

# A Participatory Evaluation Design Report

**early years**  
the organisation for young children

*The*  
**ATLANTIC**  
*Philanthropies*

*exploring*

**impacts** *and*  
**change**

*through a*

**participatory**  
**evaluation**

*process*

July 2012

**Dr Katrina Collins**  
**Dr Michael Brown**

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# Summary

The Participatory Evaluation initiative in Early Years began in March 2012 with two clear aims:

- 1 To provide an evidence base of the impact of The Atlantic Philanthropies funding within selected Early Years strategies and projects, and within their users and stakeholders.
- 2 To build the capacity of Early Years staff to conduct their own participatory evaluation activities as an integral part of their on-going work.

Early Years nominated staff from five projects to be involved in the first stage of activities. These projects were:

- Eager and Able to Learn
- The Media Initiative for Children
- Community Development
- Policy and Advocacy
- Online Communications

Two external facilitators, Dr Katrina Collins and Dr Michael Brown, prepared a bespoke participatory evaluation training and implementation programme for Early Years, the structure of which was:

- A formative five day training workshop
- A five week evaluation implementation period
- A three day summative workshop
- The preparation and presentation of the participatory evaluation process and findings

## In this report:

Chapters Two to Five address Aim 1 stated above.

Chapter Seven addresses Aim 2 stated above.

# Facilitator's Profiles



**Dr. Katrina Collins**  
Evaluation Psychologist

Dr. Collins' research for her PhD at Queen's University Belfast focused on the impact of bullying on children and the role of peer relationships in bullying. After completing five years as a Research Fellow in the School of Education at University of Ulster at Jordanstown, Dr. Collins began her own Consultancy Company in 2003. Since that time she has been involved in a wide variety of research and evaluation activities for Government, NGOs and INGOs based in the North and South of Ireland. Dr. Collins has worked on development projects in Nepal and Romania supporting evaluation activities of organisations, funders and community members. While she values her initial training in traditional quantitative focused research methodologies, her work with communities in the social and health arenas have led to her to embrace and promote the participatory evaluation approach. She has published in peer reviewed Journals and presented research/evaluation findings at national and international conferences.

Dr. Collins has worked alongside Dr. Michael Brown over the past number of years combining their skill, expertise and enthusiasm for evaluation and development in many different contexts locally, nationally and internationally.



**Dr. Michael Brown**  
**Participatory Communication Practitioner**

Dr. Brown trained in conventional design and communication in the United Kingdom, before applying these skills to international development work. He spent 6 years living and working in Nepal, where his work developed into participatory approaches using communication as a methodology for social change, influenced by the principles of Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'.

Dr Brown returned to the United Kingdom in 1995, and after periods of lecturing in the University sector, founded the Development Media Workshop in 2005. The Development Media Workshop is a not-for-profit organisation using media and communication to focus on social and environmental issues both locally and globally. The Workshop produces documentary films, educational resources and facilitates participatory processes in which individuals and groups can address issues that directly affect them. The use of participatory media within social project evaluations is a distinct aspect of this work.

The Development Media Workshop has worked with a range on national and international clients and funders including Department for International Development, Irish Aid, The Wellcome Trust, The Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation, The Leprosy Mission, Northern Ireland Hospice, and Early Years - the organisation for young children.

# The Early Years Teams

## **The Media Initiative for Children**

This initiative combines cartoon media messages around diversity with an early years programme. Together they aim to promote positive attitudes to physical, social and cultural differences amongst young children, practitioners and parents. The messages also address bullying behaviours.

## **Community Development**

The Community Development Team works directly with independent and voluntary organisations in the sector building capacity, empowering local communities and services by providing training, coaching, and mentoring in governance, leadership and management to develop quality sustainable childcare services.

## **Eager and Able to Learn**

The Eager and Able to Learn Programme aims to impact on two year old children's eagerness and ability to learn by supporting their physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development in group settings and in partnership with parents at home.

## **Policy and Advocacy**

The Policy Officer role as part of the Knowledge Exchange Directorate supports the work of Early Years in building policy capacity, member and stakeholder engagement and advocacy in furtherance of the organisation's established policy objectives. This includes monitoring, analysis and influencing of relevant policies and proposed legislation of the NI Assembly, the Dail, the UK Parliament and other bodies as appropriate, policy research, stakeholder engagement and contributing to the production of Early Years publications, releases, consultations and briefing documents.

## **Online Communications - Web Master**

The web content co-ordinator develops, maintains and continuously update all Early Years online community which includes the website and social media sites. The web master is responsible for carrying out any ad-hoc design work in-house, collating and producing the members' newsletter, providing design and online solutions for colleagues and delivering an online communication service.

## CHAPTER 1

# What is Participatory Evaluation?

Participatory evaluation is reflective, action-oriented and seeks to build capacity by:

- providing stakeholders and beneficiaries with the opportunity to reflect on a project's progress and obstacles;
- generating knowledge that results in the application of lessons learned and leads to corrective action and/or improvements;
- providing beneficiaries and stakeholders with the tools to transform their environment.

Many different labels have been attached to participatory approaches, some with a long lineage in the context of third world development work. They include participatory learning and action, participatory rural assessment, rapid urban environmental assessment, rapid rural appraisal, participatory action research and evaluation<sup>1</sup>.

Common principles in participatory monitoring and evaluation include the following:

- **Participation** - opening up the design of the process to include those most directly affected and giving the intended beneficiaries the chance to speak out about local impacts.
- **Negotiation** between the different stakeholders to reach agreement about what will be monitored and evaluated, how and when data will be collected and analysed, what the data actually means, and how findings will be shared, and action taken.
- **Learning** - a focus on cumulative learning by all the participants as the basis for subsequent improvement and sustained action. This action includes local institution building or strengthening, thus increasing the capacity of people to initiate action on their own.
- **Flexibility** in adapting the evaluation to the wider external environment and to the set of local conditions and actors, as these factors change over time.

### **Conventional research versus participatory evaluation**

Conventional research/evaluation tend to be more funder focused and funder driven. The funder is the key client, providing financial support who ultimately defines the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. Usually participation of project stakeholders in the definition of the Terms of Reference is minimal. More often than not, the

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluating Socio Economic Development, SOURCEBOOK 2: Methods & Techniques Participatory approaches and methods

evaluation is carried out more to fulfil a management or accountability requirement than to respond to project needs. An outside expert or evaluator is appointed to conduct the evaluation. They collect the data, review the project or programme and produce a report. In most cases, stakeholders or beneficiaries play a passive role, providing information during the data collection stage but not participating in the evaluation itself. The process can be described as linear, with little or no feedback to the project.

In comparison the purpose, function and roles within a participatory evaluation are dramatically different. This type of an evaluation places as much (if not more) emphasis on the process as on the final output, i.e., the report. The purpose of the evaluation is to develop the capacity of stakeholders to assess their environment and take action while also completing the funder's requirement of monitoring and evaluation. Stakeholders and beneficiaries do more than provide information. They also decide on the Terms of Reference, conduct research, analyse findings and make recommendations. The evaluator in conventional evaluations becomes more of a facilitator in participatory evaluations by guiding the process at critical junctures and consolidating the final report, if necessary, based on the findings of the stakeholders. In this respect the process is much more circular.

### **The role of stakeholders**

Participatory evaluations recognize the wide range of knowledge, values and concerns of stakeholders. The question makers in participatory evaluations are the stakeholders. When project stakeholders are involved in analysing problems, constraints and obstacles, they can often propose solutions. As a result of the active engagement of stakeholders in reflection, assessment and action, a sense of ownership is created in participatory evaluations. In addition, capacities are built, beneficiaries are empowered and lessons learned are applied both in the field and at the programme or service level, increasing effectiveness. This sense of ownership of the process, of final recommendations and of action plans makes them much more likely to introduce necessary changes. The impact can be observed at an individual, community and organisational level as a result of employing a participatory evaluation.

In terms of engagement of stakeholders there is increasing recognition in these different policy domains that bottom-up involvement of local people in the development and evaluation process is key to achieving broad policy objectives. Involvement here implies active engagement of local people and agencies that goes beyond collecting the views of individuals, to processes of interactive dialogue, collective learning and joint action.

### **A 19 step Participatory Evaluation Process**

Participatory evaluation can be described as a 19 step process:

#### **PHASE 1**

Step 1 - Develop evaluation goals



Step 2 - Identify evaluation team

Step 3 - Plan logistics

Step 4 - Develop conceptual frameworks

#### PHASE 2

Step 5 - Organise stakeholder's working group

Step 6 - Develop evaluation questions

Step 7 - Identify data collection methods

Step 8 - Develop data collection tools

Step 9 - Finalise data collection plan

#### PHASE 3

Step 10 - Orient field teams

Step 11 - Conduct data collection

Step 12 - Organise information collected

Step 13 - Summarise information collected

#### PHASE 4

Step 14 - Draw out lessons learned

Step 15 - Stakeholder review of lessons learned

Step 16 - Summarise lessons learned

#### PHASE 5

Step 17 - Develop recommendations and appropriate action plan

#### PHASE 6

Step 18 - Prepare evaluation findings

Step 19 - Distribute evaluation findings

## CHAPTER 2

# Research Questions

Each team constructed their research questions for the participatory evaluation pilot by identifying initially what they wanted to know from their stakeholders. They then engaged the target stakeholder groups to ask representatives from these groups what questions they wanted included in the evaluation. The final research aim and sub questions were formulated directly from this engagement process with stakeholders and the teams' objectives.

Team	Overall Aim	Research sub questions
Media Initiative for Children	To examine the implementation and impact of the Media Initiative for Children in the Foundation Stage with particular reference to primary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the aspects of the training that will support teachers with programme implementation</li> <li>• To explore the response of parents to the perceived usefulness of the resource</li> <li>• To examine delivery of training with parents and the impact of the programme on their own attitudes</li> <li>• To explore the experiences of MIFC staff when working with teachers and parents in the programme</li> </ul>
Community Development	To assess the effectiveness of the resources/training provided to Management Committees and Playgroup Staff by EY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the training inputs received by Management Committees and Playgroup Staff</li> <li>• To examine the contribution and impact of the training received on Management Committees and Playgroup Staff</li> <li>• To identify additional needs and support required by Management Committees and Playgroup Staff</li> </ul>

Team	Overall Aim	Research sub questions
Eager and Able to Learn	To explore the experiences of stakeholders in terms of EAL resources, the development of the programme and programme outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the level of knowledge, skill and confidence in support settings in rolling out EAL</li> <li>• To examine the appropriateness of the resources included in the service design manual</li> <li>• To assess stakeholders' response to programme outcomes following RCT and evaluation results</li> <li>• To discuss the successes and challenges of participation in RCT research process</li> </ul>
Policy and Advocacy	To identify the level of awareness of EY events and campaigns and their impact on member and staff mobilisation to address issues affecting the Early Years sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish the level of awareness of Early Years events and campaigns with members and staff</li> <li>• To examine the usefulness of the information provided and events organised</li> <li>• To explore the level of engagement and mobilisation with politicians and the Northern Ireland Executive</li> </ul>
Online Communications	To gain an understanding of member and staff needs in order to provide online resources which meet the identified need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the support needed for staff that will increase submissions to the EY website</li> <li>• To increase the member awareness about the types of online resources available to them</li> <li>• To identify the needs of members which can be met through EY online community</li> <li>• To improve the operation of website in order to increase member and staff engagement with online communications</li> </ul>

# Research Methods

Participatory evaluation methods sit alongside traditional research methods but differ in the process by which they are applied and the approach used when engaging with stakeholders. The emphasis on the word participatory goes beyond the choice of specific methods or techniques to wider consideration of who initiates and undertakes the evaluation process and who learns or benefits from the findings. These are methods which can be considered to involve appraisal and assessment (observation, semi-structured interviews, transects), while others are typically participatory learning and action methods (participatory mapping, diagramming, making comparisons etc.). However each can be used in a data collecting or empowering mode.

The different types of participatory methods have been categorised into four main classes<sup>2</sup>:

## 1) Group and team dynamics;

Methods to do with group and team dynamics are aimed at building effective interdisciplinary and intersectoral teams who are able to work closely with local people, approach a situation from multiple perspectives and negotiate with relevant stakeholders.

## 2) Sampling

Sampling receives special attention in participatory approaches so as to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented, including those from the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of the community.

## 3) Interviewing and dialogue;

The emphasis in participatory methods is on those that foster a sensitive and mutually beneficial dialogue. At an individual level, semi-structured interviews that appear informal and conversational help to reduce the social distance between evaluator and interviewee. There is also a host of techniques within the participatory approach that are aimed at facilitating social and collective dialogue and engagement.

## 4) Visualisation and diagramming.

The fourth category of diagramming and visual construction involves group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing and collective appraisal. These more creative methods seek to draw on local knowledge and perspectives using categories, criteria and symbols that are relevant and potent for local people.

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<sup>2</sup> Evaluating Socio Economic Development, SOURCEBOOK 2: Methods & Techniques Participatory approaches and methods

5) Other methods include community surveys and a range of audio-visual techniques including storytelling, popular theatre, songs and photovoice.

### Methods used in Early Years Participatory Evaluation Pilot

The teams were presented with a toolkit of evaluation methods from which they selected and matched to the research questions being asked and the type of stakeholder they were engaging with. A wide variety of methods were utilised by the teams during both data collection times. In Stage 1 a total of 9 different methods were employed across the teams. Three additional methods were introduced at Stage 2. The full toolkit and descriptions are provided in the table below:

### Research Methods at Stage 1

Research Method	Description
Rating scale	A method used to assign a value to a particular indicator which provides a quantitative measure about that issue or topic under examination
The Body Exercise	The method is intended to elicit the experience of learning by asking participants to comment on their thoughts about the subject or issues by placing notes on the 'head' of the body; something they felt by placing notes on the 'heart' of the body; something they have learned or gained which they will take away in the 'carrier bag' and something that was not so good and could loose in the 'dustbin'
Interviews	A face to face or telephone discussion which is one to one following a structured or semi structured protocol of questions about a specific issue or topic
Questionnaires	A means of collecting participant views in a structured format which can incorporate closed and open ended questions
Online Surveys	Electronic version of a survey where participants are asked a series of questions which can be closed or open ended
Checklists	Checklists offer participants the opportunity to select a number of different options under the topic or issue being discussed
Target evaluations	This is a form of a rating scale which requires participants to rate their views within a target board against specific statements
Jelly Bears Tree	Participants are asked to choose a bear which best describes how they feel based on the expression of the bear. Comments can be made verbally or in written format beside each bear

Research Method	Description
Focus Groups	An opportunity to discuss issues in a group format using a number of different techniques
Graffiti Wall/Comment Board	Comments collected about specific topics by asking participants to put their comments on the wall
Spider Diagram	This is a type of graphic organiser that is used to investigate and enumerate various aspects of a single theme or topic, helping the participants to organize their thoughts.
Online feedback - guided questions (intranet for EY staff and member area and emails to gather member feedback)	Used to obtain views of participants by structuring questions to elicit feedback on specific issues or topics
Continuum	Allows participant to place themselves in relation to others with polarised points such as 1-10 or words on opposite ends of the scale

## Methods used by each team at Stage 1

Team	Summary of Methods
Media Initiative for Children	Focus Groups
Community Development	Telephone Interviews Jelly Bears Focus Groups Rating Scale The Body Exercise Spider Diagram
Eager and Able to Learn	The Body Exercise Target Evaluations Graffiti Wall Online Feedback/guided questions through email
Policy and Advocacy	Rating Scale Target Evaluation Online feedback - guided questions Graffiti Wall/Comment Board Focus group
Online Communications	Online feedback through intranet, internet and emails - guided questions Graffiti Wall/Comment Board

## Summary of Stakeholders Engaged at Stage 1

Parents  
 Teachers  
 Playgroup staff  
 Management Committees  
 Ex-Management Committee Members  
 EY staff  
 Members

## Methods used by each team at Stage 2

Team	Summary of Methods
Media Initiative for Children	Checklists Rating Scale The Body Exercise Focus Groups Target Evaluations
Community Development	Telephone Interviews Jelly Bears Focus Groups Target Board Rating Scale Spider Diagram The Body Exercise Online Survey
Eager and Able to Learn	The Body Exercise Focus Groups Continuum Target Evaluations Guided Interview
Policy and Advocacy	Questionnaires Online Survey Graffiti Wall Rating Scale Focus Group
Online Communications	Questionnaires Online Survey Graffiti Wall Telephone Interviews Rating Scale

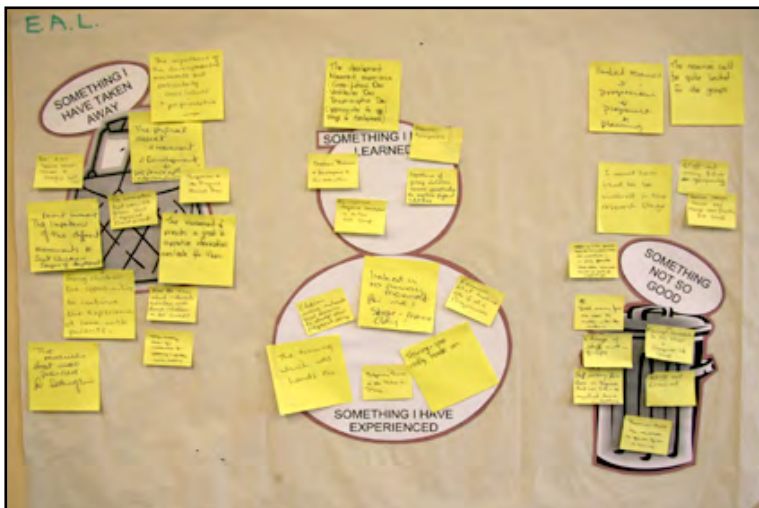
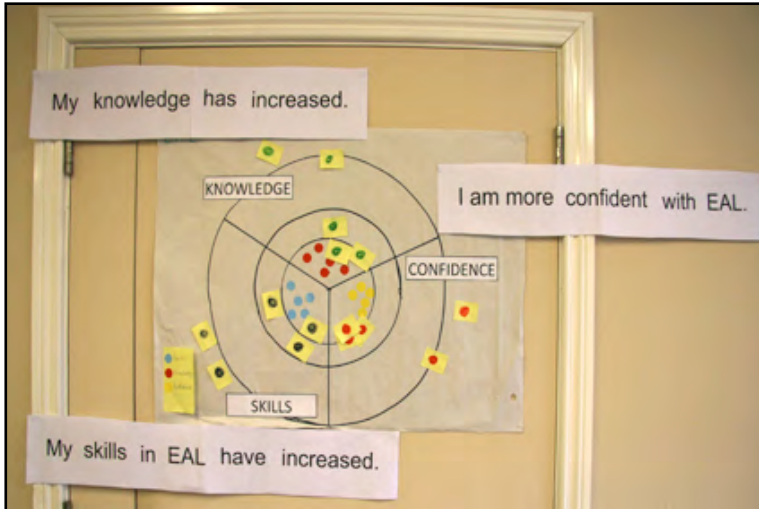
## Summary of Stakeholders Engaged at Stage 2

Parents  
 Teachers  
 Playgroup staff  
 Management Committees  
 EY staff  
 Members

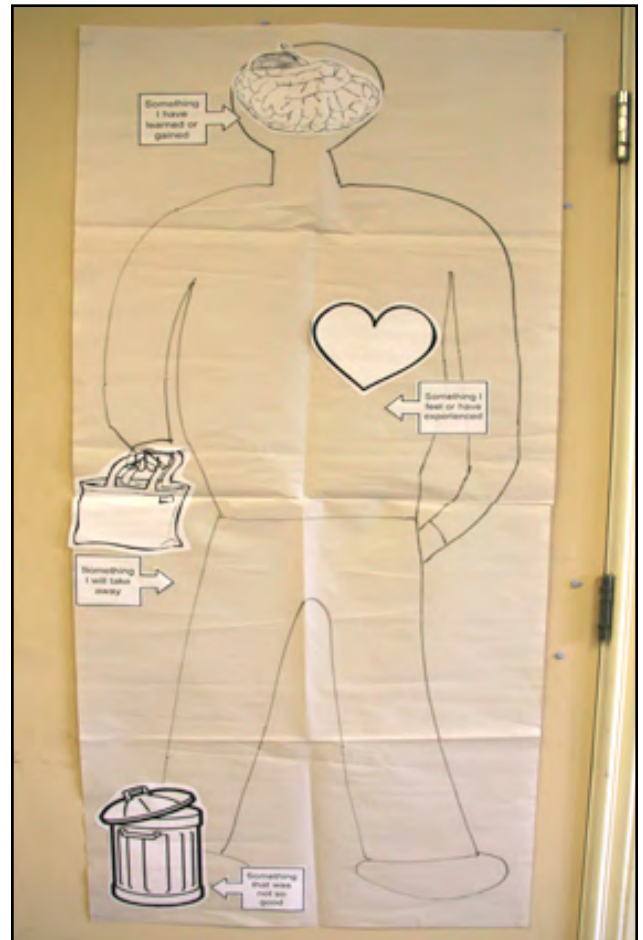
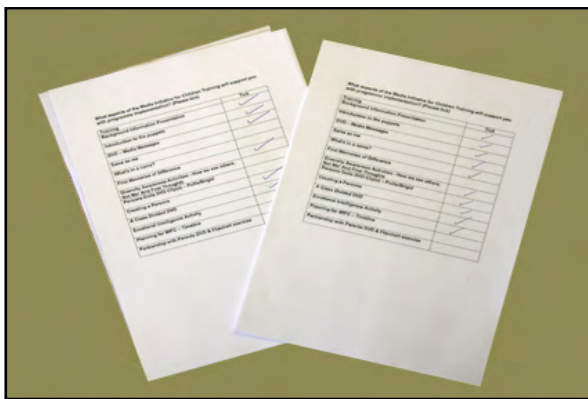


## Examples of Data Collection Tools used by EY Teams in Stage 2

### Eager and Able to Learn:



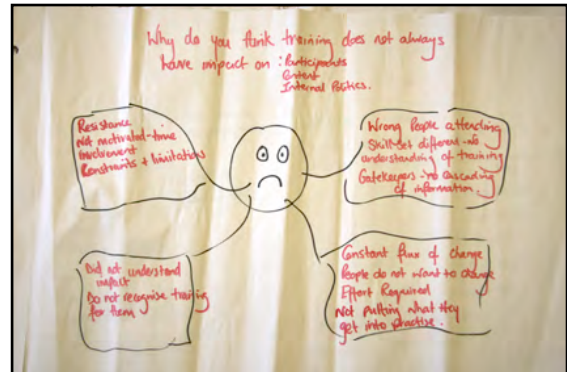
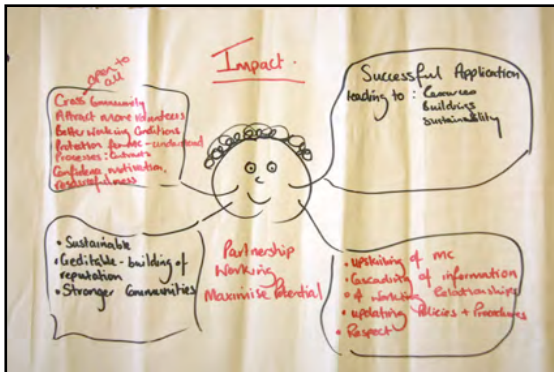
Media Initiative for Children:



YOUR VIEWS ON THE PARENTS' WORKSHOPS	
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	•••••
THE DVD	•••••
INTRODUCTION TO THE PUPPETS	•••••
EXERCISES ON MEMORIES	•••••
OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION	•••••
PARENTS RESOURCES	•••••



# Community Development:



STAFF	Settings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Content</li> <li>• Content</li> <li>• Policies + Procedures</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Valued</li> <li>• Quality provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies + Procedures</li> <li>• Better understanding</li> <li>• Better understanding of R+R's of MC</li> <li>• Employment/employee role</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• New buildings</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Spirit</li> <li>• Community building</li> <li>• Addressing local need</li> <li>• Provide services for children with additional needs.</li> </ul>
<p>-ve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trade union Disagreement + Conflict</li> </ul>	

What benefit was committee training /mentoring	
Knowledge	33333
awareness	33333
skills	13333
other ENCOURAGEMENT INFORMATION RESOURCE	SUPPORT 3 23

**Training**

How appropriate is the EY Training to MC?

Rating Scale

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

Have you attended any MC Training delivered by EY?

Basic R+R training (good for new members)

Rules + Responsibilities (What goes into policy - actual policy template)

Child Protection (e-policy - covering)

Support, Supervision + Appraisal (difficulty getting good)

Financial Support

If Yes - How beneficial was this to you Setting

Rating Scale

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

(Policy)

Ex. Management Committee: Participatory Evaluation

What Questions?

What would you have liked to have known before?

+ve CHALLENGES -ve

CHALLENGE PILE

③ Have you ever requested Specific training from EY for your Setting?

EYS Support.  
CD Support  
And/S.H.

Request advice SS - Staff issues.

What do you feel are the main benefits of being on a MC??

- It can have email.
- EYS info Social Censor.
- Continuity

Parents: Participatory Evaluation

What Questions

Contact with Management



What impact did the Support you have had from EY have on your MC/Setting?

Environment of Staff/Setting

Thoughts

- Still lack of understanding
- Good to have second opinion
- Backups

Environment of Staff/Setting

- Awareness SSA - needs to be implemented
- Direct Correspondence with MC.

Feelings

Still a learning Process

- Where is the direction.
- Need to promote ourselves.

Why do you feel people leave MC?

