITE EASY (2)

OK (3)

QUITE DIFFICULT (4)

VERY DIFFICULT (5)

**Comments:**

How useful was the booklet describing how to produce an Action Plan? *Please tick one of the options below*

VERY USEFUL (1)

QUITE USEFUL (2)

NOT AT ALL USEFUL (3)

**Comments:**

**ANNUAL INSPECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT:  
Improving the quality of day nursery provision**

**THOMAS CORAM RESEARCH UNIT**

**Inspection Officer views of the self-assessment materials for annual inspections**

Now that the first round of annual inspections using the new self-assessment materials is over, we would like to get your views on the project so far. This short questionnaire asks for your views on two things:

- (1) the training session we did on how to use the materials
- (2) the inspection(s) you have done using the new materials.

If you want to make any other comments, please write on the questionnaire, or call Tony Muntun or Caroline Bell at the Unit (0171-612-6962).

**(1) Training on how to use the new materials**

(1) How good was the training in helping you use the questionnaire?

Very good        Good       OK       Poor      Very  poor

(2) How could training in the use of the questionnaire be improved?

(3) How good was the training in preparing you for using the observation checklist?

Very good        Good       OK       Poor      Very  poor

(4) How useful were the video clips in helping you to use the observation checklist?

Very useful       Useful       Not useful

(5) How could the observation checklist training be improved?

(6) How much training should inspectors be offered in use of the materials?

Half a day     One day       Two  days      Four  days      Six  days

**(2) Inspection(s) you have done using the new materials**

Did you find any aspect of the new inspection procedures difficult to do?

Yes

No

If **YES**, please explain:

Did using the new materials make any parts of the inspection easier?

Yes

No

If **YES**, please explain:

Did the new materials make it any easier to raise issues with providers?

Yes

No

How do you think did providers reacted to the new procedures? *please tick one response*

Very positive

Quite positive

Neither positive or  
negative

Quite negative

Very negative

Did the new materials give you a good picture of the quality of care being provided by the nursery?

Yes

No

If **NO**, please explain:

Would you like to see the layout of the questionnaire changed?

Yes

No

If **YES**, please explain:

Would you like to see the layout of the observation checklist changed?

Yes

No

If **YES**, please explain:

Did the new materials cover all the information you would collect in your usual inspection procedures?

Yes

No

If **NO**, please tell us what was not covered:

Was there anything you particularly liked about the new procedures?

Yes

No

If **YES**, please explain:

Has there anything you particularly disliked about the new procedures?

Yes

No

If **YES**, please explain:

For each nursery(s) you inspected using the new procedures, please indicate if they have submitted an action plan to you:

Nursery (1) name:

Action plan received?    Yes             No

Nursery (2) name:

Action plan received?    Yes             No

Nursery (3) name:

Action plan received?    Yes             No

Nursery (4) name:

Action plan received?    Yes             No

**Any other comments:**

**Appendix  
E            Self-report questionnaire concerning staff and  
                 organisational characteristics**

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**NURSERY ID:**

**ANNUAL INSPECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT:  
Improving the quality of day nursery provision**

**THOMAS CORAM RESEARCH UNIT**

As part of the project your nursery is working on, we are asking all care staff to complete this short questionnaire. Your answers are completely confidential. You post your questionnaire straight back to us in the pre-paid envelope provided. Only the research team will see the completed

questionnaires. The ID number on this page identifies the nursery, NOT each member of staff. PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

We would like to have these questionnaires back as soon as possible, so please try to fill it in some time over the next few days. It shouldn't take more than 30 minutes at the most.

When you have finished filling in the questionnaire, put it in the pre-paid envelope (no need for a stamp) and post it back to us.

Thank you very much for taking the time to help us

Tony Munton



26-30

40+

A9. How many years have you worked in early education and child care?  
(years)

A10. What childcare qualifications do you have? (e.g. NNEB, BTec., GNVQ)

A11. Have you received any training in childcare, child development or early childhood education since you qualified?

