

# Childcare as a Gendered Occupation

Research Report  
No 23

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# *Childcare As a Gendered Occupation*

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ISBN 0 85522 600 5

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## Executive Summary

### Background

Childcare in the UK is an almost entirely gendered career. Although there is no statistical profile of those working in the childcare field, unpublished extrapolations from the general household survey and other data indicate that approximately one percent of those working in childcare are men.

The arguments for employing more men in childcare centre on the issue of equal opportunities. European legislation now requires that in principle all jobs in whatever sphere, should be equally open to men and women, and men and women undertaking those jobs should not be discriminated against in terms of pay or conditions of service. However, caring occupations present a particular challenge, since caring work has traditionally been done by women in informal situations, and much of it still is undertaken in this way. Once childcare becomes professionalised and institutionalised, what happens to these conceptions of caring as both bodily and emotionally intimate? Despite widespread acceptance of the principle of equal opportunities, there are very strong preconceptions about what constitutes a proper role for women and men with regard to looking after children.

A second equal opportunities issue is about career versatility and progression. There is a considerable academic debate in the literature about the reasons why women's earnings in general are less than those of men, and why female dominated occupations in general are lower paid than male dominated occupations. In addition, in occupations which were previously all-female, such as nursing, men who enter the occupation tend to "fast-track" into senior positions.

A related equal opportunities issue is a consideration of how the provision of childcare supports women's entry into and career progression within the workforce. There is a connection between the extent, quality and costs of childcare provision and the uptake of employment of women with young children although there are arguments about the nature of the relationship; but the debate has made clear that at the very least there is a degree of public consciousness of women's changing roles and the increased significance of childcare in supporting them.

### The full report.

The research project aimed to determine to what extent childcare is:

- perceived to be a non-academic/vocational occupation;
- the result of early specialisation, in that it has been a choice made early in school careers;
- highly gendered, and perceived almost entirely as a career for women;
- characterised by lack of career progression and;
- inflexible and provides non-transferable skills in that it is unlikely to provide a basis for entry or conversion to other occupations.

The research explored the ways in which men and women undertaking training courses in childcare saw themselves as future workers. It examined their routes into training, their conceptions of the job and their anticipation of their future prospects. It matched these against the expectations of their tutors and against the perceptions of the providers where the students undertook their placements. It records how these choices, perceptions and expectations were gendered.

Childcare as an occupation is highly gendered. The numbers of women with young children in the workforce has substantially increased over the last ten years, and whilst this has increased the demand for childcare, it does not appear to have affected the numbers of men entering the field. The number of men does not appear to have altered significantly in recent years. On the other hand there is increasing concern about the gender imbalance of the field, and in a number of countries there have been partially successful efforts to address it.

Childcare as an occupation spans both care and education services and encompasses diverse job opportunities. It has uncertain boundaries as a field of employment, and many childcare workers are home based and/or work part-time. The diverse nature of childcare as an occupation is also reflected in the training. Students may take a variety of routes in order to gain a relevant qualification. These routes are mainly vocational and since the introduction of NVQs, are increasingly work based.

The research was carried out in two London Colleges of Further Education. 125 students, 113 women and 12 men, were interviewed in 15 matched groups. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 8 tutors, 4 from each college, and with 16 providers from a variety of settings where students undertook their placements. Background documentation and course materials were collected from the colleges and from the awarding bodies for childcare qualifications.

The colleges, judged by the numbers of students on benefits, served extremely deprived areas. The average age of the students in the sample was 30 years, ranging from 16 to 52 years. Although these colleges may be atypical in some respects, for example in the high percentage of ethnic minority

students, or in the higher age ranges of those attending, in other ways what evidence there is suggests that as regards educational attainments and gender balance, there are no significant differences in student intake.

### **Doing childcare training.**

Tutors, students, and providers were interviewed about their perceptions of the training which is offered. Tutors expressed concern about the low level of academic achievements of some of the students, and the need to offer what amounted to remedial or therapeutic help for them. Many students had been low achievers at school. They regarded the childcare course as demanding, and often unnecessarily academic, but were pleased and proud at the thought of gaining a qualification. One student summed this up saying "*You are qualified, you are worthy*".

Student placements in childcare or education services are an important part of the training. Teacher practitioners had generally low expectations of the nursery nurse students on placement, and were satisfied if they fitted in and did what they were asked to do; whereas nursery nurse practitioners expected the students to show more autonomy and take more initiatives, and were critical if they did not.