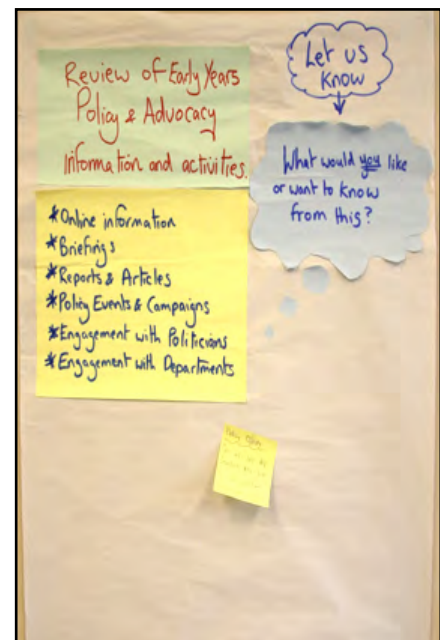
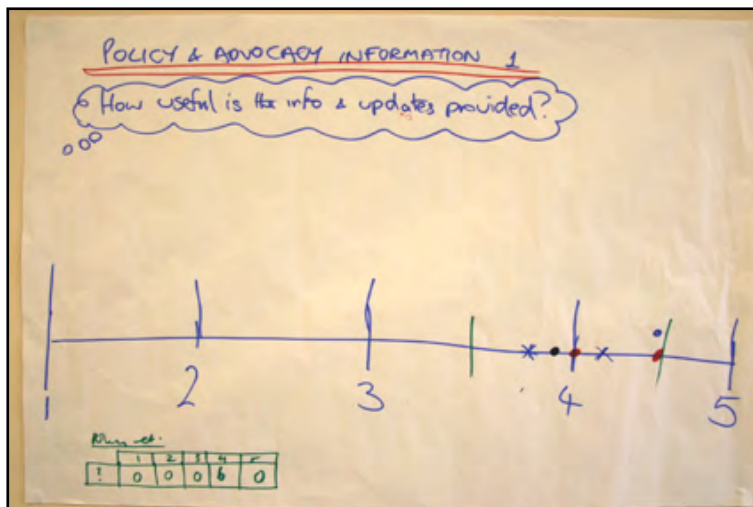
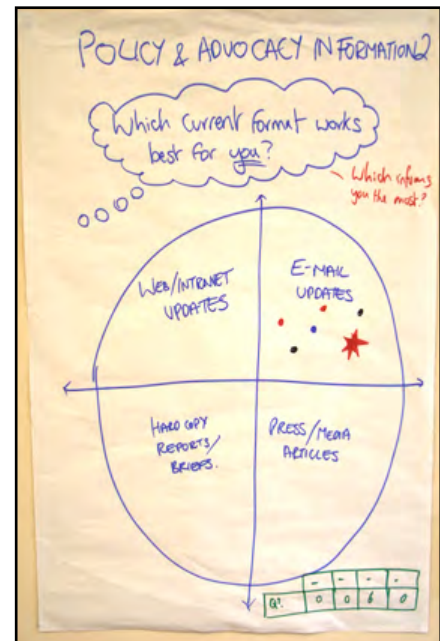
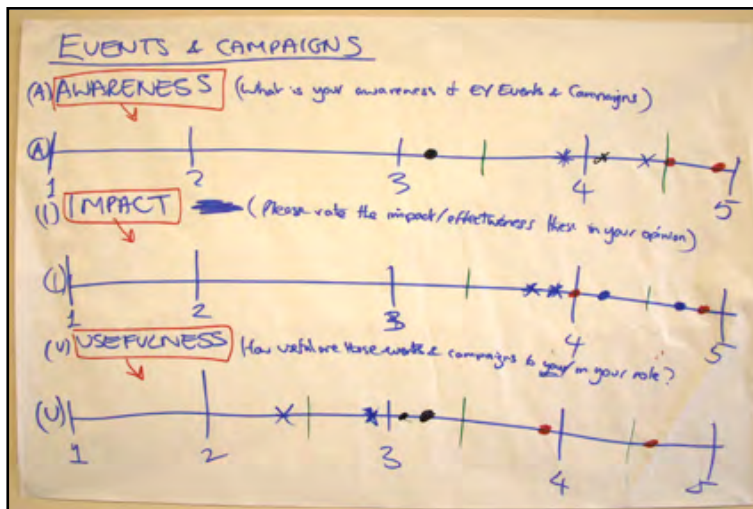
- Responsibility
- Self-qualification
- Child leave
- Collect with Staff
- Ways of Staff to improve
- Let's form Staff
- Horise
- Additional Resources
- Structure EY SS
- Structure
- How do they support us.

What are the Challenges?

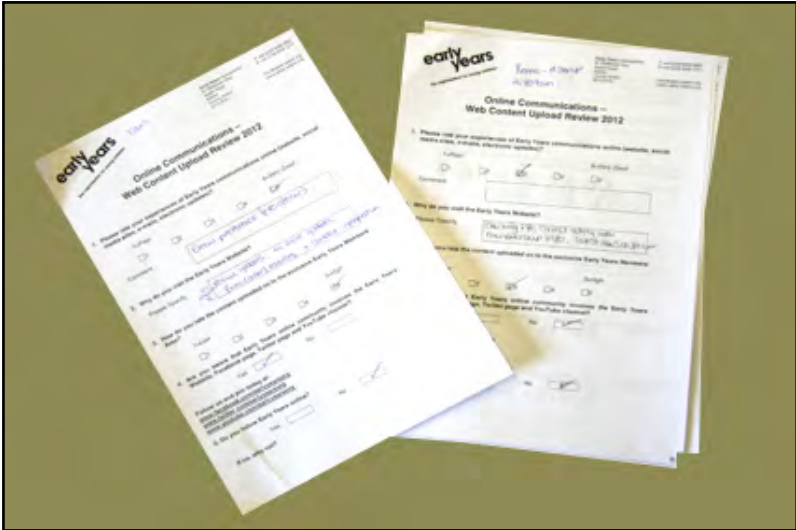
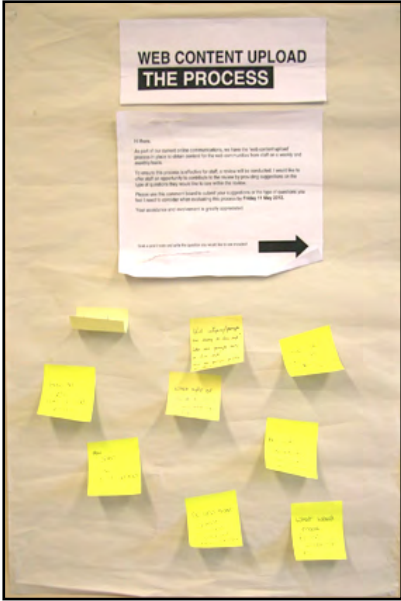
- Right audience
- Subject matter
- Time/Value
- Resources available
- Level of knowledge (As an quality they can do it but to staff)
- Facilitation Keeping it interesting
- Reactions to take on board direction
- Staff/Setting
- Additional Resources
- Structure EY SS
- Structure
- How do they support us.



## Policy and Advocacy:



Online Communications:



# Conceptual Frameworks

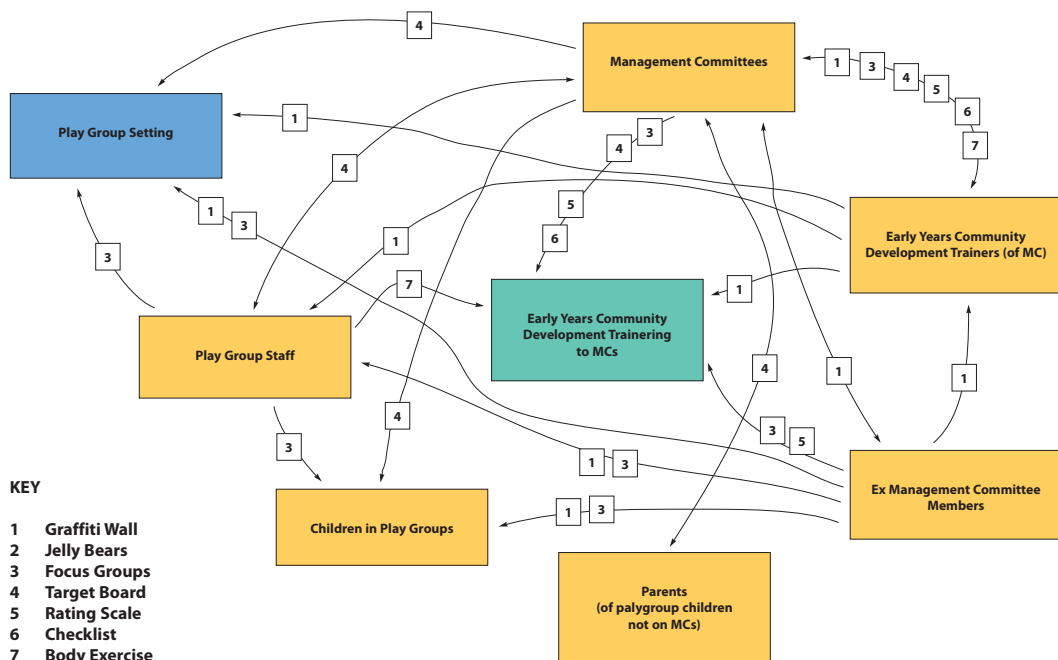
Conceptual Frameworks are a tool that allows different elements of a project to be mapped out, so that an evaluation can be planned. Typical elements include 'people', 'resources' and 'processes or methodologies'.

Participants created their own conceptual frameworks to identify the stakeholders they wanted to engage, the resources they wanted to explore, and the processes and methodologies they wanted to investigate. This visual approach to planning and management of the evaluation process enable the teams to create diagrammatic frameworks which enabled them to follow the rationale for asking questions, involving stakeholders and establishing potential outcomes for their work. Frameworks completed prior to data collection in the field were then amended in the summative training workshop to account for changes that had to take place to facilitate the six week timescale.

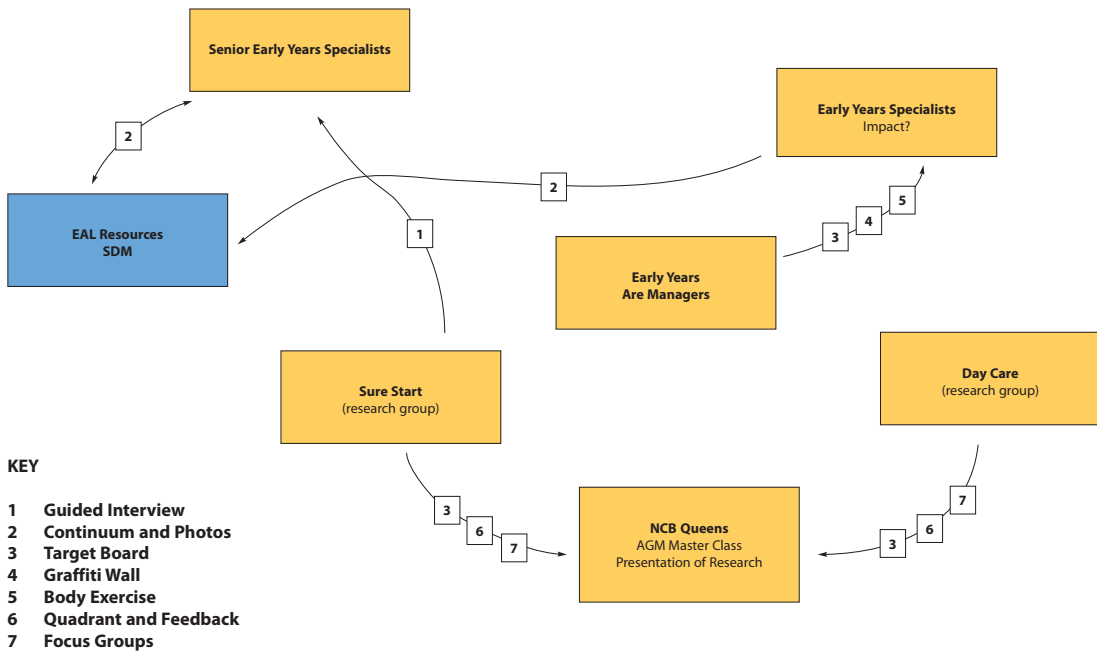
## Proposed Conceptual Frameworks

The following conceptual frameworks were prepared by the teams to guide their participatory evaluation engagement.

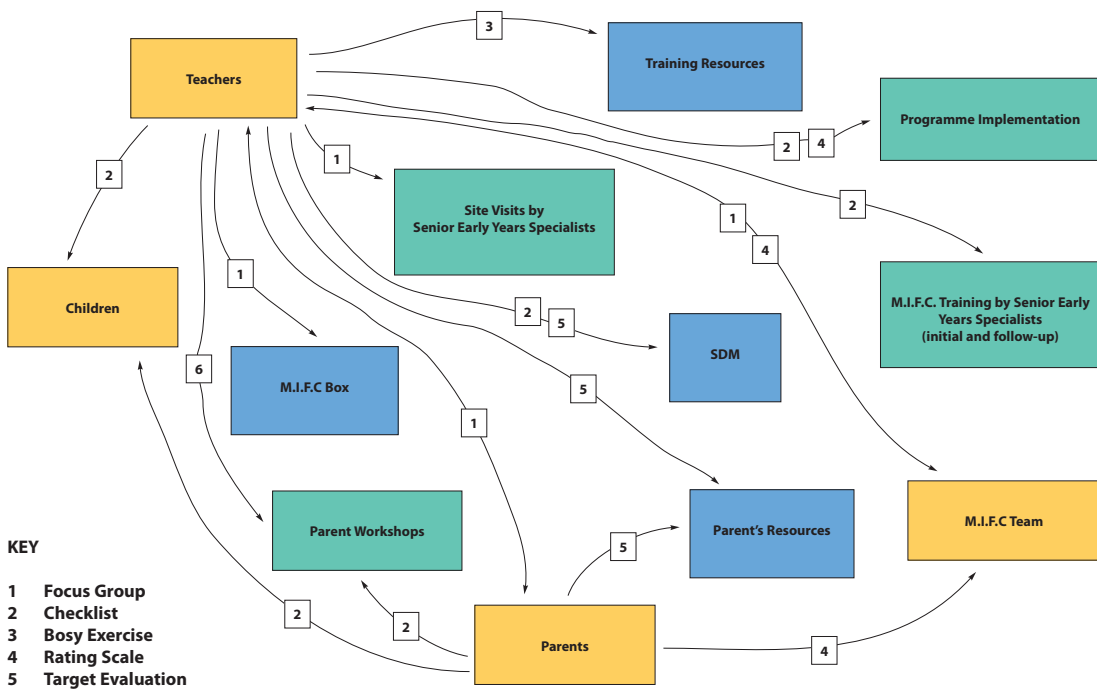
Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Community Development**



Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Eager and Able to Learn**

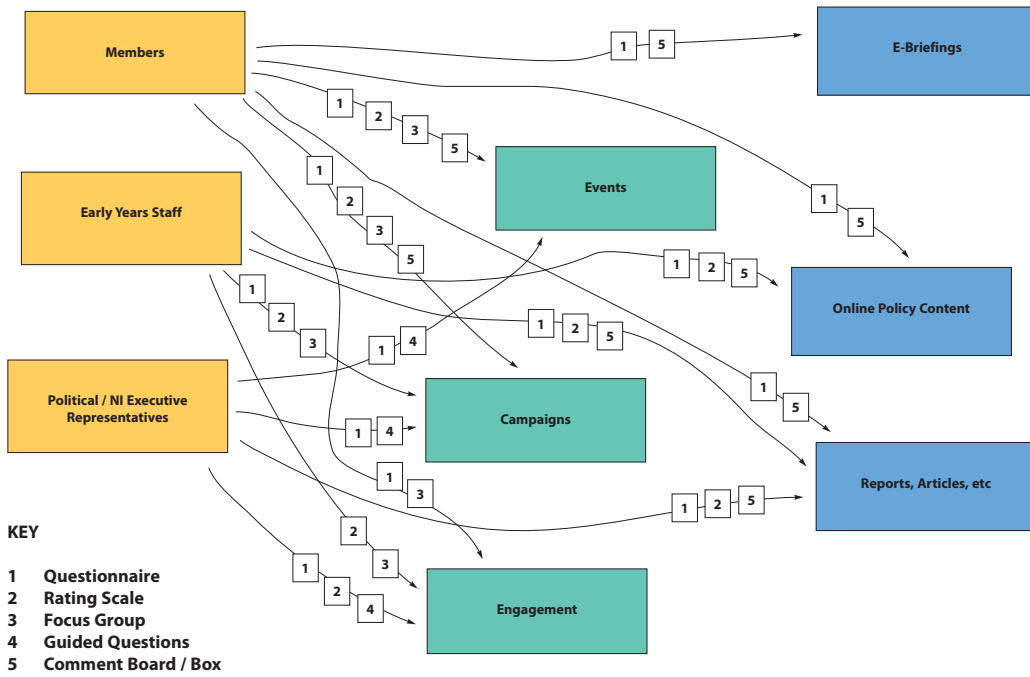


Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Media Initiative for Children**

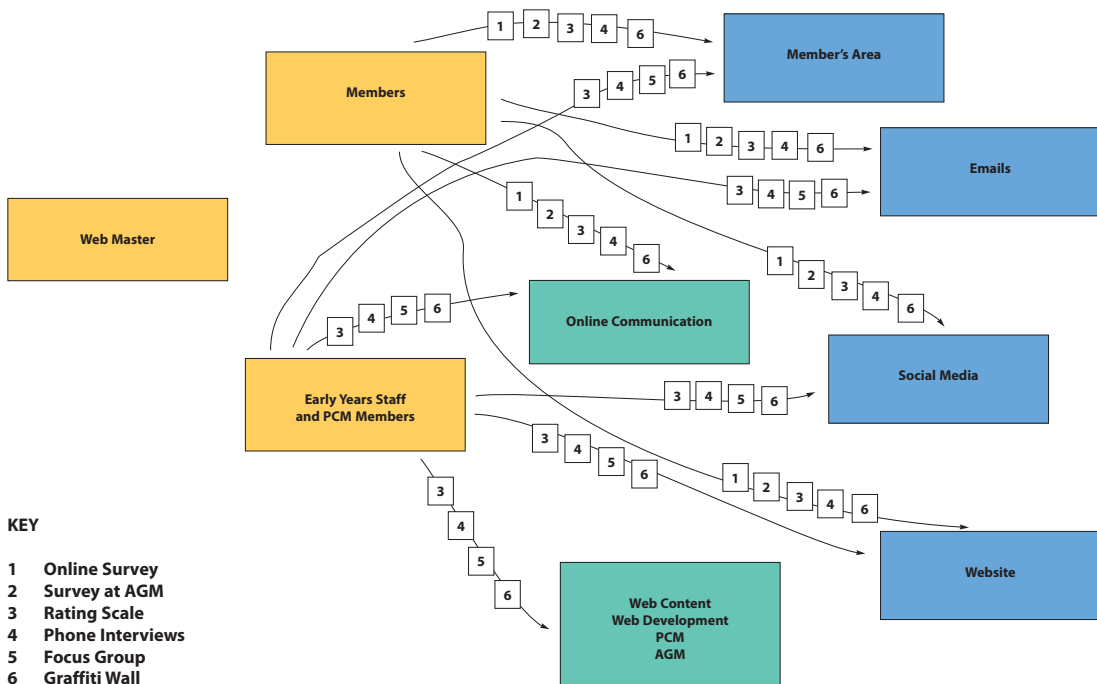




Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Policy and Advocacy**



Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Online Communications**

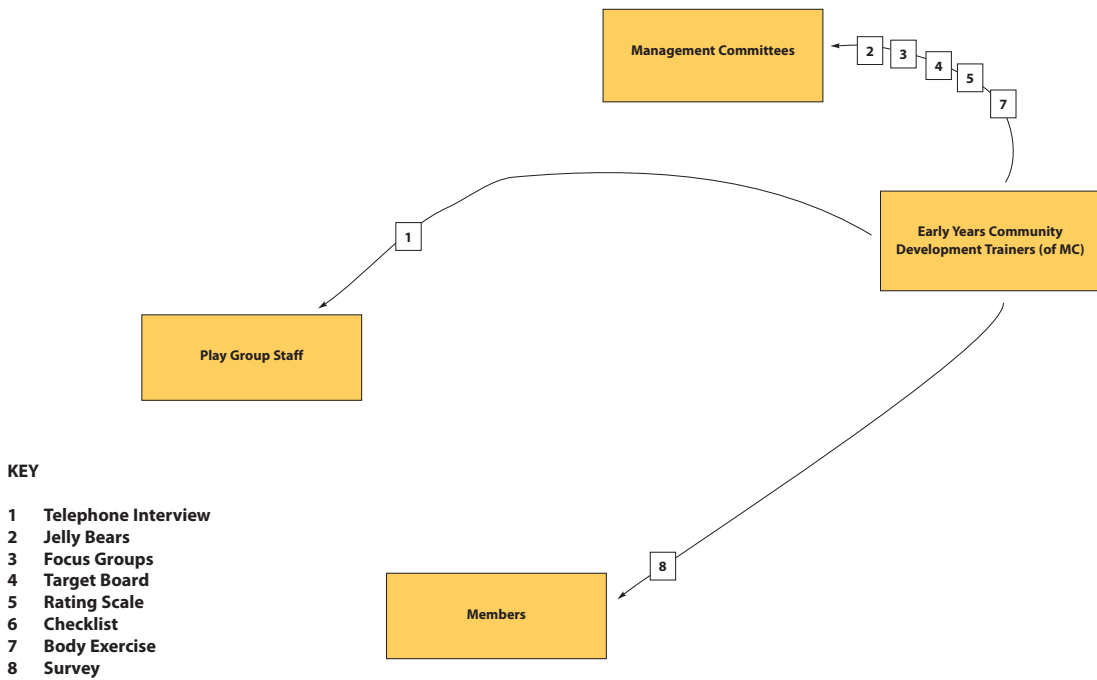


### Actual Conceptual Frameworks

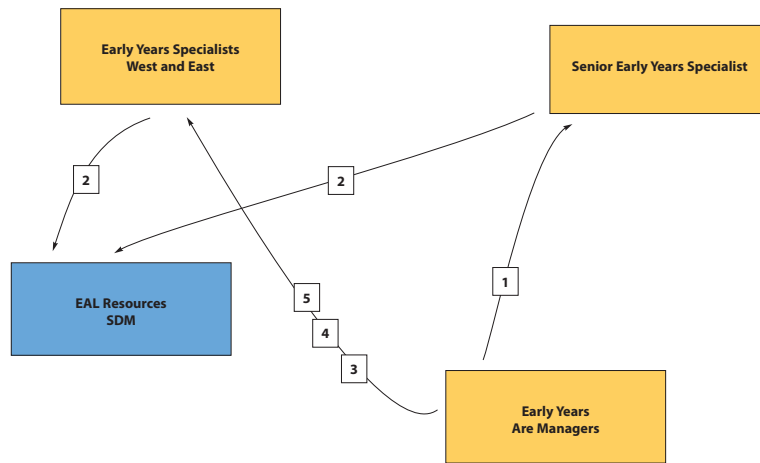
The following conceptual frameworks are the amended frameworks produced by each team to show their actual participatory evaluation engagement. These differ from the proposed conceptual frameworks.

The facilitators emphasised that conceptual frameworks are an evaluation planning tool. It is not uncommon in real life situations for evaluation plans to need flexibility to adapt to the situation of user groups and stakeholders. The important thing is to maintain transparency and fidelity about which areas of evaluation have been achieved, and which areas need to be revisited.

Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Community Development**



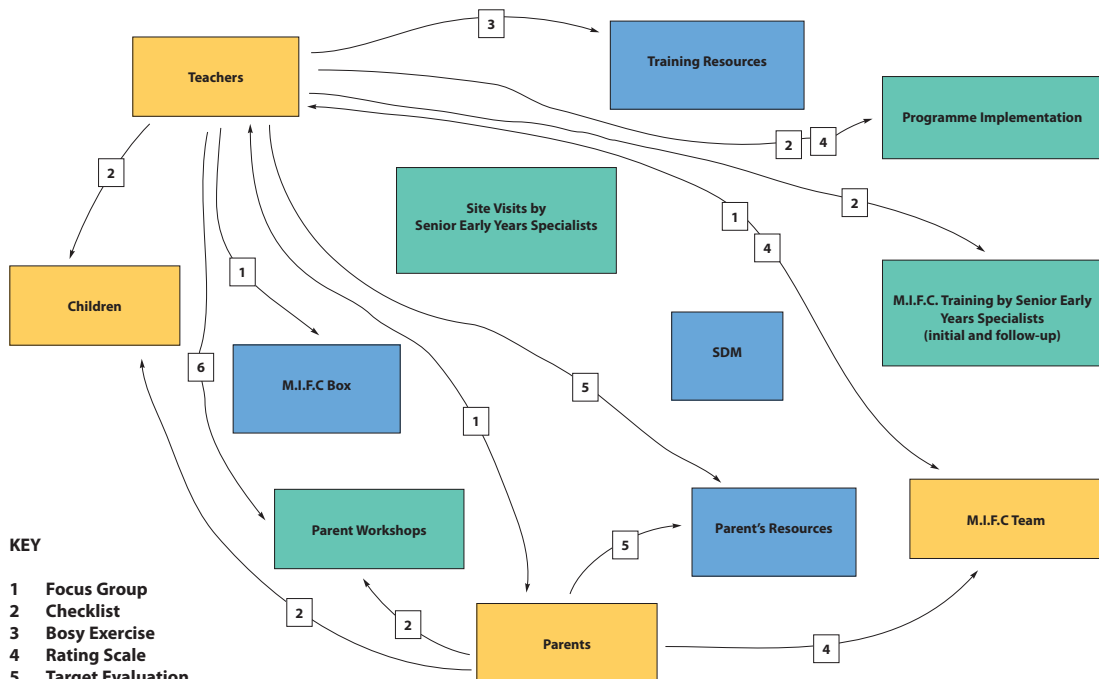
Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Eager and Able to Learn**



**KEY**

- 1 Guided Interview
- 2 Continuum
- 3 Target Board
- 4 Graffiti Wall
- 5 Body Exercise

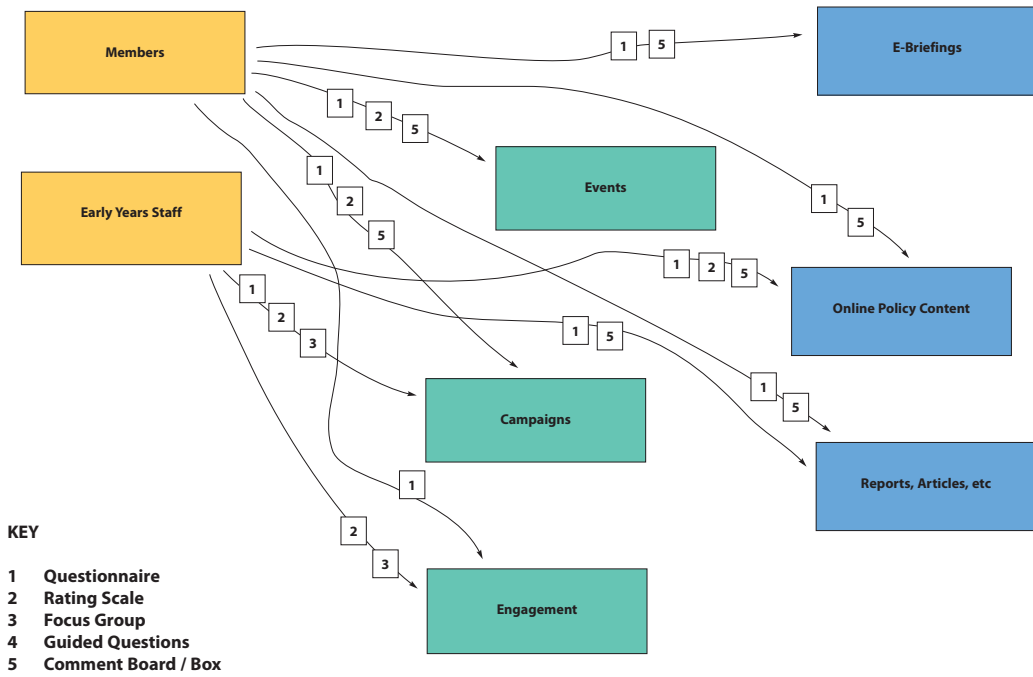
Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Media Initiative for Children**



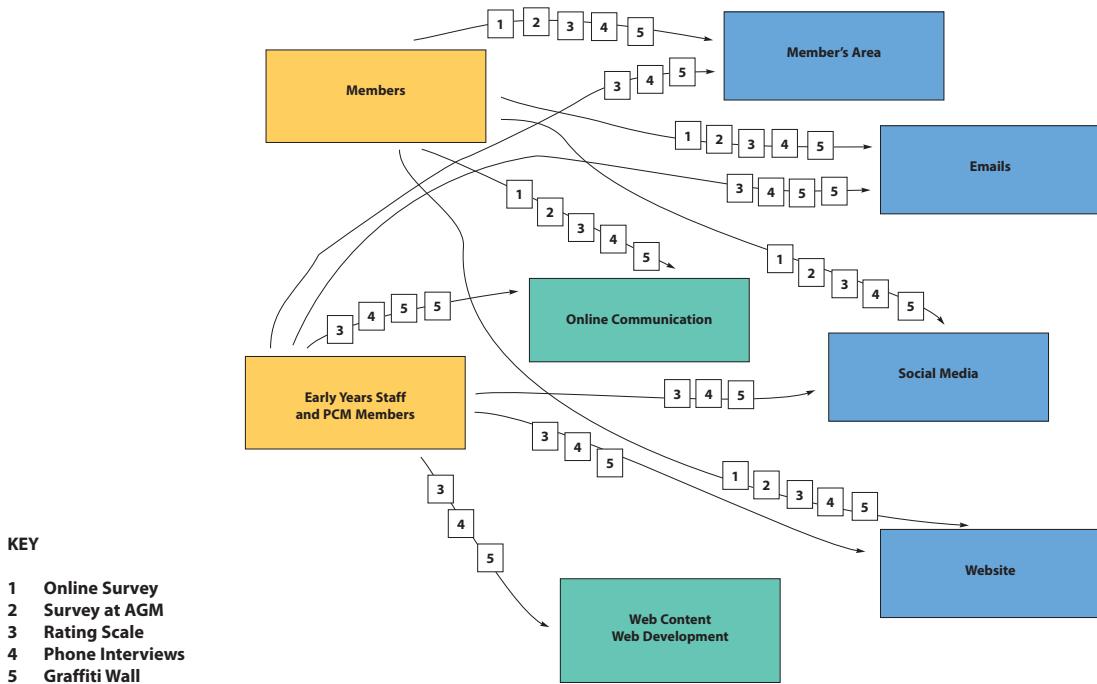
**KEY**

- 1 Focus Group
- 2 Checklist
- 3 Bosy Exercise
- 4 Rating Scale
- 5 Target Evaluation
- 6

Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Policy and Advocacy**



Participatory Evaluation **Conceptual Framework - Online Communications**



# Research Findings

The research findings in this section refer to the information collected, collated and organised by each team taking part in the Participatory Evaluation pilot. The data accumulated during the six week collection period is presented separately for each team. Their findings are linked to the conceptual framework, research questions and associated indicators. The applied methods provide the structure around which the data is reported.