Yes

No

**If yes:** please describe what this was (e.g. one day workshop on curriculum; GNVQ)

A12. Do you belong to any professional childcare or early childhood organisation? (eg. Professional Association of Nursery Nurses, National Children's Bureau, Day Care Trust)

Yes

No

A13. Do you consider your work in childcare as:

a temporary or short-term job

a long term career

A14. Within the near future, how likely is it that you will leave your job at the nursery? (please underline your answer)

Very likely                      Somewhat likely                      Somewhat unlikely                      Very  
Unlikely

A15. How likely is it that you will be working in child care five years from now? (please underline your answer)

Very likely                      Somewhat likely                      Somewhat unlikely                      Very  
Unlikely

## B: ABOUT YOUR JOB

The following statements are about the way you feel about your job. For each of the statements, please underline the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

B1 The best way to make a good impression around here is to steer clear of open arguments and disagreements.

Definitely  
Agree

Inclined to  
Agree

Inclined to  
Disagree

Definitely  
Disagree

B2 The attitude of our management is that disagreement between groups and individuals can be very healthy.

Definitely  
Agree

Inclined to  
Agree

Inclined to  
Disagree

Definitely  
Disagree

B3 We are encouraged to speak our minds, even if it means disagreeing with our supervisors.

Definitely  
Agree

Inclined to  
Agree

Inclined to  
Disagree

Definitely  
Disagree

B4 In staff meetings the goal is to arrive at a decision as smoothly and as quickly as possible.

Definitely  
Agree

Inclined to  
Agree

Inclined to  
Disagree

Definitely  
Disagree

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

TFCS

## C: ABOUT YOUR MANAGER

The following statements are about the way you feel about your manager. Please tell us how you feel about your manager in your current job by underlining the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

C1 He/she lets you know where you stand

Yes      Don't know      No

C2 He/she does a good job

Yes      Don't know      No

C3 He/she interferes too much

Yes      Don't know      No

C4 He/she is always too busy to see you

Yes      Don't know      No

C5 He/she stands up for you

Yes      Don't know      No

C6 He/she is quick tempered

Yes      Don't know      No

C7 You can discuss problems with him/her

Yes      Don't know      No

C8 He/she is hard to please

Yes      Don't know      No

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

YISS

## D: ABOUT DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF YOUR JOB

The following statements are about different aspects of your job. For each of the statements, please underline the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

### D1 The physical work conditions your own method

- a. I ' m extremely dissatisfied
- b. I ' m very dissatisfied
- c. I ' m moderately dissatisfied  
dissatisfied
- d. I ' m not sure
- e. I ' m moderately satisfied
- f. I ' m very satisfied
- g. I ' m extremely satisfied

### D3 Your fellow workers work

- a. I ' m extremely dissatisfied
- b. I ' m very dissatisfied
- c. I ' m moderately dissatisfied  
dissatisfied
- d. I ' m not sure
- e. I ' m moderately satisfied
- f. I ' m very satisfied
- g. I ' m extremely satisfied

### D2 The freedom to choose of working

- a. I ' m extremely dissatisfied
- b. I ' m very dissatisfied
- c. I ' m moderately  
dissatisfied
- d. I ' m not sure
- e. I ' m moderately satisfied
- f. I ' m very satisfied
- g. I ' m extremely satisfied

### D4 The recognition you get for good work

- a. I ' m extremely dissatisfied
- b. I ' m very dissatisfied
- c. I ' m moderately  
dissatisfied
- d. I ' m not sure
- e. I ' m moderately satisfied
- f. I ' m very satisfied
- g. I ' m extremely satisfied

**D5 Your immediate boss  
are given**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied  
dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D7 Your rate of pay  
your abilities**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied  
dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D9 Relations between management and  
staff in your nursery**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied  
dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D6 The amount of responsibility you**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately  
dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D8 The opportunity to use**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately  
dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D10 Your chance of promotion**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately  
dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D11 The way you are managed  
you make**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D13 Your hours of work**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D15 Your job security**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D12 The attention paid to the suggestions**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

**D14 The amount of variety in your job**

- a. I'm extremely dissatisfied
- b. I'm very dissatisfied
- c. I'm moderately dissatisfied
- d. I'm not sure
- e. I'm moderately satisfied
- f. I'm very satisfied
- g. I'm extremely satisfied

