

## Conclusions...

The children placed emphasis on relationships, with their peers and with the adults who worked with them in their settings. This carries an implication that serious consideration is given to the ways in which early education professionals foster and support the development of friendships, not only for the importance of their well-being, but also in the interests of holistic healthy development. If young children see their caring adults as important to them, this adds weight to the importance of the role of the **Key Person** in children's out of home lives.

The choices children make, their use of popular culture, and their enthusiasm for playing indoors and outside, show that there is space for settings to further exploit popular culture in the preschool curriculum and that energy and resources focused on outdoor spaces can be worthwhile investments.

The children in this study have demonstrated that, though young, they have clear views about the places where they spend much of their time, and that given the opportunity, they are capable of expressing those views to interested adults.

*'So, I'll tell you and you write it...right?'*

*Marlon [4:6]* when the research process was explained to him

*'I like playing on the computer with Mrs S... I go on it on my own.... I don't like it when other people say I can't go on it and I just walk away and do something else.... This is the mouse. These are the letters. The arrow keys are here'*

Annie-May (3:10)

*'I play with my friends. Me, Hayannah, Henna, Rich, Prince, Little Jacob, Karl – he has short hair – big Jacob, Leone, Kelly'*

Heidi (3:10)

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# Children's views of their early years settings

## Summary of findings

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## The Project

This leaflet summarises key findings from a study of 188 children's experiences in 18 early years settings in 5 LAs England.

The children (aged between 3-5 years) said that they mostly enjoy attending their groups, they like the adults who work with them, and their friends are important to them. They also offered ideas for adding to or changing their settings.

## Playing outdoors ...

Children talked about playing - indoors and outdoors. Thirty children mentioned the outdoors: **nature** (finding bugs, snails, frogs... climbing trees ...digging in snow) and **equipment** (a roundabout... new climbing frame... an aeroplane see -saw).

Forty-one children (20 boys and 21 girls) drew pictures of the outdoors which featured a wide range of people and equipment: themselves, friends, sun, flowers, apple tree, caterpillars, frog, climbing frame, the garden, slide, bikes, bees, snails, caterpillars, worms, trampoline, water, football, flowers, clouds, sun, the play tunnel, cars.

There was no clear stereotypical gender divide in the subject of children's drawings, apart from 'playing football' which only featured in boys' drawings.

## Staff...

The children in this study had a lot to say about the adults in their settings, and gave many different reasons why they liked them. All but 11 children (94%) said that some of the grown ups were special, giving such reasons as...

*... because she's kind ... she does cooking... she's magic!... she gives the best cuddles... she's funny... I like her hair... she teaches us things... she plays football... he does drilling...*



## Did the children like attending?

Of the 188 children, all but five were emphatic that they liked going to their early years setting. The five who expressed a different view said things like:

*'I like nursery but I miss mummy sometimes'*  
*'No, I miss mummy'*  
*'I like it sometimes'*

Other children said...

*Yeah! I like playing in the house with the babies (dolls) (Mary 3:7)*  
*[I like]... the toast! (Leon 3:3)*

## Friends...

All but seven of the 188 children interviewed said that they had friends in their setting (91 boys and 90 girls), with 174 naming more than one friend...

*Well, if I needed help I would ask a friend (Billy, 4:9)*  
*I always pick Emmie to do something (Lilly, 3:6)*

**“I need to think about that one!...”**

*Moses [4:1] in answer to a question about what he liked most*

**‘Is there anything else you wish you could do here?’ ...**

128 of the 188 children in the study expressed a wish for something in their setting.

Most popular wishes centred around the **outdoors** such as: *a roundabout... swings... a truck that goes right up to the sky... a real pond with magic baby hippos in... playing more football...a real little house outside...trees to climb...*

Second most popular wishes concerned **new technologies and popular culture** with 11% making suggestions such as: *we need Power Rangers costumes and powers...I'd like to be Ben 10 in the house... I'd like to play on the Wii...I could bring my Nintendo... I'd like Cbeebies...I'd like music for dancing but no adults telling us the music or what we can sing...*

Third most popular wishes were for **imaginative play** with 8% wishing for things such as: *more shoes... I love shoes!...more dressing up clothes for princesses... a fire engine that goes nee-nah, whoop, whoop and flashes lights; nice little cups and stuff for a tea party, with real food!*