## 5.1 Media Initiative for Children

### Research Questions:

- To examine the implementation and impact of the Media Initiative for Children in the Foundation Stage with particular reference to primary schools.
- To identify the aspects of the training that will support teachers with programme implementation
- To explore the response of parents to the perceived usefulness of the resource
- To examine delivery of training with parents and the impact of the programme on their own attitudes
- To explore the experiences of MIFC staff when working with teachers and parents in the programme

### Indicators:

Responsiveness of stakeholders to the programme

Utility of the resources

Impact of the programme

### Data Collection Methods:

Checklists

Rating Scale

The Body Exercise

Focus Groups

Target Evaluations

## Research Findings

### Parents

#### *Usefulness of the parents' resources*

16% of parents rated the resources within the MIFC programme as 'very useful' and 84% rated them as 'useful'. They commented on the specific parts of the workshop by

using a checklist to indicate which elements they found most informative. Based on their feedback parents found the 'Background Information' and 'Introduction to the Puppets' as most informative. In contrast, the exercise on 'Memories' received the fewest nominations from parents. The table below summarises their overall responses (note: in checklists multiple responses can be given):

Table 1: Checklist of responses to MIFC programme components

Workshop Component	Number of responses	% of participants
Background information	15	79
Introduction to the puppets	15	79
Parents resources	11	58
The DVD	10	53
Opportunity for discussion	5	26
Exercise on memories	2	11

### ***Impact of the training session on parental attitudes***

The quotes from parents below indicate how today's session helped them look at their own attitudes to differences in communities. The consensus among parents who responded to this question suggest a prior lack of awareness about the influence parents can have on their children's attitudes, perceptions and actions.

Parents also made reference to the social and cultural changes that occurred in their communities by virtue of them coming together to attend workshops. They expressed hopes that this would continue through their children's relationships with others in different communities in the coming years.

*"I didn't realise the impact I could have on my children with what I say"*

*"I didn't really know children at 3 years could pick these things up"*

*"We can only hope that in 10 years time our children will be sitting together in the part"*

### ***The role of the teacher in implementing and supporting the MIFC programme***

Parents recognised the instrumental role that is played by both the school and teachers in attitudinal and social-emotional development of their children. They viewed their role in implementing and supporting the key messages delivered through the MIFC programme as extremely important.

### ***Parents' rating of programme delivery***

Parents were asked to rate the facilitator in terms of her 'Knowledge', 'Skill' and 'Confidence' in the MIFC programme. Parents who responded all awarded the highest

rating on each of the indicators suggesting they found the facilitator to be 'Very Knowledgeable', 'Highly Skilled' and 'Very Confident'.

### Teachers

Teachers took part in a 2 day training workshops to introduce the MIFC programme, core content, foundation of the approach, resources and implementation programme. The 2 day format provided opportunity for evaluation to be conducted at the start (baseline) and end (endline) of the workshops. A comparison between knowledge, skills and confidence following the training could be made based on these indicators. Participants were also able to provide a ranking through a checklist method of the components of the training they preferred. Finally teachers gave feedback on what they thought about the programme, what they felt, what they took away and what they would leave behind using the Body evaluation exercise. Findings for each of these methods are presented below:

#### *Teachers' response to the components of the MIFC programme*

Teachers selection of their preferred elements of the programme revealed that 'Background Information Presentation', 'Introduction to the Puppets' and 'DVD - Media Messages' received the most nominations (Table 2). In contrast, 'Emotional Intelligence Activity', 'Planning for MIFC - Timeline' and 'Partnership with Parents DVD and Flipchart' were selected the least often. Teachers and parents choose the same components as their preferred elements of the programme.

Table 2: Teachers' ranking on their preferred parts of the MIFC programme

Aspect of Training	Total No. of Nominations
Background Information Presentation	40
Introduction to the Puppets	41
DVD - Media Messages	39
Creating a Persona	38
Persona Dolls DVD Clips	34
A Class Divided DVD	32
Same as me	30
Planning for MIFC - Timeline	29
Diversity Awareness Activities	27
First Memories of Difference	26
What's in a name?	24
Emotional Intelligence Activity	23
Partnership with Parents DVD & Flipchart	23

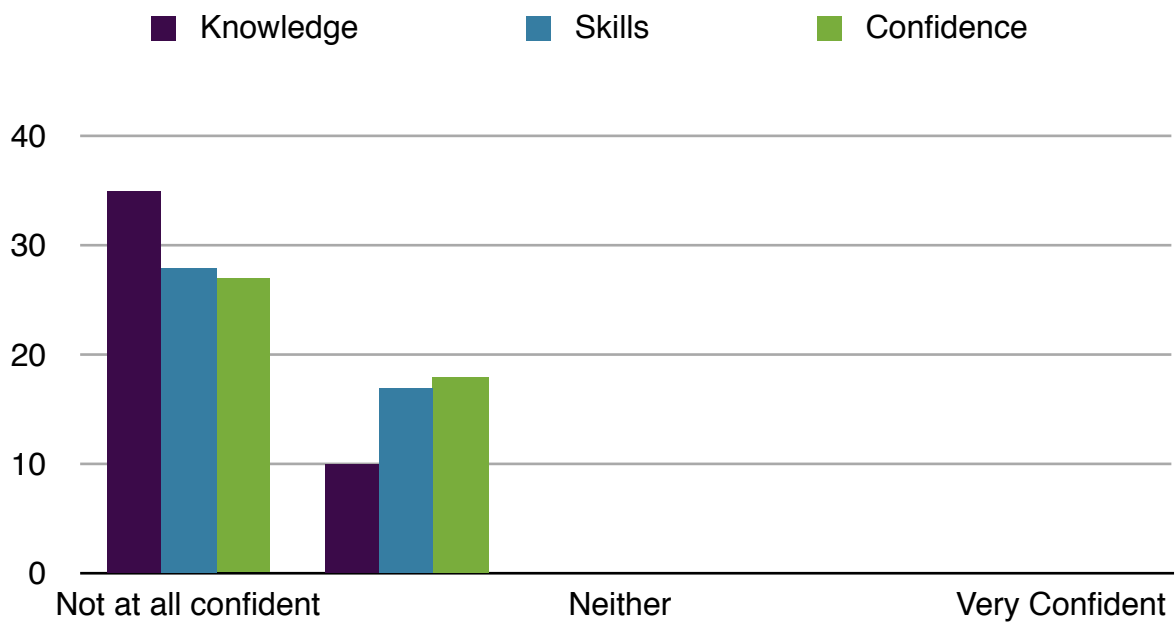
#### *Teacher Training-Level of knowledge, skills and confidence after training on MIFC programme*

Ratings of Knowledge, Skills and Confidence illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 highlight the positive shift on the scale from the beginning of Day 1 to the end of Day 2 training sessions. Overall the greatest mean difference was observed for the Knowledge

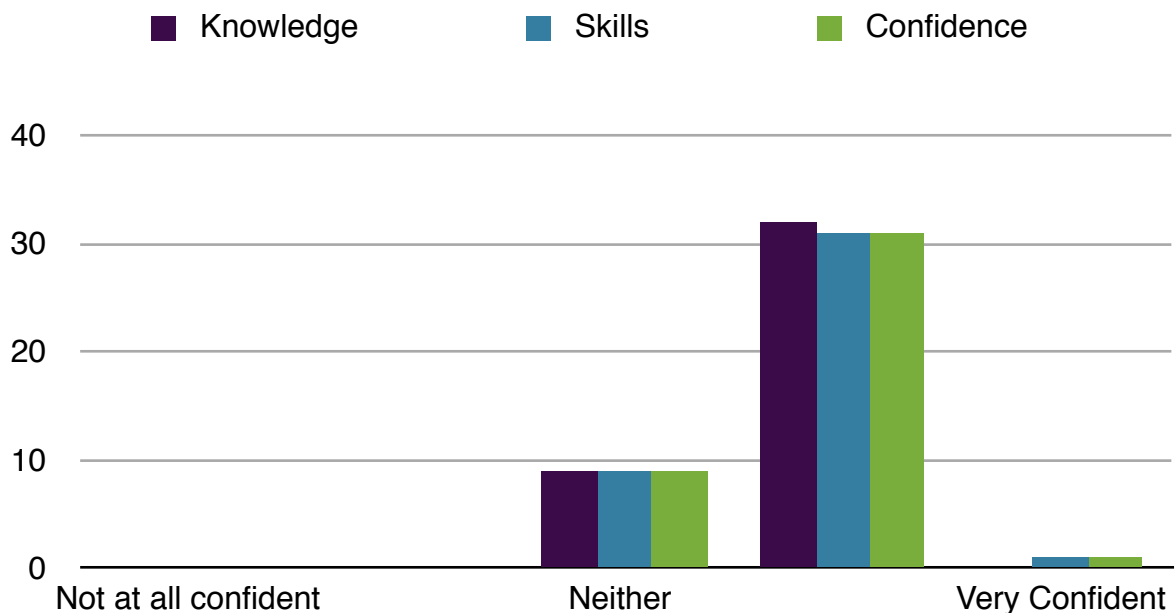
indicator (2.57), followed by Skills (2.42) and Confidence (2.4). This suggests teachers became more informed about the MIFC programme during the workshops but will only be able to improve on skill and confidence when given an opportunity to apply this knowledge in their teaching environment.

Figures 1 and 2 Rating Scale to track indicators of Knowledge, Skills and Confidence on Day 1 and Day 2 of the MIFC training programme

**Day 1**



**Day 2**





### ***Teacher feedback***

The comments made by teachers which were recorded through the Body evaluation exercise have been collated and grouped into agreed categories/themes by the MIFC participatory evaluation team. The themes centred around:

*ATTITUDINAL CHANGES*

*SOCIAL AND GROUP DYNAMICS*

*PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION*

*TRAINING RESOURCES*

### ***Feelings about the training:***

- Adults use of stereotypical statements/judgmental language
- Better awareness of MIFC and respect for others
- Listening to others experiences
- Using the puppets
- Excited by opportunities to learn

### ***Something that was learned***

- How young children can be and are aware of differences
- To be more open minded about diversity not just religion
- The importance of this work in an early years classroom
- Children need to be exposed to disability and difference and the puppets are an excellent tool to do this

### ***Something to take away:***

- Ideas and strategies for implementation
- The degree to which children are influenced by adults
- To let children discuss their own thoughts and ideas
- To continue to be aware of showing respect and unconditional positive regard to others regardless of race, colour, age, ability, culture, religion etc

### ***Something that was not so good:***

- Timing of the training
- First day activities
- Implementation issues

### **Inclusion Team - Early Years Staff**

The inclusion team took part in a focus group with 6 participants as part of the MIFC team's engagement with stakeholders. Two key areas of interest were explored during the session; experiences with delivering MIFC programme to teachers and experiences of delivery to parents. The same sub questions were asked about both groups which centred on the main impact of delivery.

#### ***On training teachers***

##### *Successes*

- Children referring to prior experiences and memories of MIFC programme in pre school
- Building up of cross community relationships between schools where schools have been traditionally segregated
- Involvement of parents
- Commitment and willingness of school Principals to engage in programme and support their staff
- Schools and teachers acting as ambassadors for the programme
- Request by schools who have successfully implemented MIFC to have it extended to P7 pupils
- The resources support implementation of the Foundation Stage Curriculum especially PDMU and evidenced links between the Curriculum and MIFC programme
- Training on emotional intelligence

##### *Challenges*

- Teachers are reticent when having to share personal experiences
- Schools not recognising the need for all teachers who will be implementing the programme to attend the training
- Socio-economic issues add further challenges to the implementation of the programme for teachers
- The culture and ethos of primary schools is different to pre school settings as a reluctance to engage in the Inclusion Team's visual methods of observation and feedback has been observed
- Time required to build relationships and provide support to teachers

##### *Barriers*

- Teachers are not as flexible with their daily timetables which has impacted on training and building relationships with teachers
- Less value is placed on components of training covered on Day 1 of the workshops

#### ***On training parents***

##### *Successes*

- The immediate willingness of parents to engage in cross community hosting of workshops

- For some parents it is the first opportunity to meet and discuss issues with parents from a different community which resulted in 'light bulb' moments
- Parents appreciate resources which allows them to support children with the work at home
- The continuity of programme delivery between pre school and primary school is valued by parents
- The involvement of grandparents in workshops addresses the intergenerational approach advocated by the MIFC programme

#### *Challenges*

- Suitability of the timing of the workshops
- Finding a neutral venue for the first workshop
- Facilitators concerns about managing community relations issues

#### *Barriers*

- Language of parents where English is not their first language
- Parents who need most exposure to the programme are least likely to attend

## 5.2 Community Development

### Research Questions:

- To assess the effectiveness of the resources and training provided to Management Committees and Playgroup Staff by EY
- To identify the training and resources inputs received by Management Committees and Playgroup Staff
- To examine the contribution and impact of the training received on Management Committees and Playgroup Staff
- To identify additional needs and support required by Management Committees and Playgroup Staff

### Indicators:

Utility of resources or materials within programmes/services

Impact of training on playgroup setting and Management Committee

### Data Collection Methods:

Telephone Interviews

Jelly Bears

Focus Groups

Target Board

Rating Scale

Spider Diagram

The Body Exercise

Online Survey

### Stakeholders

Playgroup Staff

Current Management Committee Members

## Research Findings

Two stakeholder groups took part in the main data collection exercise conducted by the Community Development team. Current Committee Members and Playgroup Staff participated in focus groups which contained a number of different evaluation activities. An online survey was distributed to Committee Members as part of the evaluation. The key questions asked to these groups and responses given are provided in the following sections:

### Current Committee Members

#### *Types of training received and support requested from Early Years*

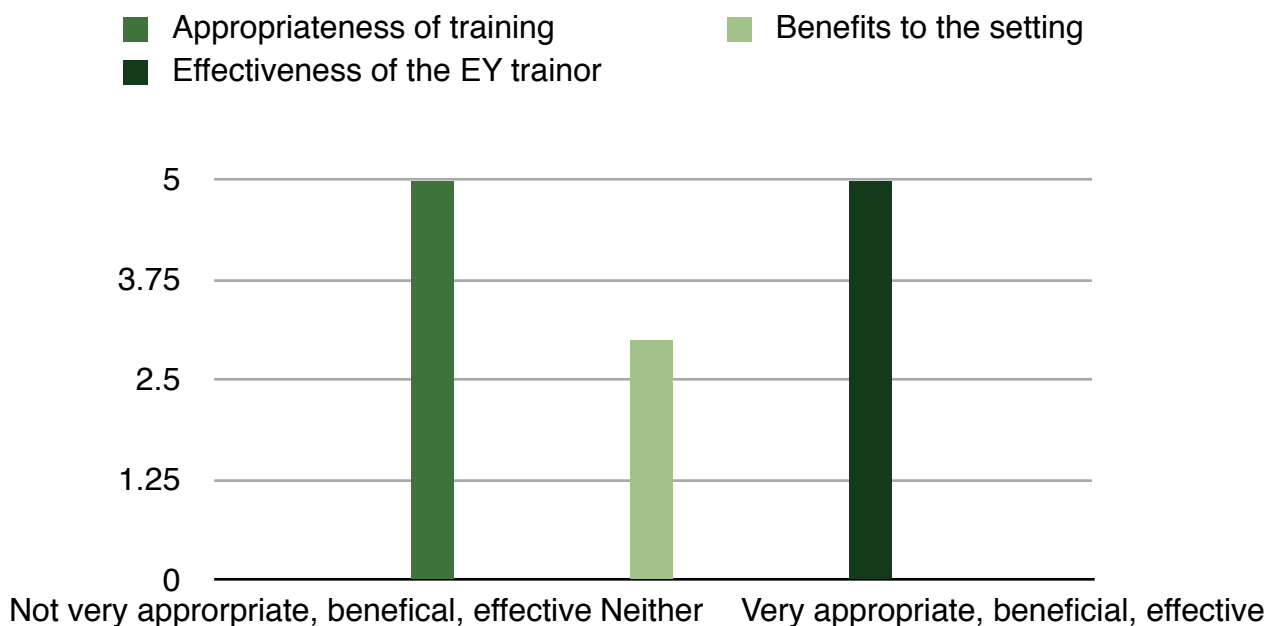
- Basic roles and responsibilities - participants commented that this type of training was particularly for new members. However this level of training was not as informative for longer standing members of committees.
- Child Protection
- Support, supervision and appraisal

- Staff contracts
- Human resource issues
- Financial support
- Policy templates - members requested that more training be given on how to devise templates that could be directly used in settings so the application of the knowledge gained at training could be linked to their own practice.
- E-policy information was viewed by participants as confusing and was believed could be simplified which would improve their understanding of these when disseminated.
- Members of the focus group indicated that they had made specific requests for training from Early Years for their setting. This included EYS support to provide an overview of paperwork requirements and information on the HighScope approach. In addition, continued support from the Community Development team was welcomed by the Management Committees taking part in the evaluation.

***Appropriateness of training received***

Members of the Management Committee attending the evaluation session agreed on a rating in terms of the appropriateness of Early Years training for Management Committees (2 out of a possible 5-where 5 is ‘very appropriate’). They awarded a rating of 3 out of possible 5 for the benefits the training brings to their setting (where 5 is ‘very beneficial’). Finally, participants in the group gave a higher rating of 4 out of 5 to effectiveness of the Early Years Trainer or Advisor. These ratings are illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 3: Ratings by Management Committee members of Early Years Training



### ***Impact of training (beneficial changes)***

Members participating in the focus group reported that the training they received had different impacts on their role as Committee Members. These included:

- New knowledge
- Increased awareness
- Added skill
- Understanding of liability and accountability in their roles and responsibilities
- Feeling more competent and confident
- Getting reassurance about taking the next step
- Improved sense of optimism among Committee Members
- Realising there is more to learn

### ***Effectiveness of Early Years Trainer***

While participants in the focus group rated the Early Years trainer from the Community Development team positively (awarding 4 out of a possible 5 - where 5 is very effective) they would welcome designated visits from Community Development Advisors to Management Committees. They viewed the role of EYS to be one of direct support for staff not Committee members in the setting. For this reason increased involvement with the Community Development team was reported as being more beneficial to Management Committees than that of the EYS.

Online responses supported the finding that Management Committees in this evaluation had positive experiences with their Early Years trainer. 50% of respondents stated that they were 'very satisfied' with the advice and support given by Early Years while 33% were 'satisfied'.

### ***Resources provided by Early Years***

A number of different resources were provided by Early Years to the Management Committees. These included publications, the Early Years calendar, information accessed on the Early Years website and the use of key workers to support the Committee and setting. Feedback about these resources was positive but suggestions made by participants highlighted the need to pass on publications to new members and for the website to have more detailed and practical information for members. Table 3 lists the resource types made available to members by the Early Years Community Development Team. The findings reveal a disparity between respondents awareness of the resource types and their use of these resources. Members were most aware of 'Draft Constitution' documents, 'Accident and Incident Book' and 'Effective Management Guidelines' but resources such as 'Policy and Procedure Guidelines' and 'Recruitment and Selection Guidelines' were reported as being used most often.

Table 3: Level of awareness and use of Early Years resources

Resource type	Aware of the resource	Use the resource
Draft constitution	89%	22% (6)
Accident and incident record book	83%	25% (5)
Effective management guidelines	80%	30% (3)
Policy and procedure guidelines	75%	50% (1)
Recruitment and selection guidelines	70%	40% (2)
Flexible communications calendar	57%	29% (4)

Members requested that Early Years could provide additional resources which they would find useful to their role. These included:

- Details on the structure of the ChildCare Partnership and how this impacts on their setting
- Leaflet explaining roles and responsibilities of becoming a member of Management Committee
- Advice and skills on managing meetings, agenda setting and time management

Through the online survey, Committee Members were asked who they would seek advice from on Governance issues. While 60% selected Early Years as the organisation they would contact, a further 53% stated they would contact the early years team in the Trusts. In addition, 33% would choose Labour Relations at the agency they would seek advice from on these matters. Open ended comments about additional resources Early Years could provide suggested that it would be helpful if the organisation had a human resource helpline for staff and management as they are experts in the sector and aware of issues faced by settings.

***Motivation for joining a Management Committee***

When asked about their reasons for joining a Management Committee, participants referred to the social gains linked to their engagement as friendships have been formed and they have increased their levels of community participation as a direct result of becoming a Committee Member. Others believed it would help them to understand the setting their child was attending while for some their involvement was a result of being nominated to the role. However it should be noted that 35% of respondents did not attend Branch meetings despite their motivation to take part in a Management Committee.

### ***Benefits of membership of a Management Committee***

Participants recognised and highlighted the benefits they obtained from taking part in Early Years training. Their increased understanding of policies and procedures, improved reporting mechanisms and greater knowledge of roles and responsibilities of Committee Members contributed to noted changes in staff, children and parents attending the setting.

The benefits directly experienced by Committee Members could be linked to their motivation for initially joining the Management Committee:

- Generation of social capital
- Develop new skills
- Insight into their children's playgroup
- Becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee

### ***Awards***

Feedback through the online survey from Committee Members suggested that while they had an awareness of the annual volunteer awards held at Early Years AGM (75% aware), 94% had never nominated anyone. Committee Members did acknowledge however that this award scheme was a good way to recognise volunteers.

### ***Reasons for leaving a Management Committee***

Various reasons for withdrawal from Management Committees was given by current Committee Members. These range from personal feelings about their involvement, to organisational issues with staff to their child no longer attending the setting.

## **Online Survey**

### **Playgroup Staff**

#### ***Understanding of Management Committee's roles and responsibilities***

Playgroup staff in one group taking part in the evaluation indicated that their knowledge about the specific roles and responsibilities of the Management Committee were limited. The other playgroup staff displayed greater awareness of the roles and responsibilities by highlighting the different aspect Management Committees are involved in from staffing to finance to support and supervision.

#### ***Support provided by Management Committee's to playgroup staff***

Playgroup staff suggested that their Management Committee gave updates and support through monthly meetings and other communication mechanisms. This provided them with up to date information as required.

#### ***Additional support needed***

Playgroup staff put forward requests for further support by their Management Committee in terms of increased supervision, extra volunteer support when needed



and greater understanding on the side of Committee Members of administrative duties of playgroup staff and time needed to complete these.

***Impact of attending Management Committee training on playgroup staff, setting and children within the setting***

No playgroup staff who participated in the evaluation activities had attended Management Committee training. To this end they could not comment on the impact of this training on the setting but did express an interest in being involved in future training of this kind.