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

JSS

E: ABOUT THE CONTROL YOU HAVE AT WORK

The following statements are about your feelings about the control you have over your work at the nursery. For each of the statements, please *put a circle around* the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree	Agree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree
E1. I have a lot of say about what happens on my job	1	2		3 4	5
E2. It is easy for me to take time off when I have a personal or family problem	1	2		3 4	5
E3. My job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own	1	2		3 4	5
E4. I am given a lot of freedom to decide how to do my work	1	2		3 4	5
E5. My work is supervised closely	1	2		3 4	5
E6. I have a lot of influence over nursery policies that affect my job	1	2	3	4	5

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

CONT/NSS

## F: ABOUT MAKING DECISIONS

The following statements are about your role in decision-making at the nursery. For each of the statements, *please put a circle around* the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree	Agree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree
F1. Staff are encouraged to be self-sufficient in making decisions	1	2	3	4	5
F2. The officer in charge or owner likes to make most of the decisions	1	2	3	4	5
F3. Staff don't feel free to express their opinions	1	2	3	4	5
F4. Everyone provides input on the content of staff meetings	5	1	2		3 4
F5. Staff provide input but the decisions have already been made	1	2	3	4	5
F6. Staff make decisions about those things that directly affect them		1	2	3	4 5
F7. The officer in charge or owner values everyone's input in major decisions	1	2	3	4	5
F8. Staff are seldom asked their opinion on issues	1	2	3	4	5

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

DDM/NSS

## G: ABOUT YOU SUPERVISOR

The following statements are about your relationship with your supervisor(s) - the person or people to whom you are directly accountable. For each of the statements, *please put a circle around* the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree	Agree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree	
G1. My supervisor is competent in doing his/her job	1	2	3	4	5	
G2. My supervisor is very concerned about the welfare of those under her/him	1	2	3	4	5	
G3. My supervisor is successful in getting people to work together	1	2	3	4	5	
G4. My supervisor is helpful to me in getting my job done	1	2	3	4	5	
G5. My supervisor is flexible when I have a personal or family emergency that I have to take care of	1	2	3	4	5	
G6. My supervisor respects my abilities	1	2	3	4	5	
G7. My supervisor is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues	1	2	3	4	5	
G8. My supervisor is supportive when I have a work problem	1	2	3	4	5	
G9. My supervisor applies centre policies without favouritism	1	2	3	4	5	

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

ATS/NSS

## H: ABOUT HOW YOUR NURSERY REACTS TO CHANGE

The following statements are about the way your nursery reacts to change. For each of the statements, please underline the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

H1 Policy changes occur slowly here and only mostly <u>definitely</u> after considerable thought and discussion. false <u>false</u>			<u>definitely</u>	mostly	
			true	true	
H2 Quick decisions and actions are not <u>definitely</u> characteristic of this place.	<u>true</u>	<u>true</u>	<u>definitely</u>	mostly	mostly
			false	false	
H3 Thinking of alternative ways in which <u>definitely</u> problems might be solved or things done <u>false</u> differently never happens here.	<u>definitely</u>	<u>mostly</u>	<u>mostly</u>		
			true	true	false
H4 New ideas are always being tried out here. mostly <u>definitely</u>	<u>true</u>	<u>true</u>	<u>definitely</u>	mostly	
			false	false	
H5 New ideas about child care don't change <u>definitely</u> the way this place is run.	<u>true</u>	<u>true</u>	<u>definitely</u>	mostly	mostly
			false	false	
H6 Unusual or exciting plans are encouraged mostly <u>definitely</u> here.	<u>true</u>	<u>true</u>	<u>definitely</u>	mostly	
			false	false	
H7 There are usual ways of doing things <u>definitely</u> here which are rarely changed. false <u>false</u>	<u>definitely</u>	<u>mostly</u>	<u>mostly</u>		
			true	true	
H8 Programmes here are quickly changed to <u>definitely</u> meet new conditions	<u>true</u>	<u>true</u>	<u>definitely</u>	mostly	mostly
			false	false	

***Please check that you have answered all the questions***

RTIS

**I: ABOUT YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE NURSERY**

The following statements are about how committed to you feel to your nursery. For each of the statements, *please put a circle around* the answer that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions, whatever they may be.

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree	Agree nor Agree	Somewhat Agree
I1. I feel very committed to this place	1	2	3	4	5	
I2. I put a lot of extra effort into my work	1	2	3	4	5	
I3. I don't really care what happens to this place after I leave		1	2	3	4	5
I4. It would be difficult for me to find another job as good as this one		1	2	3	4	5