## 5.3 Eager and Able to Learn

### Research Questions

- To explore the experiences of stakeholders in terms of EAL resources, the development of the programme and programme outcomes
- To identify the level of knowledge, skill and confidence in support settings in rolling out EAL
- To examine the appropriateness of the resources included in the service design manual
- To assess stakeholders' response to programme outcomes following RCT and evaluation results
- To discuss the successes and challenges of participation in RCT research process

### Indicators

Knowledge

Skill

Confidence

Appropriateness of resources

Responsiveness of stakeholders to programme outcomes

Experience of Early Years Staff

### Data Collection Methods

The Body Exercise

Focus Groups

Continuum

Target Evaluations

Guided Interview

### Stakeholders

Early Years Specialists

Early Years Area Managers

Senior Early Years Specialist

## Research Findings

For the purposes of reporting the evaluation information provided by the Senior EYS and EYSs are presented together.

### *Appropriateness of the EAL resources including the Service Design Manual*

EYS reported that the SDM was not user friendly and as a result may lead some practitioners to not use it appropriately. The SEYS added that implementation would be improved by having access to the resources that support the programme including photos, DVD and other related materials. Participants believed that the future development of the SDM and subsequent changes would require staff to be trained fully by EAL specialists who could deliver to target areas. The suggestions for future development have been summarised below:

- Easier access for resources.
- Merchandising
- Update SDM
- Distribute parent manual
- Storage and distribution for equipment.
- Develop a policy for carrying out Home Visits
- Develop a marketing strategy
- List additional resources
- Create a visual library
- SDM and Designs for Living and Learning are equally important.
- Copy of SDM for all practitioners.
- Additional resources available for EYS
- Value of all resources not always appreciated by practitioners.
- Training needs to put more emphasis on the variety of ways resources can be used.
- Feedback needed from practitioners on the resources.

Participants were asked to rate their level of knowledge, skill and confidence in relation to the EAL programme. The Figure 4-6 illustrates their responses which were gathered using a target board evaluation method. There was a range of scores observed through the ratings which was linked to the differences in exposure to the programme. Specialists with experience of EAL had higher ratings in terms of their knowledge, skill and confidence compared to those who had little or no experience.

Figure 4: Level of Knowledge of EAL programme

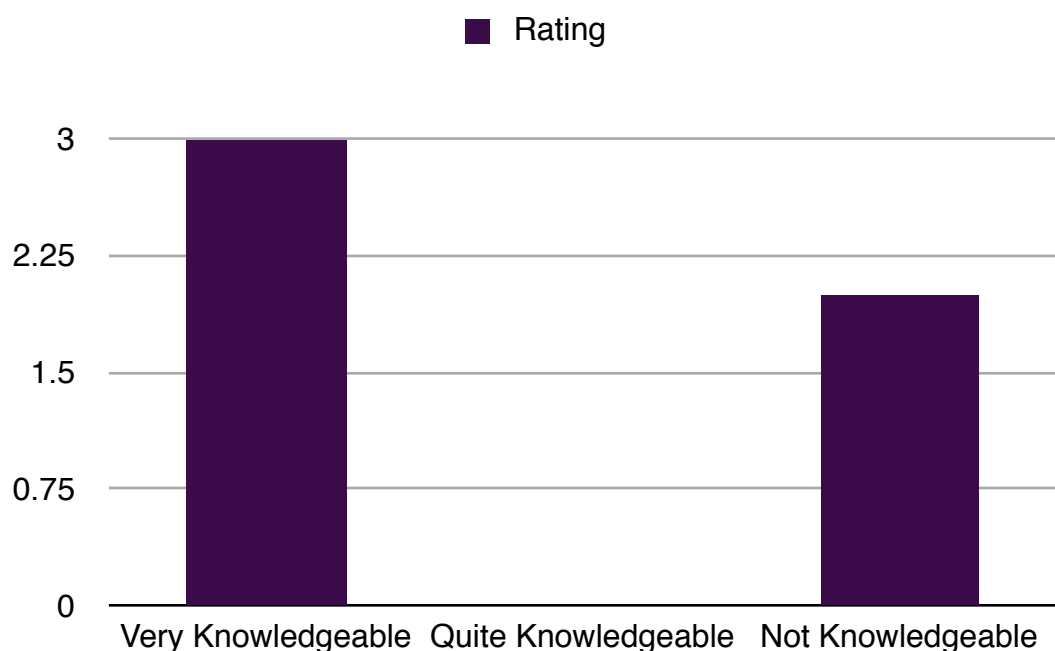


Figure 5: Level of Skill of EYS in EAL programme

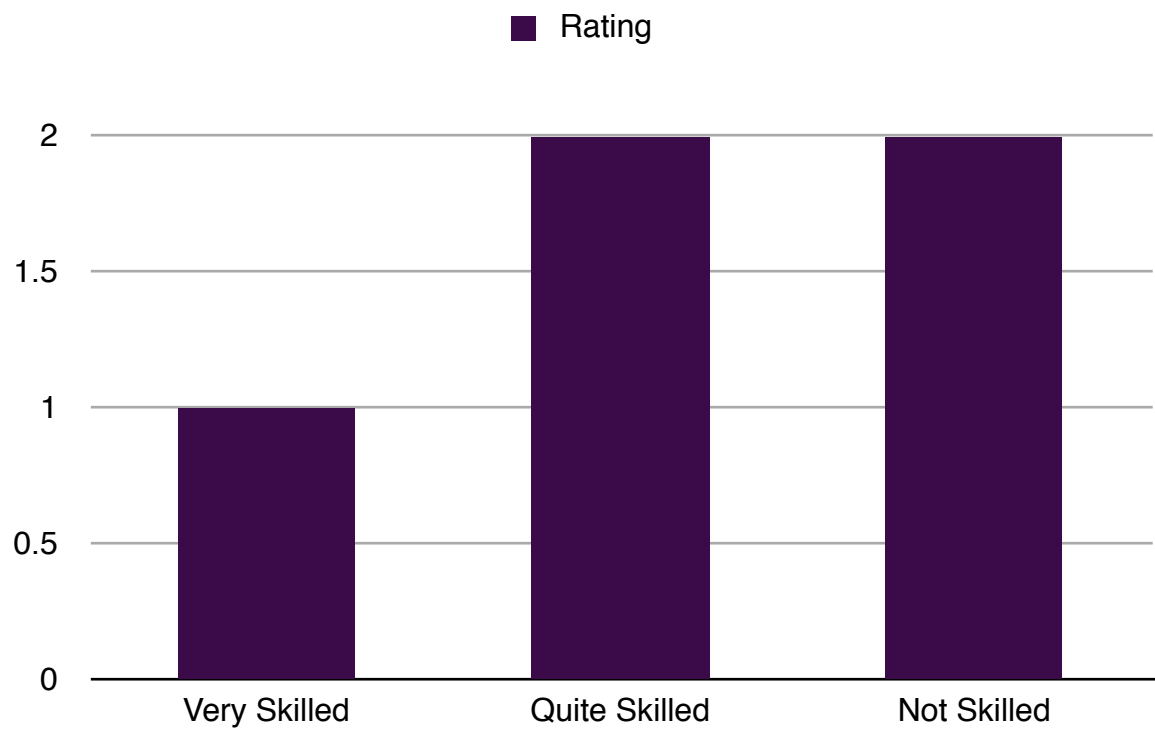
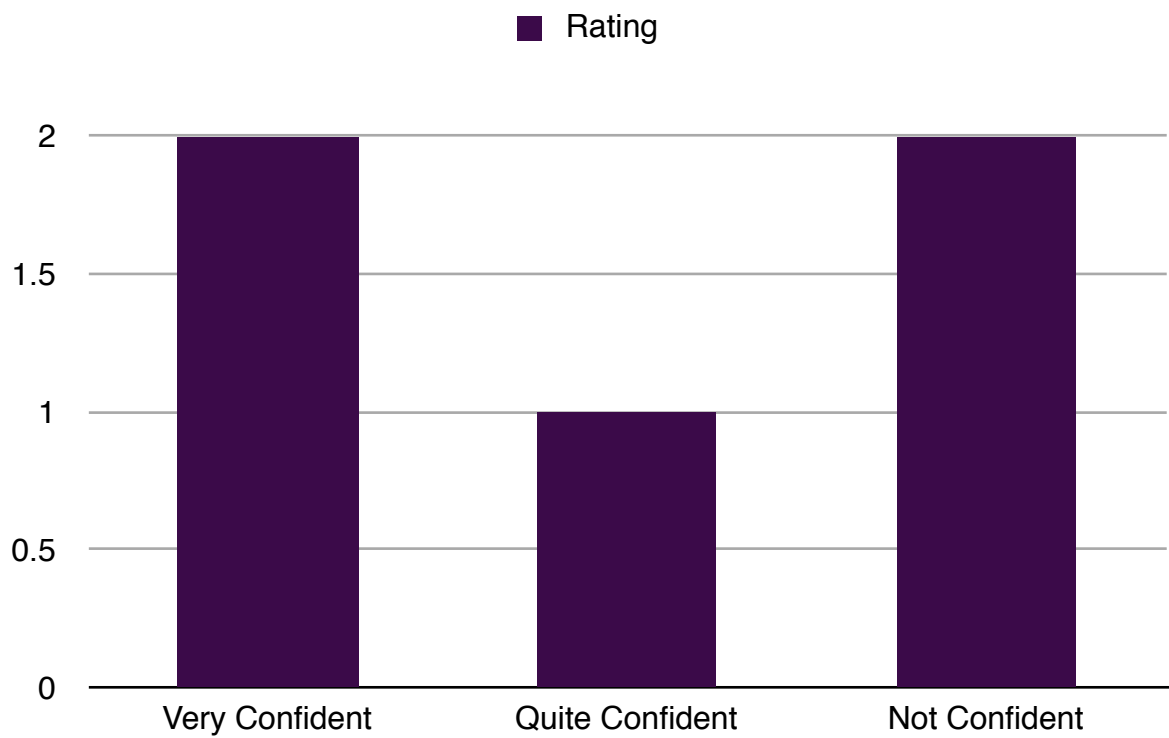


Figure 6: Level of Confidence in EAL programme



***What has been your experience of the EAL programme?***

The Body evaluation exercise was used as part of the focus group session to ask EYS their views about the EAL programme. This required participants to give four responses based on key questions set out at the top of the Table 4 below. The feedback led EYS to reflect on the responses and organise these into three categories - People, Resources and Actions. These are collated and summarised in Table 5.

Table 4: Feedback gathered during the Body exercise about the EAL programme

Something I have learnt	Something I have experienced	Something I have taken away	Something not so good
<p>The developmental movement experiences.</p> <p>Balance and the development of coordination.</p> <p>The importance of physical development for this age group.</p> <p>The importance of giving children opportunities to explore physical activities.</p> <p>Appropriate resources for this age group.</p>	<p>The resources that enhance the EAL programme.</p> <p>Informing parents of the value of play.</p> <p>Children using materials and resources to develop their physical play.</p>	<p>The connection between the brain and physical development.</p> <p>Ideas for materials for supporting settings.</p> <p>The importance of the SDM.</p> <p>Importance of a physical movement area.</p> <p>The importance of developmental movements.</p> <p>Importance of parental involvement.</p> <p>Resources to be available to parents free of charge.</p>	<p>Limited resources to implement the EAL programme effectively.</p> <p>Planning not developed to allow for progression.</p> <p>Not being involved at the research stage of the EAL</p> <p>Practitioners not using SDM appropriately.</p> <p>SDM not user friendly.</p> <p>Funding not available after pilot to buy resources for parents.</p> <p>Practitioners moving rooms within daycares.</p> <p>Training not available to all practitioners particularly new staff in rooms</p>

**What do Early Years need to have in place to roll out the EAL programme?**

The allocation of feedback into three agreed categories during the evaluation session provided a focus for the future action planning in relation to EAL developments. This highlighted the staffing requirements for programme roll out, staff support needs, specific resource considerations and a plan of action for how these might take place. Table 5 and 6 details the feedback by both EYS and SEYS on these themes. Additional feedback provided by the SEYS highlighted the different stakeholder groups to be considered in the continued and future delivery of EAL.

Table 5: Development needs of the EAL programme in terms of People, Resources and Actions based on EYS feedback

<b>EYS Feedback</b>		
<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
Staff training x 2  Training team for EAL to be established x 5  EAL SEYS to be appointed x 2	Funding for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EAL Resources</li> <li>• Staff/practitioners training</li> <li>• Sub cover for practitioners attending training</li> </ul> EAL training kits x 6 Photographs to share x1 ICT support x 1 Appropriate venues to deliver training	Dissemination of EAL research results x 3  SDM to be reviewed x 2  Clarify difference between EAL and P2YO x 2  Facilitate EAL clusters x 2  Market EAL training  Up skill EYS and practitioners on EAL programme  Ensure participation on EAL with a range of stakeholders  Request continuity of EAL trained staff in EAL rooms x 2

Table 6: Development needs of the EAL programme in terms of People, Resources and Actions based on SEYS feedback

<b>SEYS Feedback</b>		
<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<p>All EYS trained to implement EAL To facilitate parent workshops in each area. 2 designated persons in each area ( 1 from EY and 1 from SS) to take lead and to deliver training and clusters in each area. Collate evaluations at team meetings</p> <p>Area managers to ensure that clusters and workshops planned.</p> <p>Home visits carried out by settings.</p> <p>SEYS to oversee training of designated group and CPD.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of EAL through team meetings.</p> <p>SEYS to oversee EAL development.</p> <p><b>STAKEHOLDERS</b> Daycares Surestarts Social Workers Partnerships FE Colleges DE ETI MLAs Play Resource staff Media EY BOARD</p>	<p>Training programme Parent packs Setting resources Publications Service design Parent manual Training venues in each area Cluster venue in settings Play resource materials storage</p>	<p>Access funding to roll out EAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Lottery</li> <li>• AP</li> <li>• Awards for all</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• DE</li> </ul>

### **Successes and Challenges**

Reflecting on the programme the SEYS drew out a list of successes and challenges across the different settings and stakeholders which could be considered in future action planning. While there was an equal number of successes and challenges identified each was seen as contributing to lessons learned about the design, implementation and impact of the EAL programme for staff, children, parents and Early Years as an organisation. These are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: SEYS perception of the successes and challenges of the EAL programme to date in Early Years

Successes	Challenges
Learnt from environments that they can be varied	Expense
Practice was of a high standard but environments could look different	How else can you get to know what others are doing – examples of best practice?
Observing how culture influences practice	How do you ensure funding for visits?
In Reggio – the involvement of parents	Who gets going on visits?
In Tulsa the recognition of the work of their staff – staff were appreciated – provided with non contact time for planning	How can you disseminate the learning?
Documentation – displayed on the day as observations/glimpses of moments of the day	Maintaining links and relationships
Use of emails to communicate and share information with parents	Identifying practice in UK and establishing contacts and IT technology
Parents attending information sessions which was also a social session	Costs to setting around documentation and access to IT
The outdoor environments were natural and spacious and used in all weathers	Additional training needs– E Safety
Staff morale was high	Resource costs
	Motivating and informing Owners Managers

### **Early Years Area Managers**

Launch of the EAL Baseline Report took place at a Master Class at the Early Years Conference 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012 where 40 people attended. Results were presented through graphs while sample activities were demonstrated by Early Years SEYS.

The expectations of a group of attendees were not met during the Masterclass and felt that the Baseline Report did not reflect their practice. As a result of the learning from



this session, the dissemination strategy will have to ensure appropriate language for practitioners and parents is used to aid clarification and understanding of the focus on the reports. The evaluation exercise planned to follow the masterclass was affected by the mood of the group and their subsequent participation in the activity.

## 5.4 Policy and Advocacy

### Research Questions

- To identify the level of awareness of EY events and campaigns and their impact on member and staff mobilisation to address issues affecting the Early Years sector
- To establish the level of awareness of Early Years events and campaigns with members and staff
- To examine the usefulness of the information provided and events organised
- To explore the level of engagement and mobilisation with politicians and the Northern Ireland Executive

### Indicators

Awareness

Utility of information at events and campaigns

Engagement and mobilisation

### Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires

Online Survey

Graffiti Wall

Rating Scale

Focus Group

### Stakeholder groups

Members

Early Years Staff

## Research Findings

### *Early Years Member Feedback*

These evaluation findings are a combination of online survey, questionnaire responses and feedback gathered through a 'Comment Wall' displayed at the Early Years AGM. A set of standardised questions were repeated for each method which focused on: identifying levels of awareness about Early Years policy events and campaigns, their perceived usefulness and impact on members' roles, Early Years capacity to lobby Politicians and local Government Departments on behalf of members and members' knowledge of and confidence to contact their local political representatives. The findings for these questions are illustrated in Figures 7-12.

Feedback was predominantly collected through online responses using survey monkey. Questions were constructed through participatory processes in which other members were asked which questions should be included in the survey. The overall findings suggest that members who completed the survey had a moderate to high level of awareness of Early Years policy events and campaigns which they rated as

having quite a high impact on their work and were quite or very useful to their roles and responsibilities.

Members believed Early Years had a strong capacity to lobby on behalf of members (71.4%) and disseminated political information quite effectively. In comparison, members varied greatly in their reported level of knowledge (47%) about political matters and confidence to engage with local Politicians weaker (40%). This was despite the finding that members stated they could access their local political representatives easily but did not engage to the same degree. When asked what additional steps Early Years could take to assist members in making contact with local Politicians and Department Officials or further lobbying on their behalf a number of different suggestions were put forward:

- Possibly provide sample letters for members to send to local politicians.
- Send out information on what Early Years is lobbying and members could present these issues to local politicians.
- Give more information on who we could speak to in our area who has an interest in early years
- Perhaps politicians could be invited to attend branch meetings or cluster training.
- Ensure that they are invited to all functions involving childcare and education in the local community
- Make me aware of who they are and maybe a meet and greet for new facilities as they will then be aware of who they are and where to find them
- Continue to lobby the Minister to ensure the voluntary sector can access additional funding for children with additional needs on par with the Statutory sector, so as to eliminate the need for voluntary groups to have to continually seek funding from other charities
- Evening for groups to discuss/chat with politicians may be useful. Would be interesting for groups to understand what role the Politicians play in making things change or happen

Figure 7: Awareness of Early Years policy events and campaigns

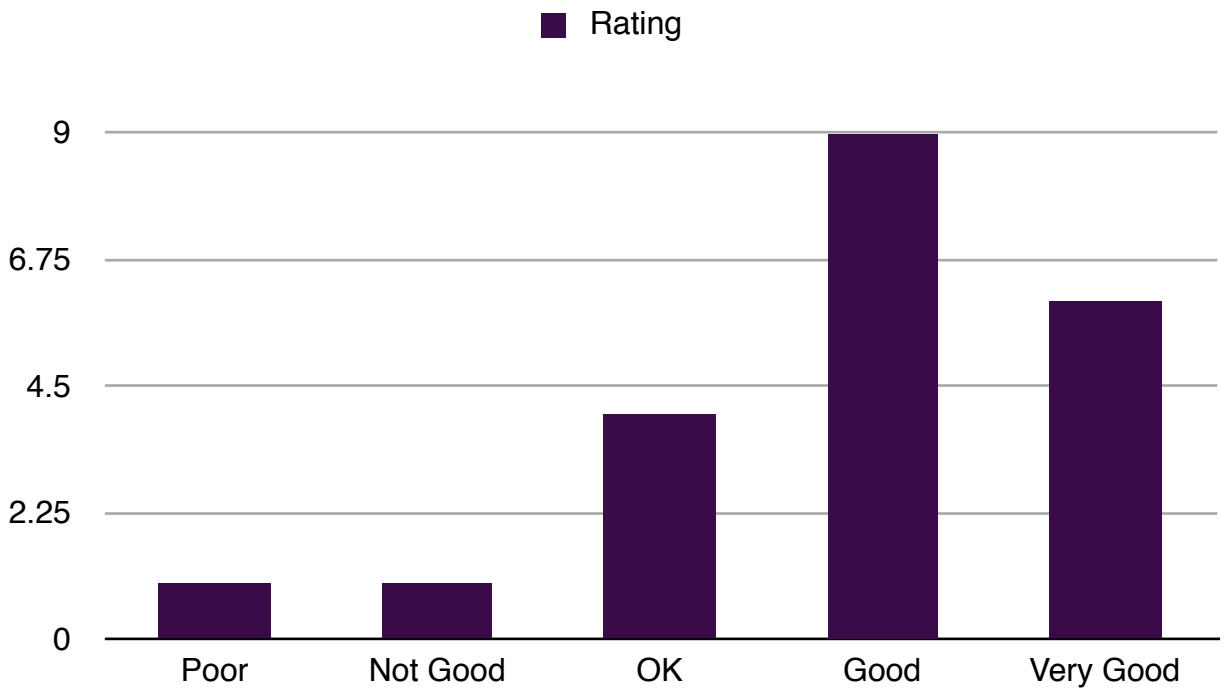


Figure 8: Impact/Success of Early Years policy events and campaigns

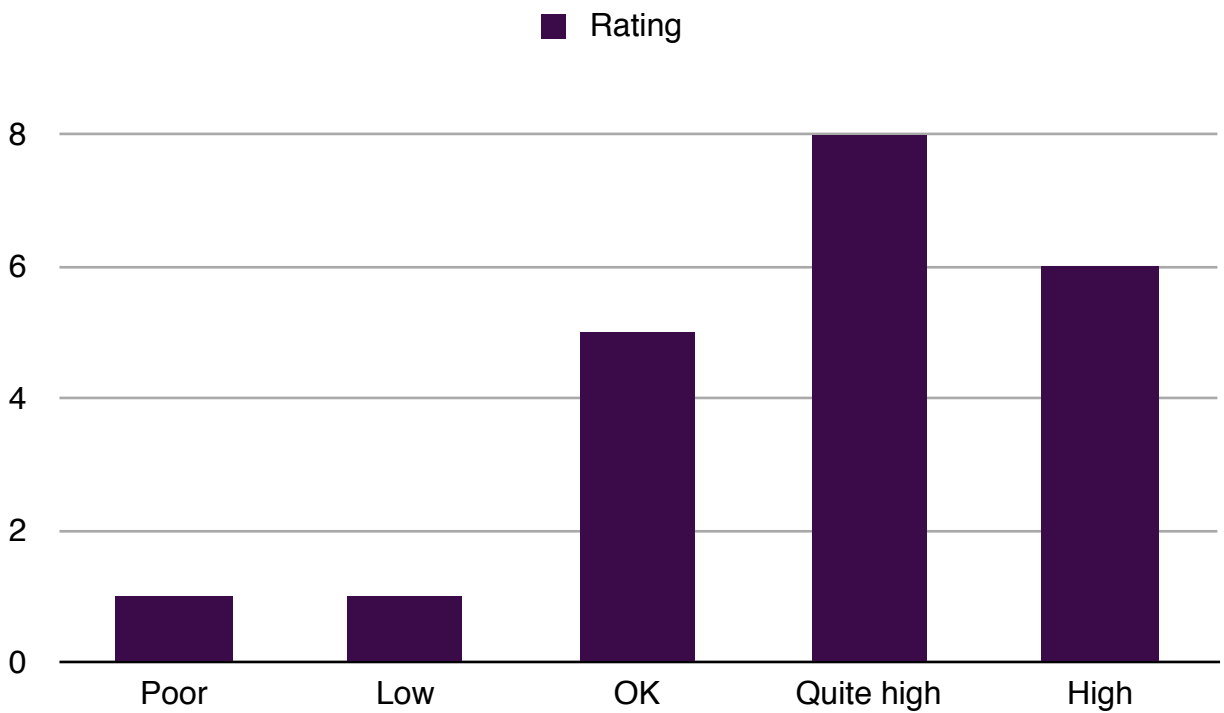


Figure 9: Usefulness of events and campaigns to members' roles

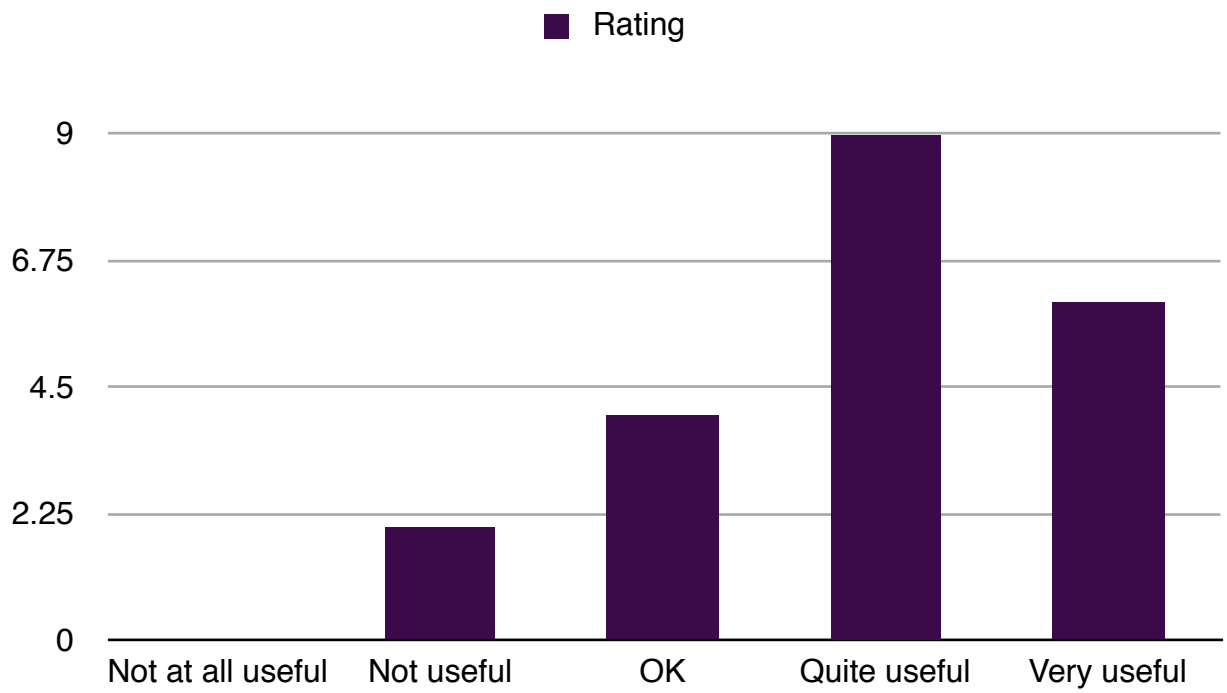


Figure 10: Usefulness of political information presented

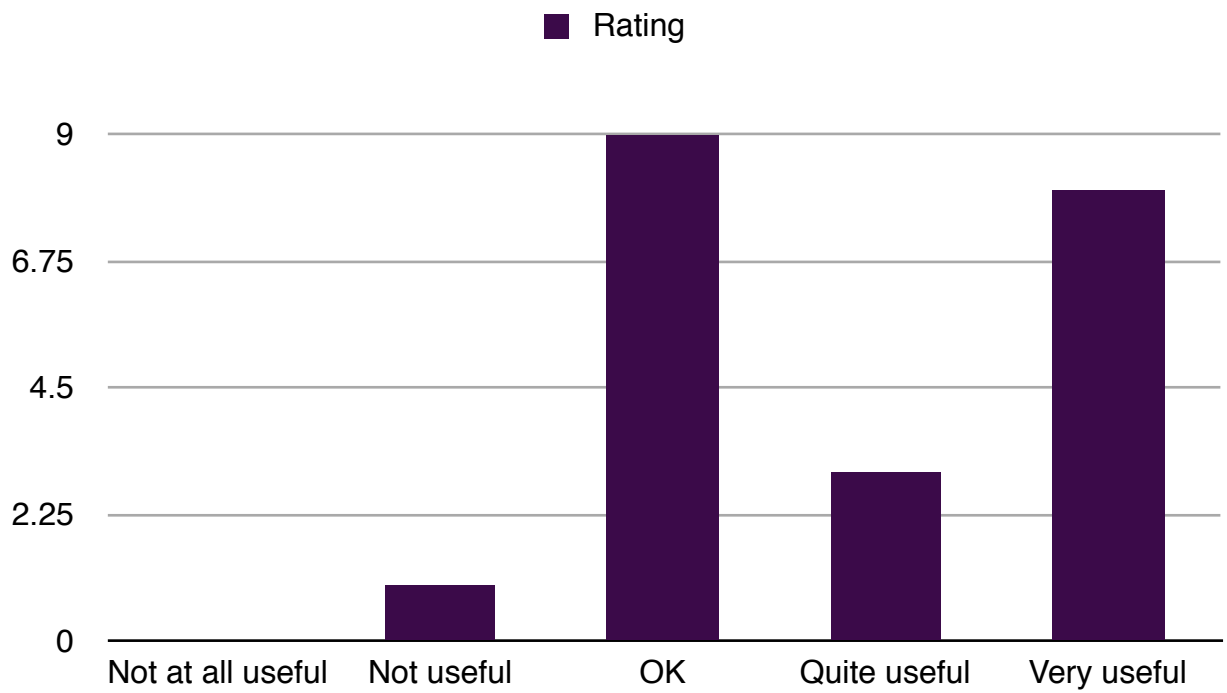


Figure 11: Early Years Lobbying of Politicians and Government Departments

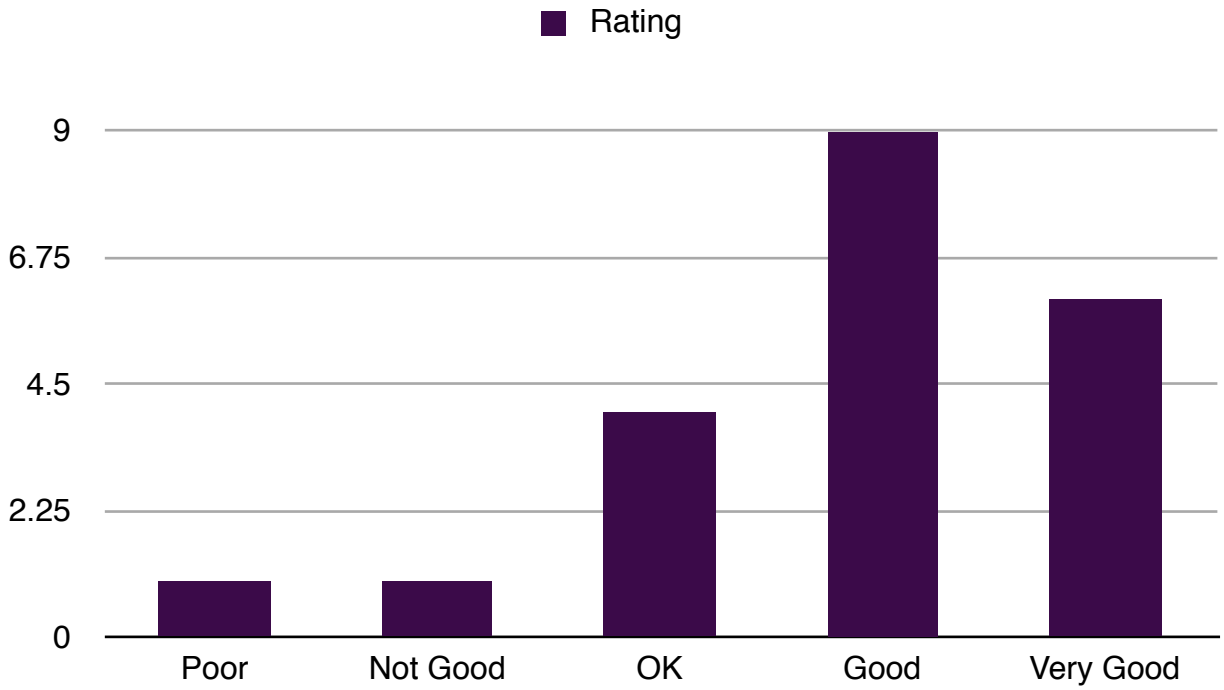
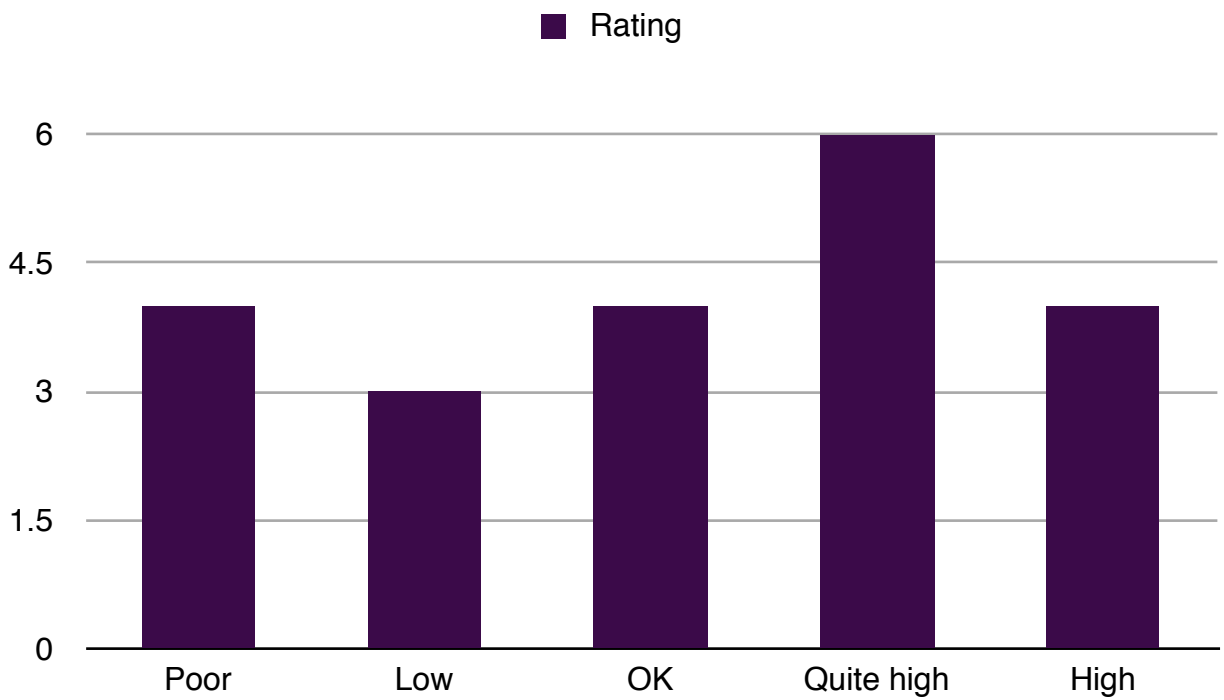


Figure 12: Members' knowledge of local Politicians in their area



### ***Confidence and ability to contact their local Politician***

40% of respondents indicated that they were either moderately or highly confident in contacting their local Politician. 25% stated that they lacked confidence in being able to contact them. In comparison, 62% of participants believed they could easily make contact suggesting a belief local Politicians were accessible to their constituents.

Other comments in relation to policy events, campaigns and Early Years lobbying activities gathered during the evaluation process either through online or in person are detailed below:

- Any I have attended have been very worthwhile and interesting
- Well organised events and good publicity for events and campaigns on website and Facebook page
- Very informative
- I believe that Early Years are working towards improvements for those working within the sector
- It is important that all settings are encouraged to take part in all these events so each setting can help each other
- Want Early years to keep lobbying for equality of opportunity in funding for children with additional needs in the voluntary sector
- Political updates shorter and snappier

### **Staff Feedback**

Staff participated in a focus group and email/online survey to assess their awareness and utility of policy events/campaigns. In addition, the evaluation process provided an opportunity for staff to give feedback on Early Years capacity and role in lobbying Politicians and Government Departments on behalf on their members and the sector. Using focus groups to deliver rating scales/guided interviews, comment boards and online surveys staff participated in the process to give their feedback on these issues. The evaluation findings are illustrated in Figures 13-18.

The findings suggest that staff find email updates and briefings most useful in improving their knowledge about policy events and campaigns followed by the Early Years website (Table 8). The largest percentage of staff accessed the website 'weekly' followed by 'daily'. Articles in the local press were perceived as less useful.

Overall staff had quite a high level of awareness of Early Years policy events and campaigns which they viewed as having a positive impact. The usefulness of the information disseminated through policy events and campaigns varied across staff

although the majority did rate these as either 'quite useful' or 'very useful'. A smaller number did state that the events and campaigns were either 'not useful' or 'not at all useful'.

Staff viewed the lobbying capacity of the organisation to be high (79.3% - positive rating) which was a similar rating awarded by members.

Table 8: Format staff rated as useful in improving knowledge

	Most Useful	Least Useful
E-mail updates and briefings	<b>55.2% (16)</b> 3.4% (1) 10.3% (3) 31.0% (9)	
Early Years Web / Members area updates	14.3% (4) <b>42.9% (12)</b> 21.4% (6) 21.4% (6)	
Hard copy report and brief mailings	7.4% (2) 33.3% (9) 22.2% (6) <b>37.0% (10)</b>	
Articles in the local press and media	20.7% (6) <b>31.0% (9)</b> 24.1% (7) 24.1% (7)	

Figure 13: Awareness of Early Years policy events and campaigns

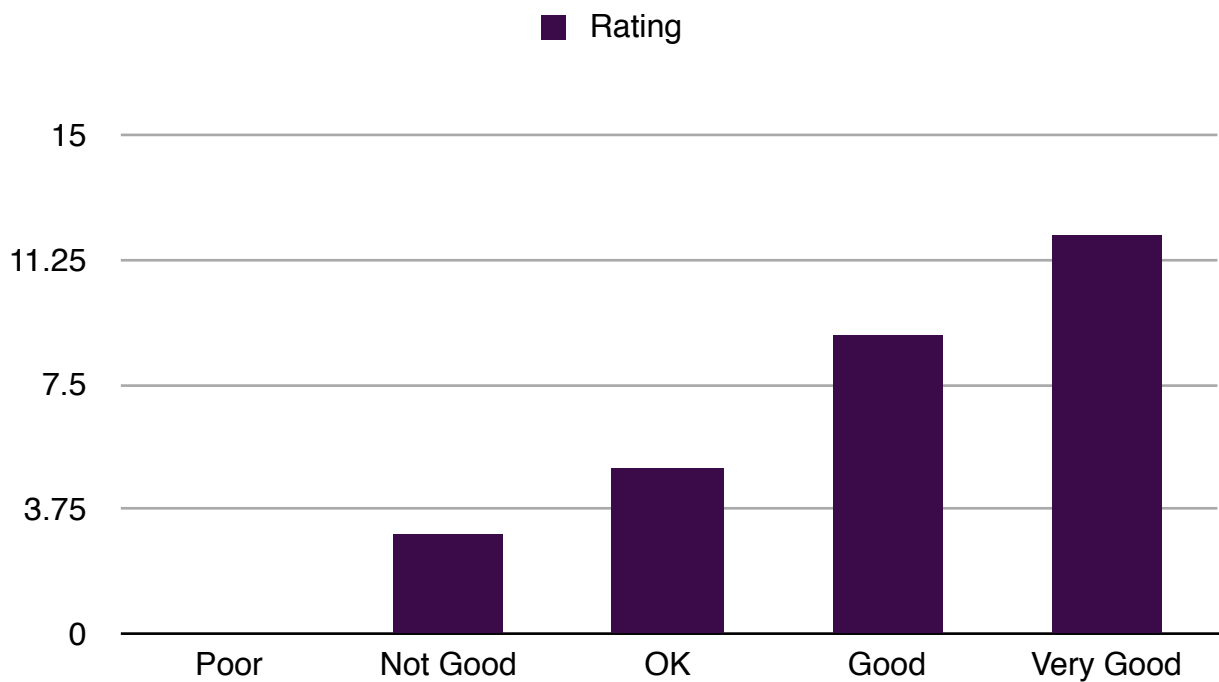




Figure 14: Impact/Success of Early Years policy events and campaigns

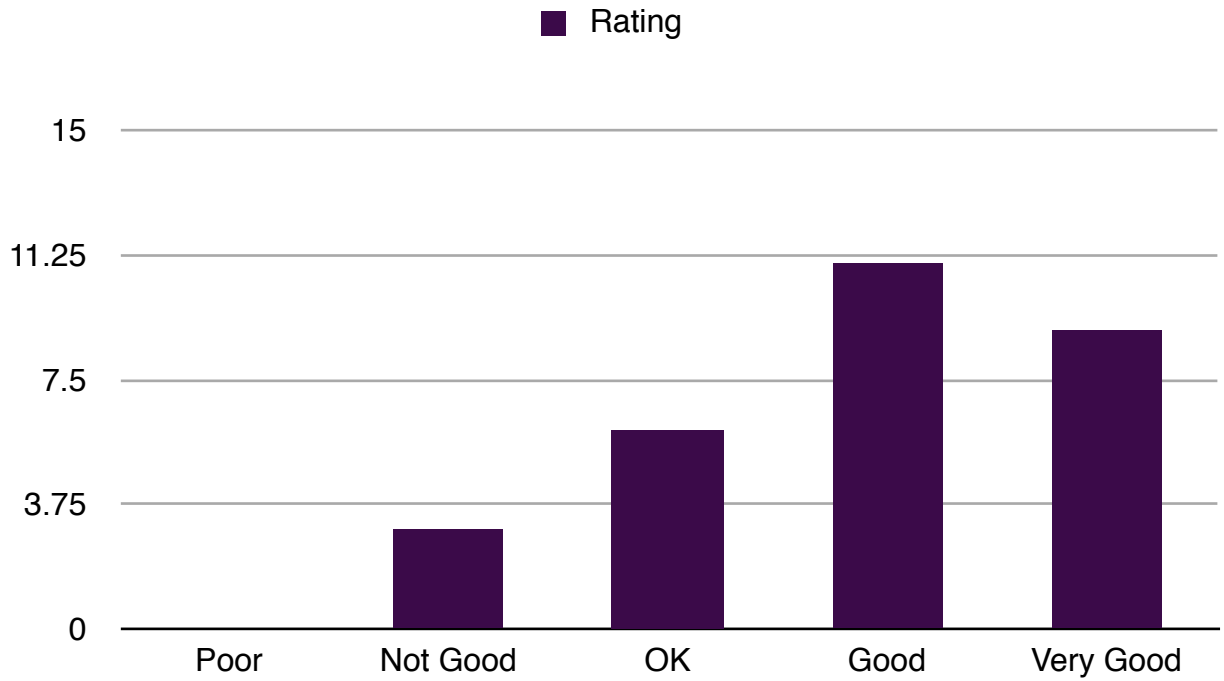


Figure 15: Usefulness of events and campaigns to staff roles

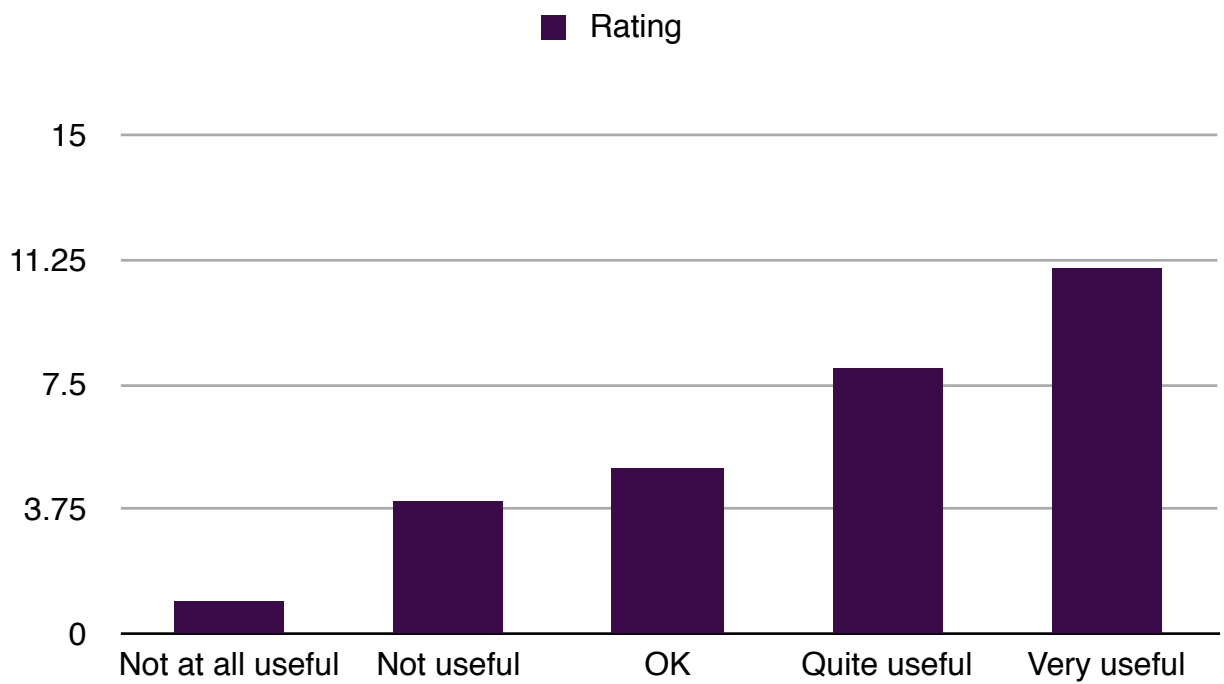


Figure 16: Level of staff access of Early Years website

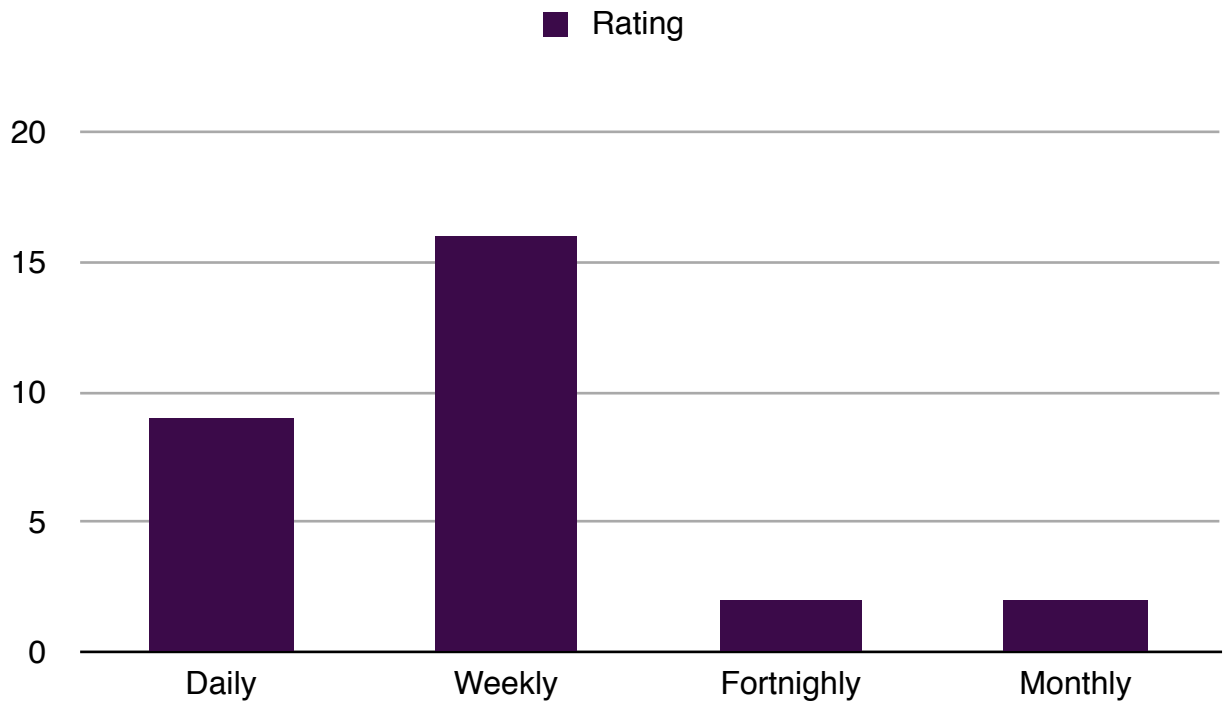


Figure 17: Usefulness of political information presented

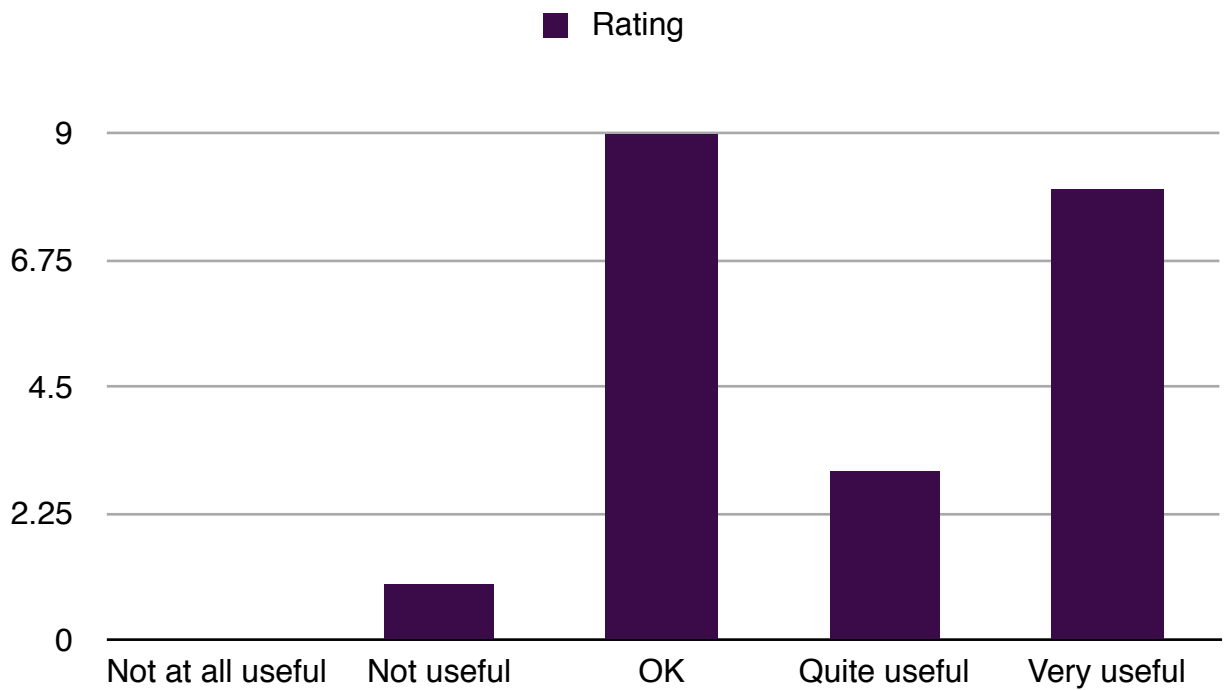
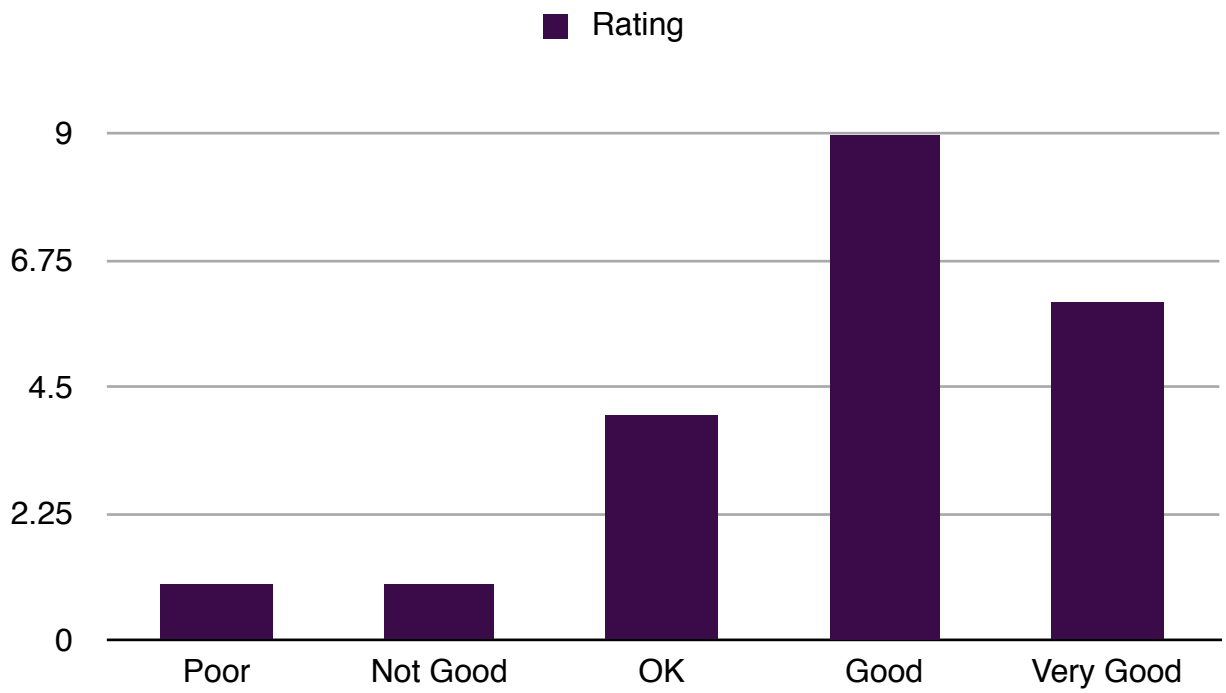


Figure 18: Early Years Lobbying of Politicians and Government Departments



## 5.5 Online Communications

### Research Questions

- To gain an understanding of member and staff needs in order to provide online resources which meet the identified need
- To identify the support needed for staff that will increase submissions to the EY website
- To increase the member awareness about the types of online resources available to them
- To identify the needs of members which can be met through EY online community
- To improve the operation of website in order to increase member and staff engagement with online communications

### Indicators

Level of awareness

Support required

Understanding of needs

### Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires

Online Survey

Graffiti Wall

Telephone Interviews

Rating Scale

### Stakeholders

Members

Early Years Staff

## Research Findings

### Member Feedback

#### Web Content

Respondents predominantly rated their online experience with the EY communications as positive ranging from 'Good' to 'Very Good' while they stated that content to the exclusive members area was mainly 'Ok' with fewer ratings as 'Good' or 'Very Good'. 57% of respondents had an awareness of the concept 'online community' and 43% did not. When asked if they followed the online community through the Early Years Facebook or Twitter account all respondents stated they currently did not despite their awareness of the different account. Reasons for this included time, age and role in the setting. All members who completed the survey viewed frequency of content as 'Ok' while others said it was 'just right' (Figures 19-21).

The largest percentage of respondents found email updates and briefings to be the most useful in terms of improving knowledge around early years issues and their work. This was followed by articles in the local press and hard copy reports/brief mailings (Table 9). Members who participated in the evaluation through telephone interviews and online surveys reported that the Early Years website and members area updates were the least useful for knowledge enhancement. Open ended feedback suggests that members requested more face to face communication between Early Years and members when providing updates or distributing information. These suggestions put forward include:

- Branch evenings, pointers to website news in hard copies "For more info look at..."
- Email... Would save a lot of money rather than printing of glossy report books
- Oral communication through cluster training and branch meetings.
- Face to face through our early years representative.
- Email is great as you have so much on you do not think of checking the web site and really only hear new then through the paper or television in the evening

Table 9: Format members rated as useful in improving knowledge

	Most Useful	Least Useful
E-mail updates and briefings	<b>38.1% (8)</b>	9.5% (2) 23.8% (5) 28.6% (6)
Early Years Web / Members area updates	15.0% (3) 30.0% (6)	20.0% (4) <b>35.0% (7)</b>
Hard copy report and brief mailings	21.1% (4) <b>26.3% (5)</b>	<b>26.3% (5)</b> <b>26.3% (5)</b>
Articles in the local press and media	15.8% (3) <b>31.6% (6)</b>	26.3% (5) 26.3% (5)

### Reasons

Members were asked their reasons for accessing the Early Years online community. Various reasons were put forward and included:

- To check meetings / training etc
- Look for information on events, training, support services and recruitment
- Keep up to date on developments and for bookshop
- Courses available for staff, any new info we need to be updated with
- Up-skilling, to check for any new updates and knowledge
- To keep up to date with political issues
- Looking for curriculum guides
- Information that may help me with my Early Years Degree. Jobs

- To keep up to date on current issues, developments in legislation etc
- In response to emails
- Book conference

Figure 19: Experience of EY online communications

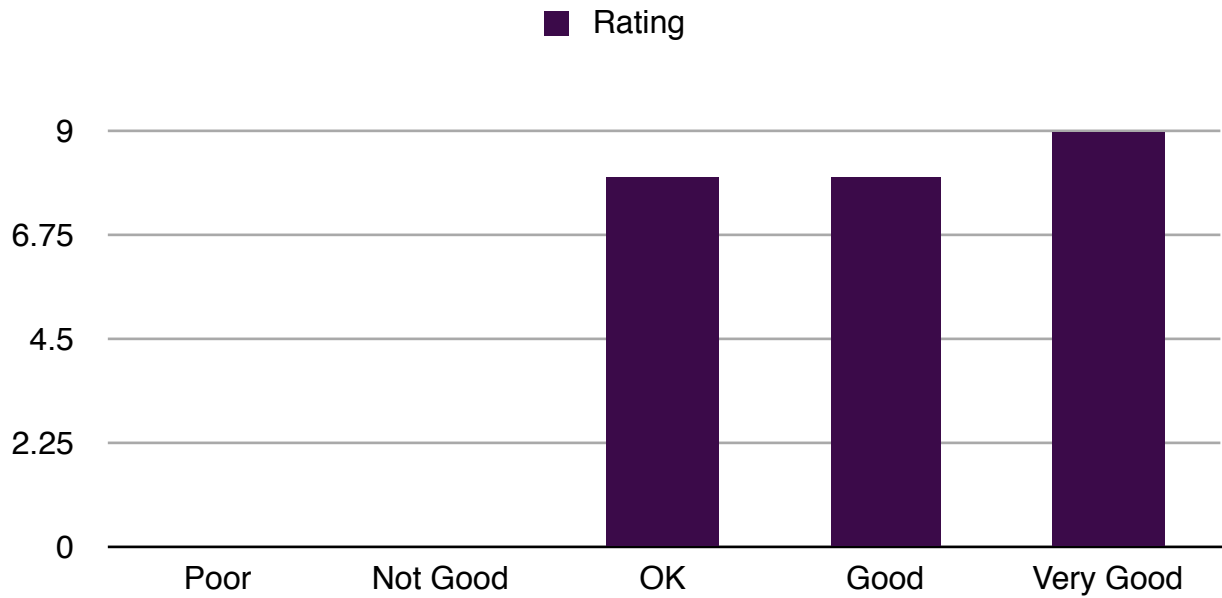


Figure 20: Content upload to the exclusive members area

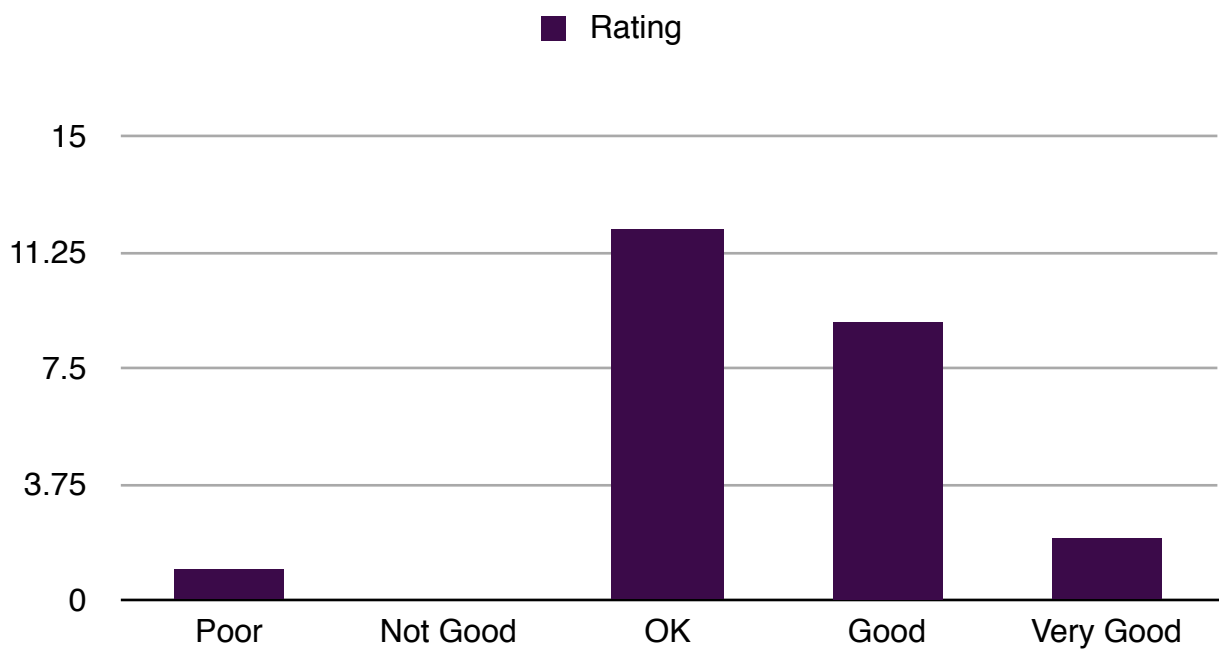
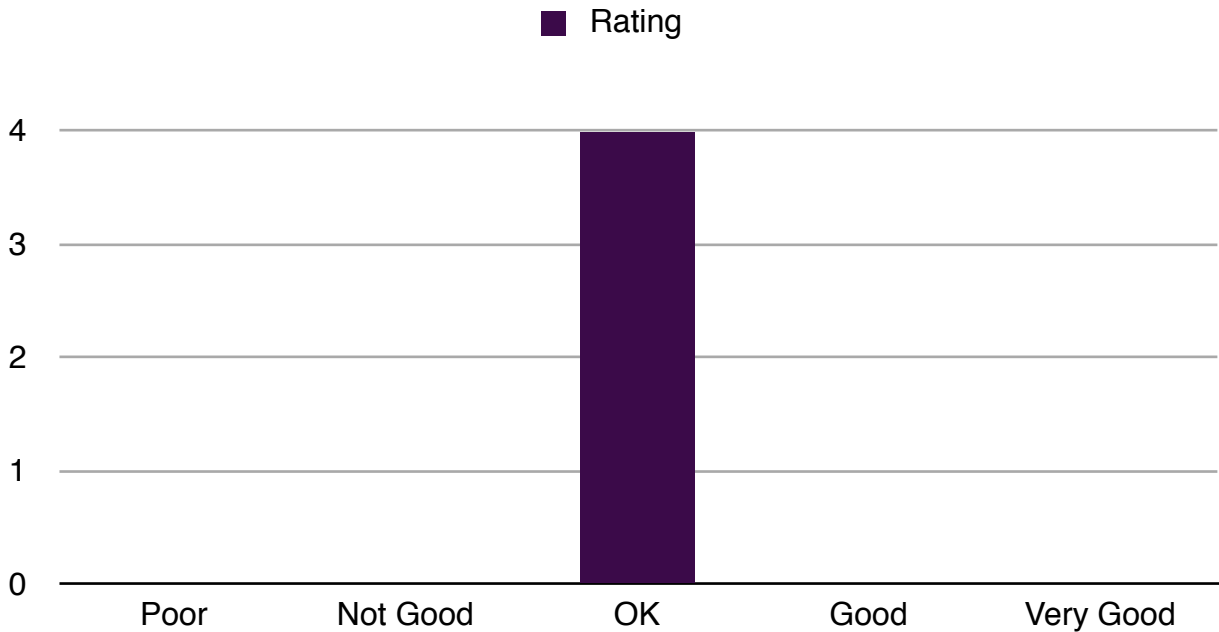


Figure 21: Frequency of content



**Requested content**

When asked for suggestions about content members would like to see added to Early Years online communications catalogue various requests were put forward:

- Reminders
- News from the Areas
- Resources or tips for practice - challenging behaviour, working with children with English as an additional language, special needs, managing staff, observation and assessment and preparing for inspection
- Forum for practitioners to share views/tips, etc
- Policy information more in depth as well as committee meeting dates and day care sub committee dates
- Any updates on policies e.g. transport on outings, guidelines on staff wages, pensions information
- Presentation notes from prominent speakers -like for example, Dr. Lilian Katz or Ferre Laevers- for members of Early Years. These can be difficult to locate elsewhere
- More fun and regular updates on Facebook
- Advertise news on website more

**Early Years Staff Feedback**

The majority of staff recognised the usefulness of the information provided through online communications with 75% of staff fully aware of what the Early Years online community consists of (Figure 22). While most respondents had a high level of knowledge of the full catalogue of online content 37.5% were unaware of ‘videos’ and ‘solutions to problems’ being available on the site (Table 10).

There was disagreement among staff who responded to the evaluation in terms of frequency of content submission to the Webmaster (Figure 23). While some believed that weekly submissions were manageable and necessary, an equal number indicated that monthly submissions were sufficient and was seen to help reduce heavy workloads. Others suggested that the rate of submission should vary from department to department and perhaps the best practice would mean submitting when new information or updates needed to be made available online to members.

Figure 22: Information on EY Community

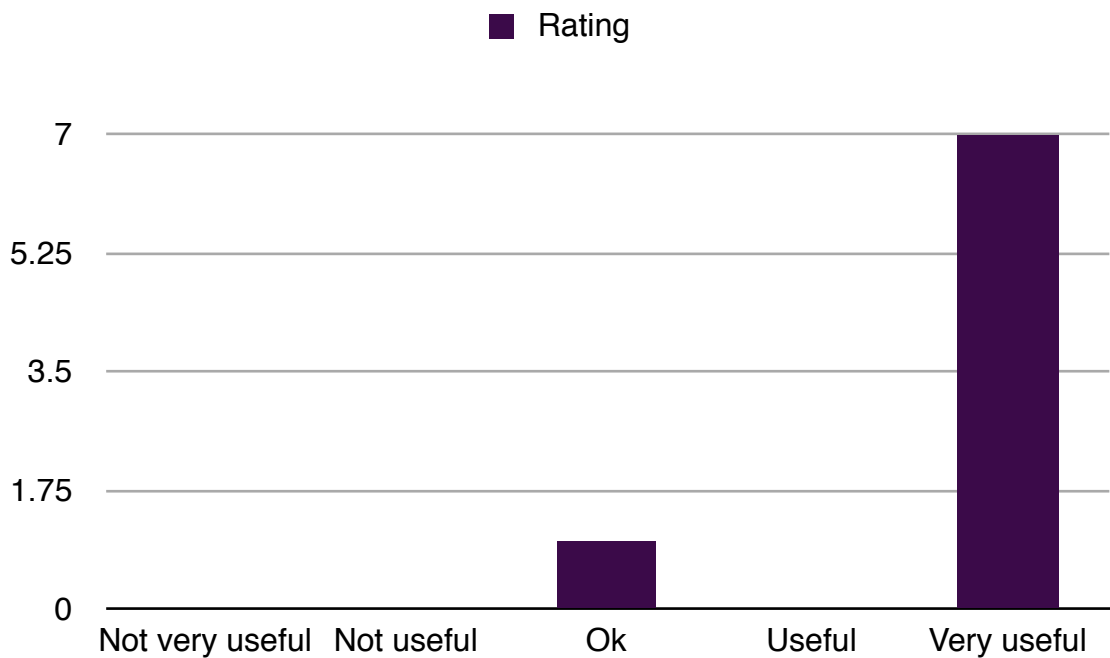


Figure 23: Rate of submission

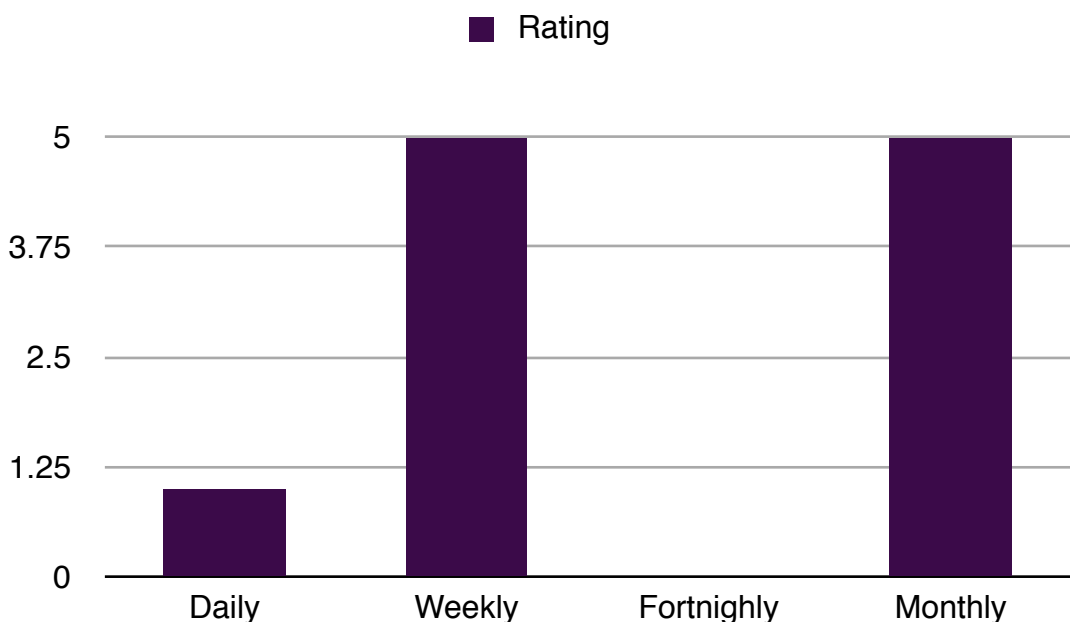




Table 10: Level of awareness of online communication types

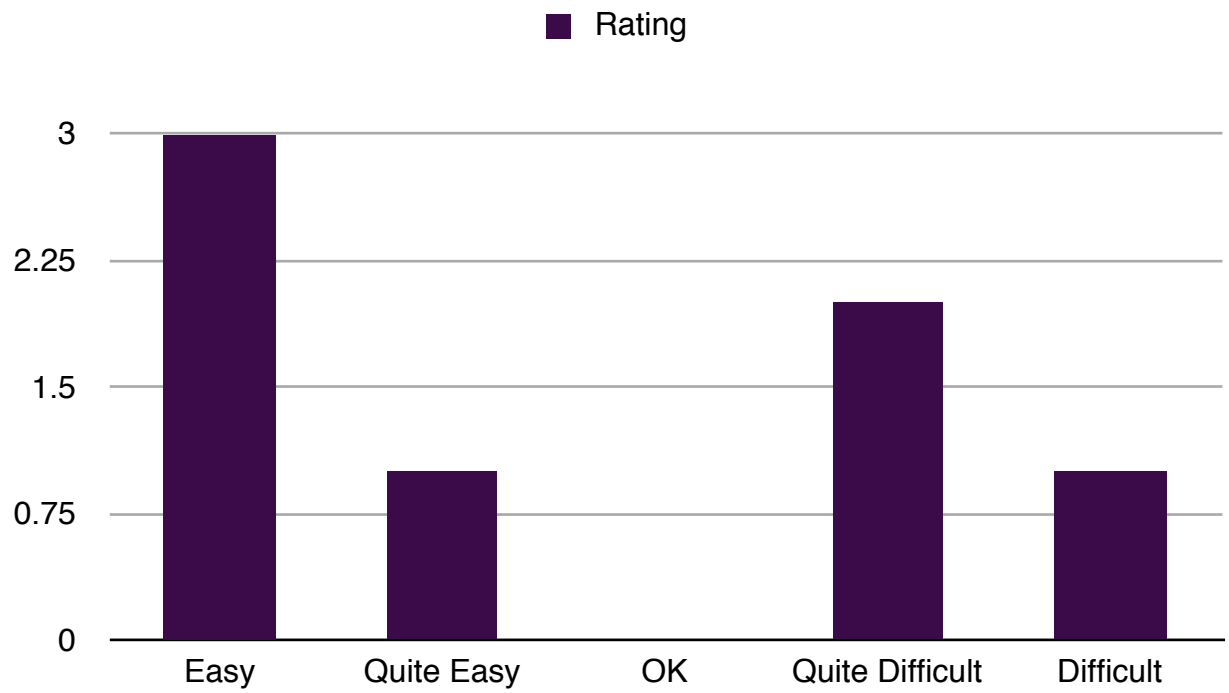
Type of content	Yes	No
Articles	100%	
Photos	100%	
Events	100%	
Member interest	100%	
Training events	87.5%	12.5%
Industry developments	87.5%	12.5%
Team/project developments	87.5%	12.5%
Member awards	75%	25%
Advice	75%	25%
Solutions to problems	62.5%	37.5%
Videos	62.5%	37.5%

### ***Recognising fresh web content***

Staff not only acknowledged the need for fresh content to be uploaded on a regular basis but remarked on its importance in terms of making connections with members and providing essential information that impacts on them, their setting and their children.

A division in staff responses was observed in relation to rating the upload process to the Webmaster. 57% rated the process as either 'easy' or 'quite easy' while 43% found it 'quite difficult' or 'difficult' (Figure 24). Further feedback suggests that time needed for management approval of content and demands of work schedules contribute to the difficulties experienced by some staff members. A guideline document around web uploads and content was put forward as something that might help this process alongside integrating this aspect of the organisation's work into the agenda at team meetings.

Figure 24: Improving process

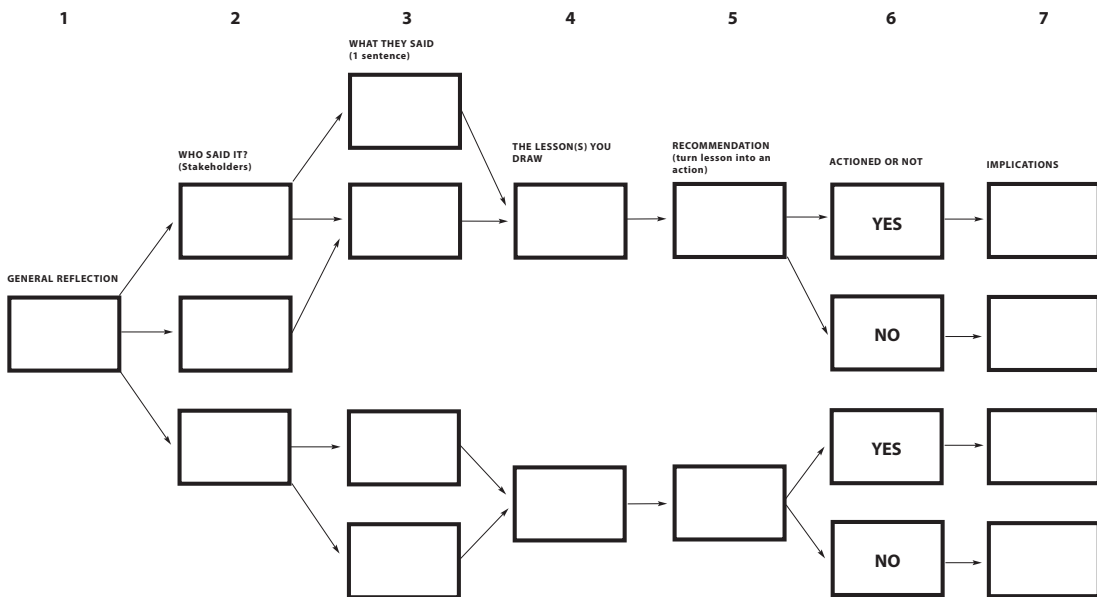


CHAPTER 6

# Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Following the organisation and analysis of the research data collected during the participatory evaluation process, each team used the 7 step diagram created by facilitators to highlight general reflections, draw out lessons learned, make a recommendation and consider the implications of actioning or not actioning the recommendation.

**7 Steps To Making Clear, Appropriate Recommendations:** recommendations should be specific, achievable, evidence-based.



This provided an opportunity to fully appraise the ramifications for the Early Years organisation of these recommendations. Participants were encouraged to follow the thread of the participatory evaluation process from the creation of the conceptual frameworks, the implementation of their plan, the analysis of the data collected to the final recommendations made as a result of this work.

## Recommendations

### 6.1 Community Development

General Reflection on	Who said it	What they said	Lesson	Recommendation	Actioned 'Yes' or 'No', and Implications
Early Years Training Inputs and Resources	Management committee	Excellent	80% effective 70% recruit  High % of awareness but lower rate of usage	Increase in usage of community development resources to assist good governance development	<b>Yes:</b> Increase in knowledge and skills. <b>No:</b> Lack of knowledge and poor governance.
Levels of attendance at Branch meetings	Management committee	35% did not attend branch Time commitment and lack of information	Democratic process from grassroots level to EY	Training to all branches incorporating the social impact.  Benefits and challenges which have come from existing committee members	<b>Yes:</b> Participants will be much better informed of their role as a management committee <b>No:</b> Lack of voice being heard and not valued.
Support with Governance issues and structures of committees	Management committee	9 groups contacted EY for governance 8 Groups contacted trust for governance	Understanding of structures and organisations	More joint partnerships required in relation to supporting the Governance of Management Committees	<b>Yes:</b> Willingness to engage Partnerships to be built <b>No:</b> Gap, no clear pathway, no easy access, continued misunderstanding.
Benefits associated with Management Committee involvement	Management Committees	Positives: Learning New friendships Teamwork Challenges  Negatives: Stress Time Family ties Conflict	Social impact attached to be part of a Management Committee is derived from engagement with CD team. EY recognise social impacts and actively promote it.	Continue to offer all groups support and engagement from CD team	<b>Yes:</b> Proactive groups more engaged with greater social impact and social capital. <b>No:</b> Reactive groups always fire fighting. Difficult to see social impact.
Impacts of engagement with Management Committees	Management Committees	New knowledge awareness and skills Understanding of roles Social capital generated	Building capacity and skills of voluntary management committees.	Continued roll out essential. Training takes place to equip voluntary management committees.	<b>Yes:</b> Participants will be much better informed of their role. <b>No:</b> Accountability Responsibility Child leaves group Feeling inadequate Conflict

## 6.2 Policy and Advocacy

General Reflection on	Who said it?	What they said	Lesson	Recommendation	Actioned 'Yes' or 'No'; and Implications
Political information	Members Staff	Ranking of usefulness in the 3-5 category mostly E-mail ranked 1st of existing methods and hard copy low.	Good base to build on in relation to streams of information. Opportunity to enhance e/digital interaction.	Work with membership officer to increase numbers of members accessible via email.	<b>Yes:</b> Environmental benefits Speedier form of access Time and money savings and saving mail out hard copies. <b>No:</b> Costs with mailings and printing hard copies. Time and staff resources continued to be used.
Political information	Members	EY political web updates ranked 4th	Great work awareness raising of web resources and materials	Work with webmaster and areas specialists to promote web materials	<b>Yes:</b> Increased knowledge. Easier access to political information Time - policy officer and webmaster. <b>No:</b> Missed opportunity in an ever increasing digital age.
Events and campaigns	Members Staff	4-5 rating category Awareness = 72% Impact + 68.9% Usefulness + 65.5%	Positive appreciation of EY event and campaigning activity and enhanced opportunity to communicate and promote impacts and usefulness	Build on and sustain level of event activity. Enhance focus of communication of impacts and usefulness of events.	<b>Yes:</b> Greater awareness of effects of events and campaigns. Enhanced participation from different levels and stakeholders Time/resource implications of events <b>No:</b> Encouraging participation would be time consuming and difficult. Members and staff disengage personally.
Lobbying Political Engagement	Members	Confidence to contact 40% Knowledge of local politicians 47.6%	More awareness work focused support to facilitate local engagement	Work and support members and staff to contact MLA with template materials and invitations to evenings and/or branch events. Case study examples	<b>Yes:</b> Enhances communication of issues. Greater ground level involvement. Enhanced relationships and engagement. Good sectoral awareness. Time implications of organising events and materials. <b>No:</b> Good levels of awareness and contact become stagnant. Relationships not enhanced.

Lobbying and political engagement	Members Staff	Rate EY lobbying (4-5) = 71.4% Rate EY lobbying (4-5) = 79.3%	Positive appreciation of EY lobbying and contact with politicians.	Build on and sustain organisational political contact and ensure awareness of these maximised to address all relevant issues.	<p><b>Yes:</b> Maintain and enhances reputation as a champion. Increased confidence from stakeholders as champion of EY child issues.</p> <p><b>No:</b> Risk of EY not being seen to be active. Risk of missing opportunities to lobby on key issues.</p>
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### 6.3 Media Initiative for Children

General reflection on	Who said it?	What they said	Lesson	Recommendation	Actioned 'Yes' or 'No', and Implications
Programme implementation	Teachers	The most beneficial aspect of the training was the back ground information. Using the puppets in a wonderful way to have children relate to how others feel in certain situations.	The project context is important for framing the programme implementation.	We continue to allocate sufficient time to the contextualisation of the programme. Follow up the Palestinian equivalent of 'too young to notice'.	<b>Yes:</b> Strengthened programme implementation and maintained quality. <b>No:</b> Quality drops. Programme implementation suffers. Poorer outcomes for children and families suffer.
Programme implementation	Parents	The most beneficial aspect of the training was the back ground info and the puppets. The role of the teacher is really important as theyve such an influence over our children.	Parents are buying into the programme, biotn interms of the teachers role as well as their own. They see the benefits of the programme.	Ensure that all future funding applications contain costs for parents workshops and resources.	<b>Yes:</b> Fidelity to the programme and continued positive outcomes for children. <b>No:</b> Lack of parental involvement. Reduction in outcomes for children.
Attitudinal change	Parent teachers	"I didn't realise the impact I could have on my children with what I say". "I didn't know children at 3 could pick these things up".	What we do at the parents workshops is effective	Keep doing what were doing and build on and consolidate the workshops.	<b>Yes:</b> Engagement with parents remains high quality and parents workshops bring about more attitudinal change. <b>No:</b> Quality drops and lesser level of engagement with parents.
Attitudinal change	Teachers	Body exercise: to be more open minded about diversity not just religion. The importance of doing this work in the EY classroom is not to be glossed over.	The importance of attending the whole training particularly Day 1.	Keep the training structure as is. Facilitators reinforce the rationale for the activities and the programme.	<b>Yes:</b> Maintains the potential for attitudinal change among teachers. <b>No:</b> Negative impact on teachers attitudes and potential reduction in programme outcomes.

Training	MIFC Team Teachers	Focus group: Some participants place less value on day 1 of the training where we expose the values, prejudices, stereotypes, first memories etc. Body Exercise: Enjoyed hearing about other peoples experiences and memories of their own childhoods and school days and DVDs about children and their teachers.	Day 1 of the training needs to be reviewed to ensure participants are supported in recognising the importance of the activities.	MIFC team to consult with teachers in reviewing day 1 of the training and MIFC team to reflect on our delivery.	<b>Yes:</b> Continued improvement of quality delivery of MIFC training. <b>No:</b> Disengagement of teachers in relation to Day 1 of the MIFC training.
Training	MIFC Team	Focus Group: Large groups over 25 makes delivery of training very difficult and challenging especially the exercises.	Keep numbers under 25.	When arranging training especially with outside agencies stress the importance of 25 or less.	<b>Yes:</b> Reduction in teachers prejudices held about others in relation to race, disability and religion. <b>No:</b> Less potential to reduce teachers prejudices held about others in relation to race, disability and religion.
Resources	MIFC Team	Focus group: Appreciate parents own pack of resources to continue the work done in school in the home.	The MIFC parents resources are key to the success of programme implementation in regard to continuity between school and home.	To ensure future funding applications include money to provide all parents with a resource.	<b>Yes:</b> Continued support for parents to increase their confidence in dealing with diversity issues for children. <b>No:</b> Decreased and lack of confidence in parents in dealing with diversity issues with children and continuity between home and school will drop.
Resources	Teachers MIFC Team	Focus group: How the resources will clearly support the implementation of the foundation stage curriculum especially PDMU. How the programme fits with planning curriculum topics and PDMU.	The MIFC resource box is a vital component in successful implementation of the programme.	Continue to develop age and context appropriate resources to support implementation in the foundation stage curriculum in consultation with teachers.	<b>Yes:</b> Consolidate and build upon the outcomes achieved at preschool and to extend the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes for children. <b>No:</b> The opportunities to build upon outcomes achieved at preschool level are lost.



## 6.4 Eager and Able to Learn

General reflection on	Who said it?	What they said	Lesson	Recommendation	Actioned 'Yes' or 'No', and Implications
Development of the EAL resources	EYS	Practitioners not using SDM appropriately. SDM not user friendly. Access to EAL training kits.	Updated resources including SDM and access necessary for EAL implementation.	Review and update SDM to be more user friendly for EYS and practitioners. Create EAL training kit for EYS.	<p><b>Yes:</b> Great fidelity to EAL implementation. Cost and time. EYS confidence with EAL will improve and impacts positively on practitioners to implement EAL.</p> <p><b>No:</b> Practitioners will be less motivated to implement EAL with fidelity. Cost Ongoing motivation for implementation will not be sustained for EYS and practitioners.</p>
Development of the EAL resources	SEYs	Access to ICT resources, e.g., photos/DVDs of EAL documentation and implementation.	A variety of ways to capture learning and development for EAL is needed.	Up skill EYS and practitioners in ICT in order to document EAL implementation.	<p><b>Yes:</b> Enable dissemination of EAL practice and lead to further development of EAL implementation.</p> <p><b>No:</b> Limits progress and EAL dissemination.</p>
Development of the EAL resources	SEYs	Funding for support re SDM and staff cover.	The importance of staff cover to support access to training and subsequent full implementation of EAL.	Access funding and management support	<p><b>Yes:</b> Consistency of staff training and confident in implementing EAL.</p> <p><b>No:</b> Staff will not be released to attend training and EAL will not be implemented fully or at all.</p>

Need for specialist EYS EAL team	EYS SEYS	EAL training team to be established. 2 specialists from each area.	Specialist EAL team to lead on implementation.	Specialist staff appointed to lead on EAL.	<p><b>Yes:</b>  Funding R and S.  Training CPD  Capacity to deliver increased  EAL rolled out  Raising EY profile  PR potential  Further development of programme regionally/ internationally.</p> <p>Buy in from registering and inspection bodies.</p> <p><b>No:</b>  No development of EAL training and implementation.  Current levels of implementation lessened.  Potential for EAL to have minimum impact.  Reputation of ET at risk.</p>
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## 6.5 Online Communications

General Reflection on	Who said it?	What they said	Lesson	Recommendation	Actioned 'Yes' or 'No', and Implications
Lack of awareness about online community	Staff	<p>% not aware of content:            5% training events            14.3% industry development            12.5% Team/ project development            28.6% Problem solutions            37.5% video            25% member awards            25% advice</p> <p>Too much work for weekly update.            Understand need for fresh content but process is difficult.            Average of 2.57 for upload process, with 5 rating of difficult, staff consider process difficult.</p>	<p>Staff not fully aware of process for uploading.            Not aware weekly updates are possible but not essential.            Not all aware of all type of content that can be submitted for upload.</p>	<p>Make process user friendly and internal promotion of process.            Workshop on ' how to use and why use'.</p>	<p><b>Yes:</b>            More staff will be happy to submit various content for upload in turn providing members and web users with quality information.            More updates submitted.            Website used as main outlet for information to members.</p> <p><b>No:</b>            Online community information will suffer.            Content quality will fall which could affect reputation of EY.</p>
Engagement and interaction with members	Staff	<p>100% of participants recognised need for fresh content. Important to engage users. Important to keep members updated on changes in policy sector.            Web important as can be first point of contact for members.</p>	<p>Staff recognise the value of interacting with members through the web and circulating up to date information to users.</p>	<p>Internally promote the value of interacting with our users.</p>	<p><b>Yes:</b>            Staff aware of value of engaging with users online.            Planting seeds! All staff thinking online how web can increase their project / service delivery.</p> <p><b>No:</b>            No full reach.            Staff not realising potential and value of user interaction.</p>

Frequency of web content submissions and updates	Staff	Staff considered weekly and monthly submission sufficient. Reminders make aware of possibility of submitting content but monthly more manageable. Too high workload for weekly uploads. Difficult to set aside time. Process needs to be incorporated in to daily routine. Average of 3 on rating scale. 1-5 for frequency of content. 1 not enough, 5 too much.	Continue request for information on weekly and monthly basis.	Work the upload process into daily workload routines. Webmaster attending team meetings or web updates as agenda item in team meetings.	<b>Yes:</b> Team collation of info for upload. Maximising use of quality web content. Fidelity of information from teams. <b>No:</b> Collating left to individual - increasing stress and creating low morale. Lack of consistent and regular information uploads and users not getting info they want and need.
Frequency of web content submissions and updates	Members	Members are satisfied with frequency of updates on web.	Notification and content updates need to continue on weekly basis.	Work with departments to ensure weekly updates are met. Operational process for web updates optimised.	<b>Yes:</b> Members continued satisfaction on updates and web content. <b>No:</b> Members dissatisfaction if content is not fresh.
Web content	Members	Majority visit site to obtain knowledge, see available resources and attend events. The review of content on members area: 47.6% rated 3 42.9% rated 4 on the scale = medium satisfaction.	Members use website as vehicle to increase knowledge and access resources, attend events. Members recognise web community as a resource for their needs. Members comments suggestions of content types needs to be seriously considered.	Web master will need to liaise with relevant internal departments to obtain information that members want to see. Providing feedback to colleagues about what members want.	<b>Yes:</b> Members driven to web community to obtain information. Maximise web community as a resource. <b>No:</b> Members will not use websites if not obtaining info they want to see, in turn missing out on important notifications.

Lack of access to online communications	Members	<p>57.1% of members aware of social sites. Not all 64% follow.</p> <p>Reason for not following include:          No time          Age/interest          Enough info through emails.</p> <p>42.9% of members not aware of inline community.</p>	<p>Information on emails need to be summary of content on social sites.</p> <p>Members not aware that social sites can be used as forum and displays.</p> <p>Online community needs further promotion.</p> <p>Reach number of staff per setting.</p>	<p>No replication of data.</p> <p>Keep email as method of contact.</p> <p>Create more interaction/forum type on social sites to increase interest and promote online community further.</p> <p>Work with membership officer to ensure members can provide a number of email addresses.</p>	<p><b>Yes:</b>          Emails will ensure connection with members.          Social sites can be used as forum, sharing tips and views among members in turn increasing interest.</p> <p><b>No:</b>          Social sites will not be utilised by customers.</p>
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## CHAPTER 7

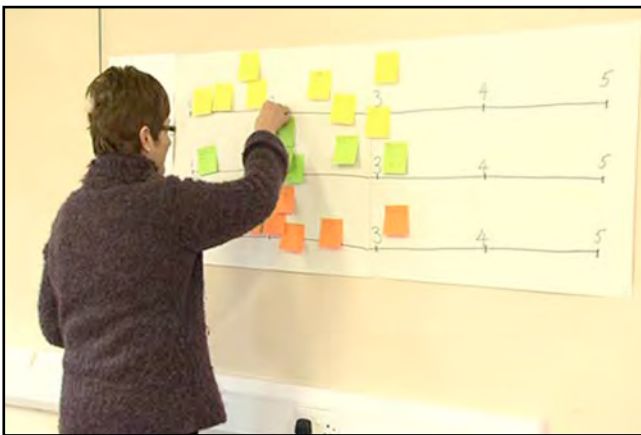
# Evidence of Building Participatory Evaluation Capacity within Early Years

Throughout the participatory evaluation training every individual embarked on a reflective journey to record, report and ruminate on the different stages they were involved in. The facilitators created an evaluation methodology to examine the impact of the participatory evaluation training on participants, and to inform future training programmes through lesson learned during the pilot.

This involved participants completing:

- a rating scale on specific days in the training to establish a baseline and endline
- a personal journals to record thoughts and feelings
- a video diary method to capture reflection on days 1,5 and 8

### The Rating Scale



### The Learning Journal



## The Video Diary



The impact of the training on participants, recorded through the rating scales, learning journals and video diaries, is presented in this chapter.

### **Participants Initial Discussions**

As part of the initial baseline work by facilitators participants were asked to share their experience of research/evaluation and monitoring within Early Years. It became clear that a diverse and broad spectrum of experiences existed within the group. Staff had not been aware of, or taken part in, the participatory evaluation approach. The types of research/evaluation and monitoring experiences listed by staff included:

- Monitoring through staff appraisals/time sheets/budgets/probations
- Project monitoring for funders
- Consultations
- Monitoring training through attendance/audience demographics
- Services monitoring
- Complaints/compliments
- Levels of media coverage
- Evaluation of staff training
- Self reflections from staff
- Evaluation of project and programmes through RCT
- Impact measurements

Staff were also asked to identify the types of stakeholders who engage in Early Years research/evaluation and monitoring activities. The stakeholders included:

- Programme or service participants (parents, practitioners, children, management committees, childcare partnerships, settings)
- Early Years staff
- Tutors
- Partners
- Contractors

- Political Parties
- Government Departments
- Members
- Conference attendees/meeting attendees/events attendees/speakers

### **Baseline and Endline Scores**

The indicators of 'Knowledge', and 'Confidence' and 'Skill' in relation to participatory evaluation were selected by facilitators as the gauge by which impact of training would be measured. Participants were asked to complete a 5 point rating scale on a large wall display and in their Journals on Day 1, Day 3, Day 4 and Day 5 of the Formative Training. This was repeated on Day 1 and Day 3 of the Summative Training. These are presented in Figures 1-21.

Closer examination of the ratings made across the Formative and Summative Training Workshops revealed a significant shift in participant's 'Knowledge', 'Confidence' and 'Skill'. Individual and group effects were observed for each of the indices used by the facilitators. A visual inspection of the graphs provides an indication of the changes that took place as a result of the training but further analysis confirm a positive increase in scores as highlighted by the increase in mean rating over the training period.

Table 1 shows a breakdown from Day 1 of the Formative Training Workshop to final day of the Summative Training Workshop. A mean shift was observed over time ranging from 2.50 (Confidence and Skills) to 2.75 (Knowledge). Although the average rating was higher for both Confidence and Skills compared to the Knowledge indicator, a marginally larger increase was shown with respect to Early Years staff's level of knowledge about participatory evaluation.

A slight downward change in ratings emerged at the beginning of Day 1 of the Summative Workshop. A six week period for data collection separated the Formative and Summative Training Workshops. Feedback at the final workshop and reflections in the evaluation Journals suggested experience of applying the participatory evaluation methodology in their work or settings had in some cases challenged their level of Knowledge and Confidence. The teams also expressed their concern about returning to the training to present and discuss the data collected which may have influenced their ratings on the first morning of the Summative Training Workshop. Interestingly the level of Skill remained constant over this period compared to the other two indicators. Despite their reported reservations about presenting the evaluation information, participants would appear to have grounded their skill through application in the field with the opportunity over the six weeks to carryout and engage in a participatory approach to evaluation.

The quantitative findings are substantiated by the personal insights documented through the evaluation Journals. Some examples are given below:



*“I have come to really appreciate the value of participatory evaluation in my work....I am now much more tuned into exploring issues, problems and reflections as they arise and will more purposeful in addressing the lessons learned and recognise the importance of bringing these to the fore”*

*“Evaluation is a such a part of what we do in Early Years that it make sense to have all staff trained up in this participatory evaluation style”*

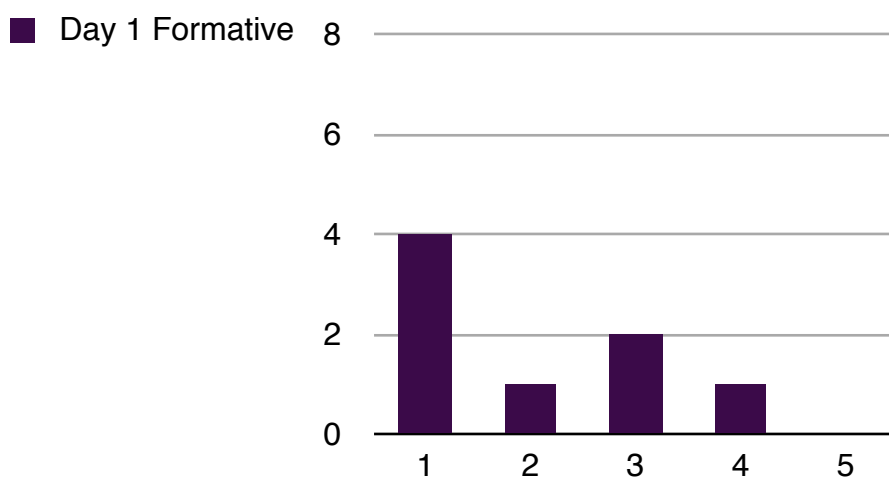
*“I feel the participatory evaluation approach will be crucial for the continuous analysis of work to improve my processes and delivery of service”*

*“The course will be a huge benefit to me in future projects and has helped my own knowledge, skills and confidence in relation to participatory evaluation increase. Taking part in this training has also been a great continuing professional development opportunity”*

Table 1: Mean score for ratings of Knowledge, Confidence and Skills for pilot group during Formative (F1, F3, F4, F5) and Summative (S1, S2) training days

Indicator	Mean						Increase over time
	F1	F3	F4	F5	S1	S3	
Knowledge	1.87	3.12	3.20	4.00	3.20	4.62	2.75
Confidence	2.25	2.75	3.37	4.00	3.75	4.75	2.50
Skill	2.25	2.75	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.75	2.50

Figure 1-4: Level of Knowledge about Participatory Evaluation in Early Years Staff at the Formative Training Workshops



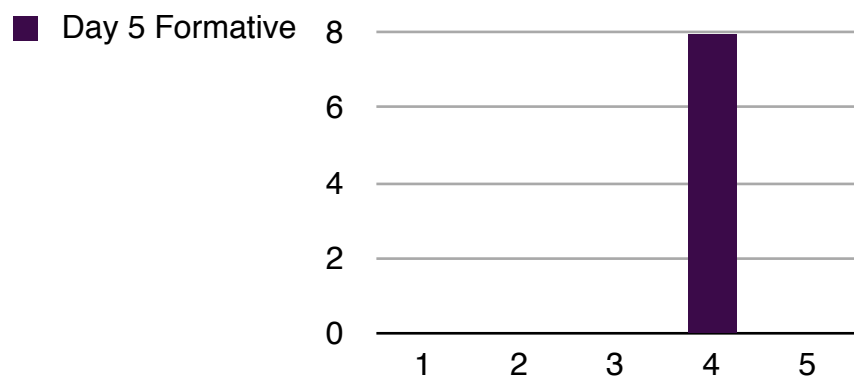
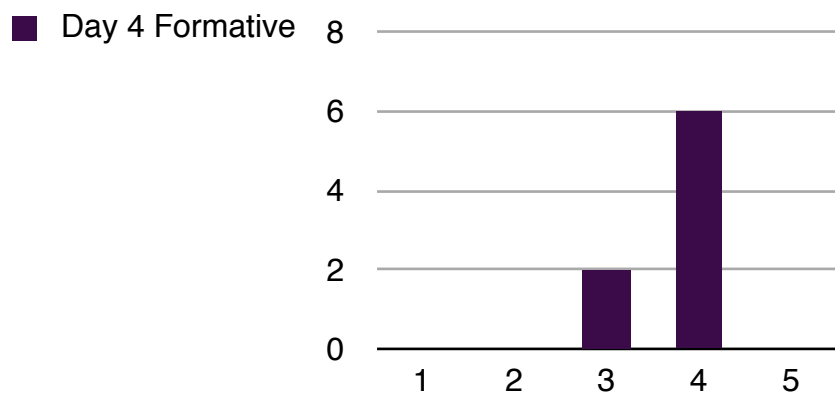
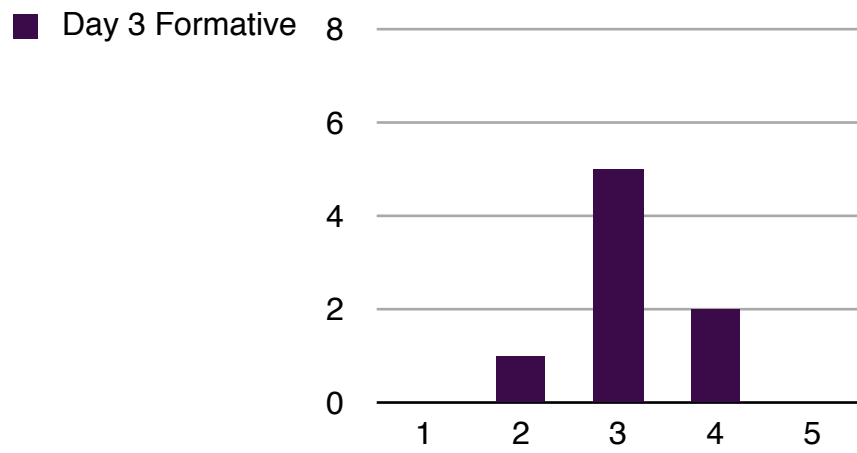


Figure 5-6: Level of Knowledge about Participatory Evaluation in Early Years Staff at the Summative Training Workshops

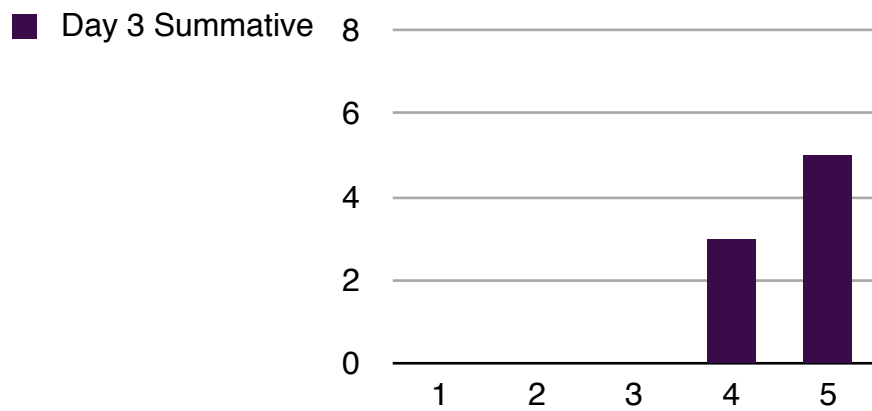
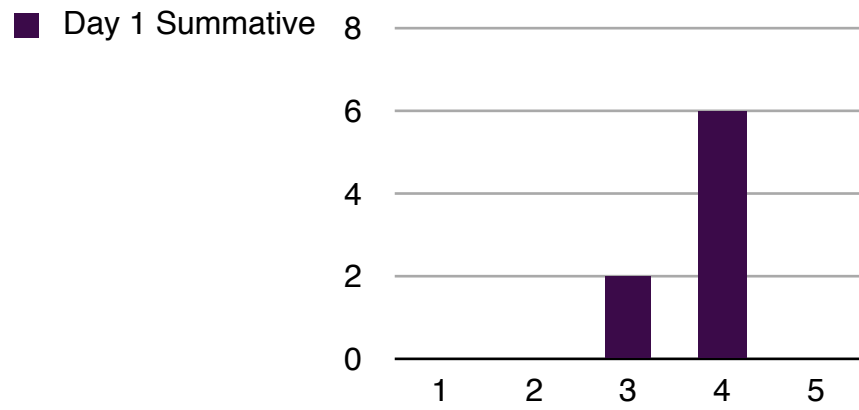
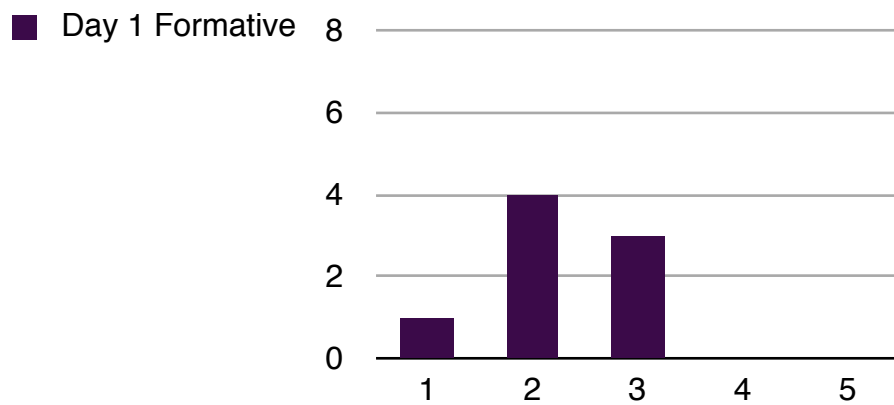


Figure 7-11: Level of Confidence about Participatory Evaluation in Early Years Staff at the Formative Training Workshops



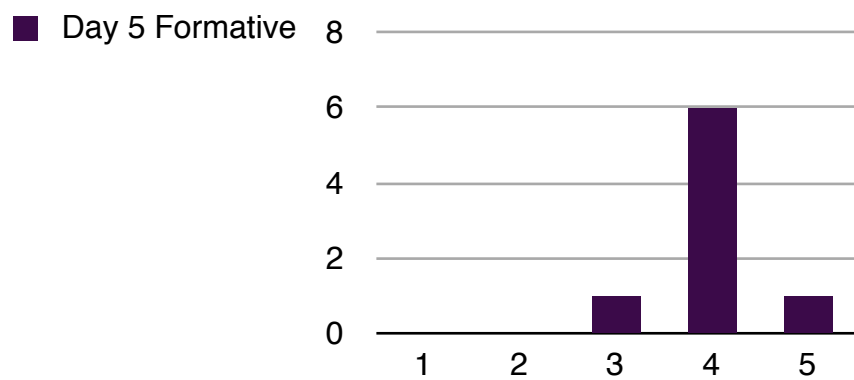
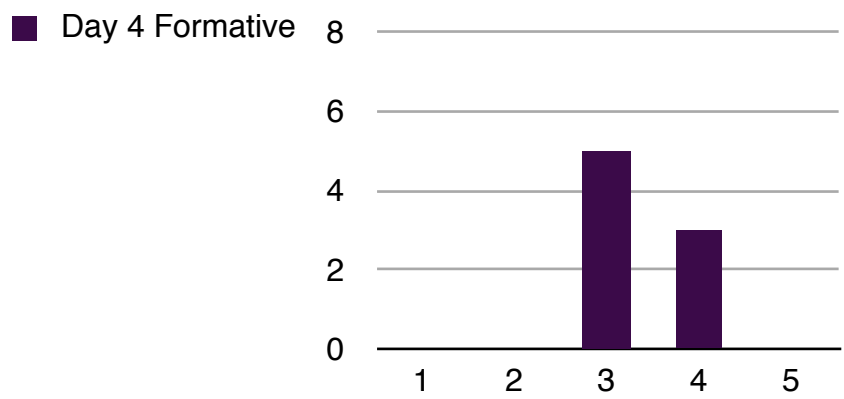
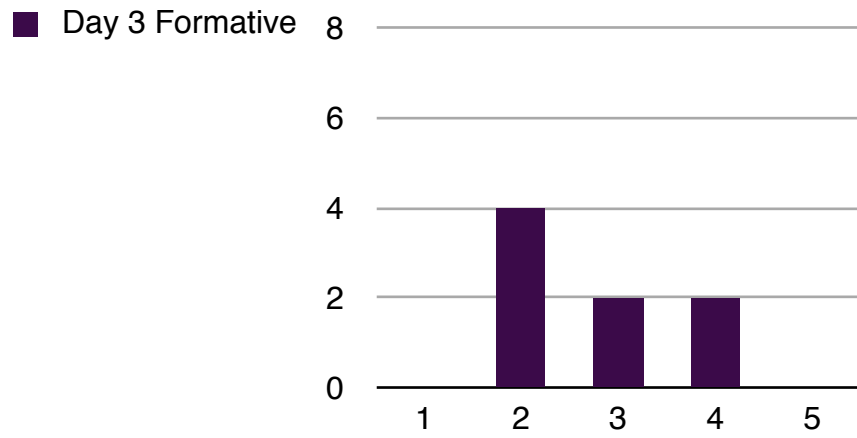


Figure 12-14: Level of Confidence about Participatory Evaluation in Early Years Staff at the Summative Training Workshops

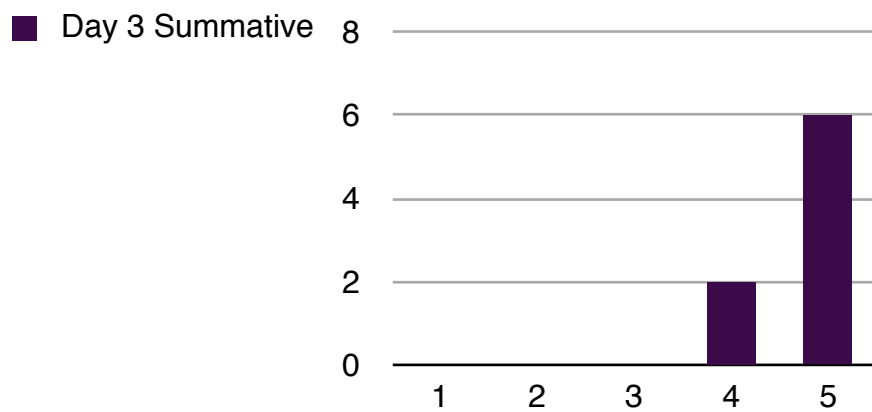
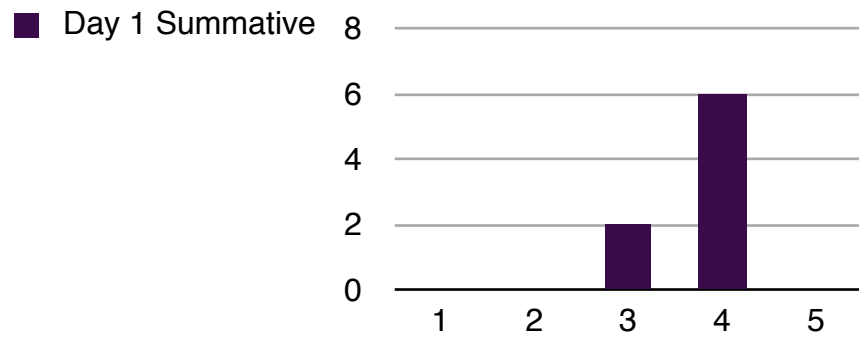
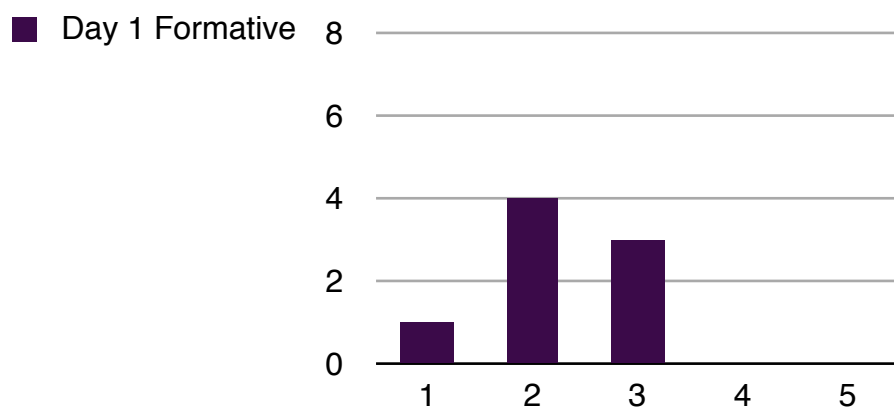


Figure 15-19: Level of Skill around Participatory Evaluation in Early Years Staff at the Formative Training Workshops



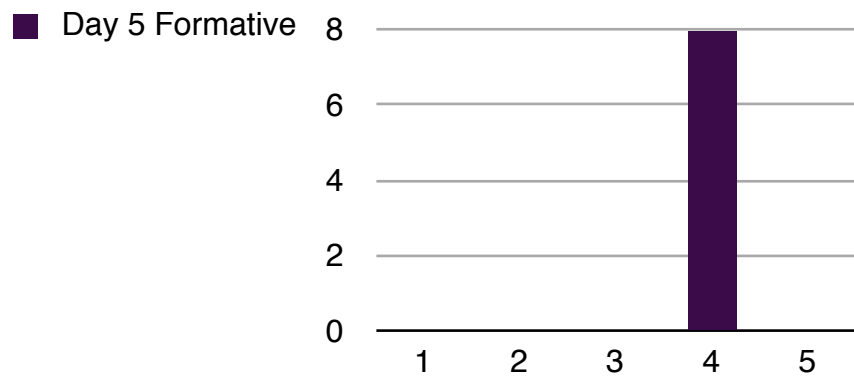
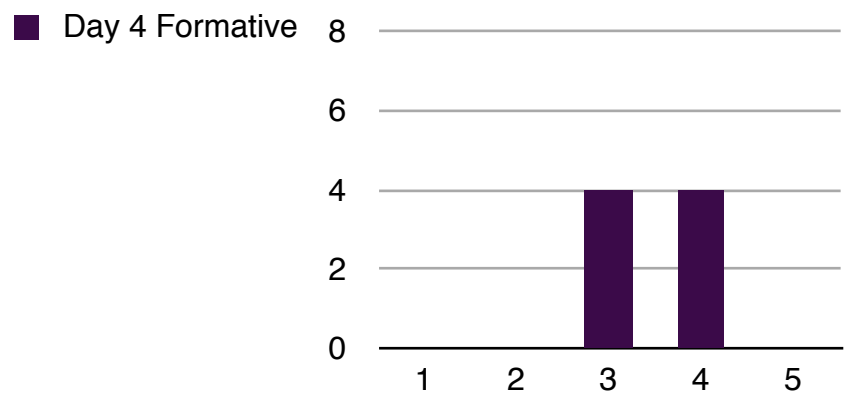
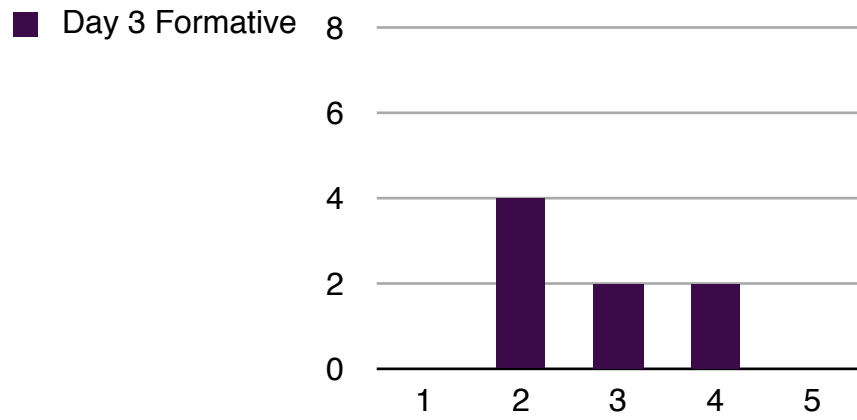
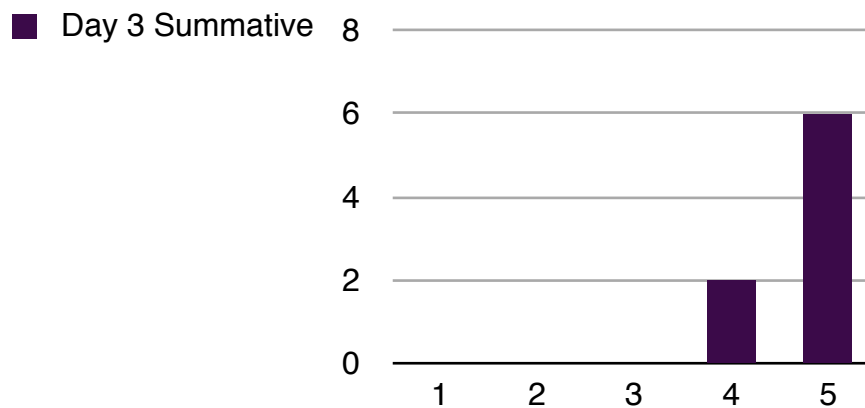
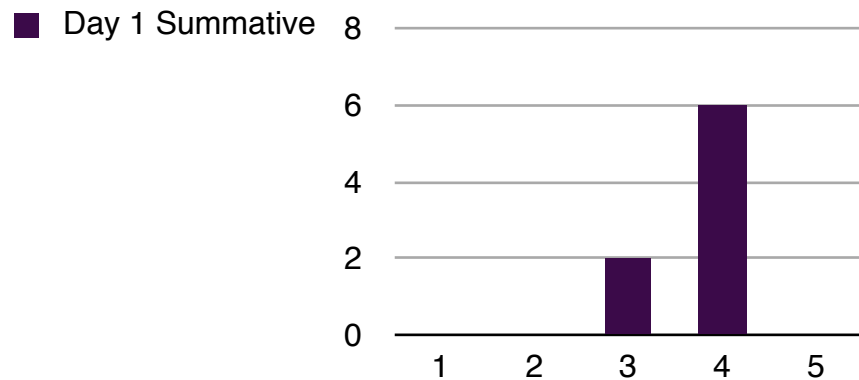


Figure 20-21: Level of Skill around Participatory Evaluation in Early Years Staff at the Summative Training Workshops



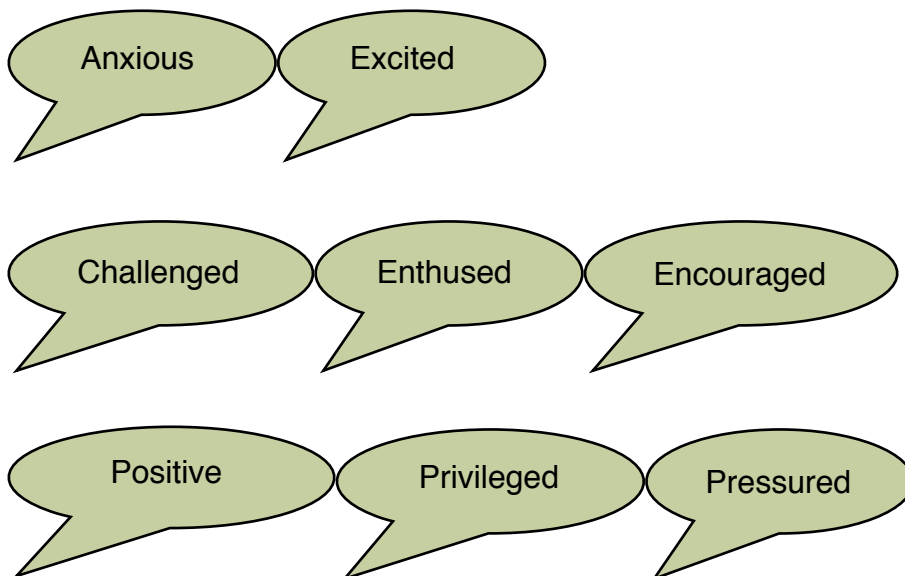
### Participants' Personal Objectives

Early Years staff on Day 1 of the Formative Training were asked to record their individual objectives for the course. These were then discussed among the group. A number of overlapping themes emerged from the feedback which led to key objectives for staff being identified. They point to a motivation by staff to acquire new knowledge, skills and confidence about this approach and understanding its degree of fit between existing Early Years monitoring/evaluation methods and the model being introduced in the training. It is evident from the list of personal objectives that staff acknowledge the necessity of conducting research and evaluation within the organisation but do desire an approach that puts the voice of stakeholders to the forefront. Although these objectives were created at the very start of training the realisation of them becomes apparent not only through the tracking of ratings by staff but through the application of the principles and tools of participatory evaluation over the course of the pilot:

- To gain knowledge of the principles of the participatory evaluation approach

- To have an understanding of the practicalities in applying the participatory evaluation approach to Early Years work
- To develop a participatory evaluation ethos within Early Years work in particular for engagement with stakeholders
- To have confidence to use the tools to carry out a participatory evaluation in Early Years
- Make links between existing knowledge on research and evaluation with this new approach
- To involve team members in carrying out a participatory evaluation and understanding the key principles and skills needed to do this
- To understand the differences between participatory evaluation methods and traditional approaches to monitoring and evaluation and how these will benefit Early Years
- To find ways to integrate the knowledge, skills and confidence I gain through the training into everyday work and planning
- To make evaluation more enjoyable and meaningful for our stakeholder groups
- To develop ways to be more self critical and reflective in work

### Wall of feelings from participants on the first day of training



Participants were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about coming to the training. Open and honest feedback was given by the group who expressed both positive and negative views about taking part in the training. Examples of these are in the vox pots above. The facilitators asked staff to concentrate on feelings as well as thoughts and opportunities to share their feelings were offered in the form of a 'video diary room' at the end of Day 1, Day 3, Day 5 of Summative Training and Day 3 of the Summative Training. Participants continued to record and reflect on feelings as they



went through the pilot period in the Journals. Similarities in experiences could be observed through content detail in the Journals with many staff referring to initial trepidations of the training, their role and expectations placed on them by themselves, their team and management. An experiential journey through learning to application and then final to summative reflection and discussion was captured by individuals in their Journals and brought to life through their video diaries.

### **Participants' Initial Concerns**

At the start of the process staff were given the opportunity to share and address their fears through their Journal entries and group discussion. Common concerns emerged which pointed to worries around time required to implement the training within heavy workloads, management support and the application of the method to their work. They also recognised the group of Early Year staff selected to take part in the training had diverse experiences, needs and backgrounds alongside different roles held within the organisation. The group wondered how the needs would be met within the training context. To address this facilitators provided a detailed training programme for the pilot period which offered participants complete transparency about the activities and the role they had to play in the programme.

Issues around integrating existing knowledge about research/evaluation with this new information was evident in many of the personal reflections made by Early Years staff in their Journals. Facilitators made clear to the group that while a long standing debate between the value of quantitative and qualitative data underpins many discussion about research and evaluation, the participatory evaluation approach does not dismiss the strengths that traditional methods or practices can bring to the table. However, the defining distinction between the participatory approach and other models of research/evaluation is in the attention paid to 'process' and 'how' things are done. The engagement of stakeholders and recognition of the central role they play in conducting evaluations separates this type of methodology from any other. Early Years staff came to understand that they could assimilate their previous knowledge and experience of research/evaluation with the participatory approach but fully appreciated what set this way of working apart.

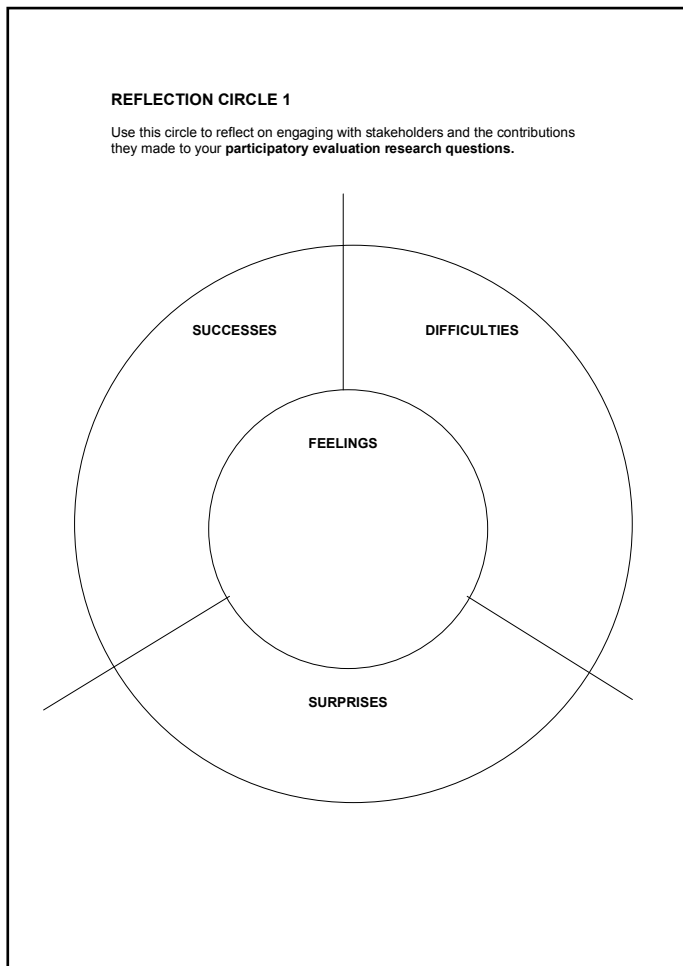
The group acknowledged both privately and publicly that they were curious and anxious about the new approach being introduced to them and how this fits within Early Years existing research/evaluation practices. This concerns began to fade as their knowledge increased from participation in the training workshops. Their willingness and openness to listen to, engage in and explore the participatory methodology created an environment that both facilitators and students shared. Within this knowledge, confidence and skills were built through active learning methods and full engagement from participants. The style of delivery by facilitators mirrored the ethos and principles of the participatory approach allowing Early Years staff themselves to experience this methodology first hand.

## Participants Final Reflections

As part of the facilitators evaluation methodology of the programme, staff were asked to consider the successes, difficulties, surprises and feelings about the two stages in the participatory data collection process. Stage 1 involved staff engaging with their target stakeholder group to ask them what representatives from that stakeholder group wanted asked as part of the evaluation. In line with the 19 steps which define a participatory evaluation approach opportunities were offered to stakeholder groups to contribute to and direct the evaluation questions. This aspect of the training was viewed as the most distinguishing feature by Early Years staff. It also raised concerns about the communication of this feature of the approach to stakeholders and other Early Years team members.

At the Summative Training Workshop staff were asked to complete two reflection circles. These tools were intended to help individuals review the previous 6 week data collection period in terms of successes, difficulties, surprises and feelings. The first question asked staff to:

*Reflect on engaging with stakeholders on the contributions they made to your participatory evaluation research questions*



The feedback by staff under each of these topics is summarised below:

### **Successes**

Willingness of stakeholders  
Use of different methods  
Willingness of Early Years staff to participate in the process  
The insight offered by stakeholders  
Suggested question that had not been thought of  
The amount of feedback received

### **Difficulties**

Trying not to prompt groups  
Adding this activity onto something else  
Getting stakeholders to understand why we were asking them this question  
Getting stakeholders together  
Got more comments than questions as this was such a new concept to stakeholders  
Time needed to do this  
Stakeholders unable to comment

### **Surprises**

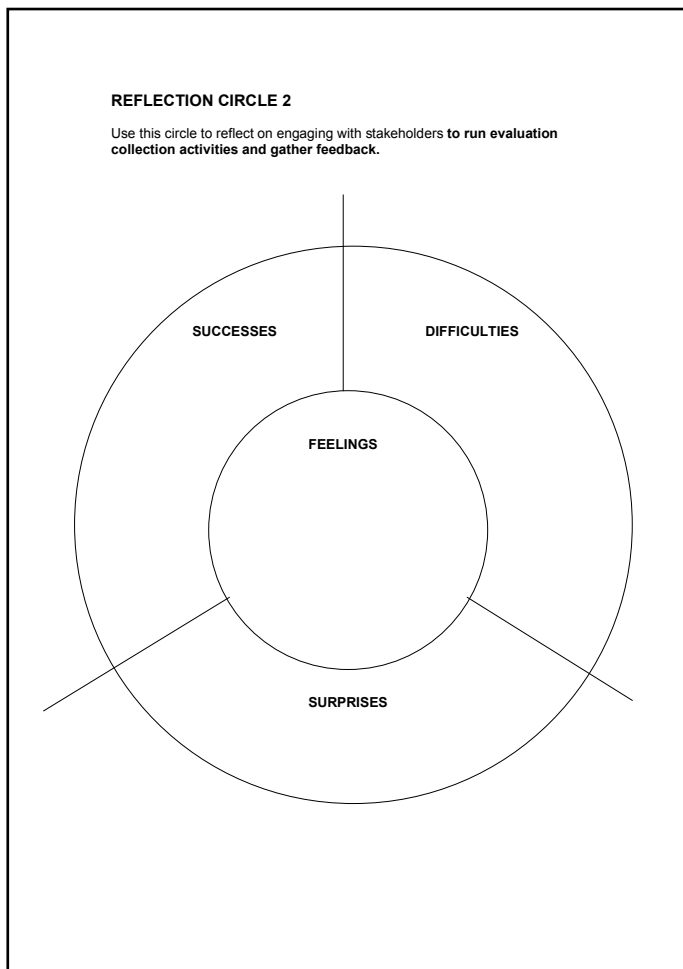
Lack of awareness of staff about specific roles within Early Years  
Agreement from staff to participate  
Parents/teachers coming up with ideas that had not been offered previously  
Stakeholders feeling threatened  
Positive feedback

### **Feelings**

Apprehension  
Relief  
Empowered  
Confident  
Refreshed  
Inspired  
Motivated  
Under pressure  
Nervous

The second question asked staff to:

*Reflect on engaging with stakeholders to run evaluation collection activities and gather feedback.*



The responses by staff under each of these topics are summarised below:

### **Successes**

The amount of information that was collected  
Engaged 100% with stakeholders  
To observe the participatory evaluation model in action  
1-2-1 discussions  
Visual methods  
Building relationships with stakeholders  
Feeling valued  
Keeping the team informed throughout  
Ideas from members  
Personalising contact with members

### **Difficulties**

AGM was not ideal setting to collect data  
Fitting activities around everyday duties  
Participants leaving early  
Inappropriate venue  
Timescale  
Juggling methods to make activities interesting  
Participants not being informed about evaluation session beforehand  
Suitability of stakeholders to questions being asked

### **Surprises**

Parents' eagerness to be involved  
The variety of responses  
The way data collection methods stimulated thoughts and discussions  
Positive reception to the process  
Enthusiastic engagement  
Value of data collected to inform future practice and training

### **Feelings**

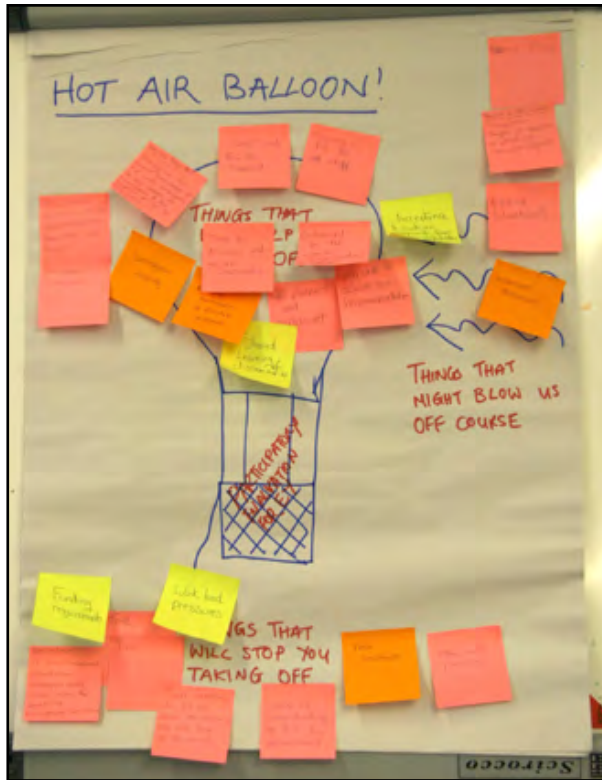
Stressful  
Relieved  
Satisfied  
Motivated  
Informed  
Insightful  
Valued  
Happy  
Accomplishment

These reflections served as the basis for the final video diary by staff who were asked to consider three summative evaluation questions. The questions focused on the impact of the participatory evaluation training on the individual, their stakeholders and on Early Years as an organisation. Earlier in the Summative Training Workshop the group had discussed organisational implications of the 7 steps to recommendations put forward by each team. As a collective the group remarked on the opportunity for cross fertilisation of ideas that the participatory evaluation training had provided them. The support, involvement and guidance of other staff members from different teams was welcomed by participants and highly valued as an intended outcome of the training.

The video accounts of participants final reflections capture their overall experience, feelings and impact they perceived the training to have on their work, their stakeholders groups and to the overall organisation.

One final evaluation exercise by facilitators was called the Hot Air Balloon. This was a visual group method where the balloon is used as a metaphor to assess learning.

## The Hot Air Balloon



Staff reflected on:

### **Things that will help participatory evaluation in EY to take off:**

Shared learning

Participatory evaluation embraced by whole organisation

Senior Management and Board of Governors support

Time to discuss and agree methods

Our own enthusiasm

Building awareness of positive outcomes from the approach

Help of colleagues

### **Things that will stop participatory evaluation in EY from taking off:**

Time constraints

Lack of understanding of methods

Team members not buying into the process

Not being valued by Senior Management and Board of Governors

### **Things that might blow participatory evaluation in EY off course:**

Acceptance of the approach by wider stakeholder groups

Workloads

Other pressures

Reactive situations

Being able to deliver on recommendations

Loosing focus