### **The gendered nature of childcare.**

Women experience considerable ambivalence about the job, on the one hand seeing it as "natural" and something they can already do, and on the other hand wanting to be recognised as trained and qualified professionals. Childcare was described as essentially female: "*It's intrinsic woman*". Young children were also seen as more docile and biddable: "*We can control them more. You say don't do it and they understand. You say it to an older child and they get back at you.*"

The more natural the job is seen for women the more unnatural it is for men, who have to avoid accusations of perversity and child abuse in wanting to work with young children. Both men and women deal with this by attempting to see men as offering an essentially different kind of role from that of women in looking after children. Women are perceived as soft and caring particularly with babies, whereas men are perceived as more robust and more vigorous and offering a useful role model to children from single parent families. These perceptions of the gendered nature of childcare are complicated by considerations of class and ethnicity.

#### **Childcare as a career.**

Men and women students were asked to rate the status of the job compared with other predominantly female occupations. Both men and women students reluctantly rated the work as low status: *"A lot of people think that as a nursery nurse you are just there to wash their faces or take them to the toilet."*

The most popular career option for women was to work as a nursery nurse in a school. It was seen as a secure job offering hours that were compatible with family life, although students were ambivalent about being subordinate to teachers. Men were more ambitious and saw themselves as reaching senior positions relatively soon. Another popular career move, particularly for the West African women in the sample, was seen as becoming a private nursery owner (usually in their country of origin). Very few students wanted to work in home based care as a childminder or a nanny, and no-one expressed a wish to work in a playgroup.

#### **Summary and suggestions.**

The findings suggest that the gendered nature of childcare is not likely to change without national and local intervention. It suggests

seven issues which need to be addressed to bring about change. These are:

- public measures to address the roles of men and women at home and at work.
- locating child abuse in the wider context of promoting children's interests
- upgrading training
- positive recruitment policies
- targeted financial support for students
- changes to the regulation of childcare
- working in partnership with unions and professional organisations.

## Chapter One: Introduction.

This research project which was carried out in April-June 1996 explores the ways in which women and men undertaking training in childcare see themselves as future workers. It examines their routes into training, their conceptions of the job and their anticipations of their future prospects. It matches these against the expectations of their tutors, and against the perceptions of the providers where the students undertook their placements. Above all it seeks to explore how these choices, perceptions and expectations are gendered.

Childcare in the UK is an almost entirely gendered career. Although there is no statistical profile of those working in the childcare field, unpublished extrapolations from the General Household Survey and other data indicate that approximately 1 percent of those working in childcare are men (1). The European Childcare Network has produced two booklets on men working in childcare services, *Men as Carers* (2) and *Men as Workers in Childcare Services* (3) which review the arguments for involving men in childcare. These discussion documents also suggest that the numbers of men working in childcare services is considerably higher in some European countries, and that there are strategies which can be adopted which promote the employment of men.

### 1.1. Childcare as an Equal Opportunities Issue.

The arguments for employing more men in childcare centre on the issue of equal opportunities.

Firstly, European legislation now requires that in principle all jobs in whatever sphere, should be equally open to men and women, and men and women undertaking those jobs

should not be discriminated against in terms of pay or conditions of service. However, caring occupations present a particular challenge, since caring work has traditionally been done by women in informal situations, and much of it still is undertaken in this way. As Rose (4) has remarked:

*"Yet women's work is of a particular kind. Whether menial or requiring the sophisticated skills involved in childcare it almost always involves personal service...emotionally demanding labour requires that the carer gives something of themselves to the person being cared for, so that even while childcare is capable of immense variation within societies, across societies and across time, it remains the case that nurturance - a matter of feeding, touching, comforting and cleaning bodies - is cross-culturally the preserve of women."* (p22, 31)

Once childcare becomes professionalised and institutionalised, what happens to these conceptions of caring as both bodily and emotionally intimate? As we show in this study, women tend to retain such a view of their activities, but men experience considerable difficulties with it. Moreover, women also find it hard to accept that men can work in this way. Despite widespread acceptance of the principle of equal opportunities, there are very strong preconceptions about what constitutes a proper role for women and men with regard to looking after children. We explore these at some length in the text.

A second equal opportunities issue is about career versatility and progression. There is a considerable academic debate in the literature about the reasons why women's earnings in general are less than those of men, and why female dominated occupations in general are



lower paid than male dominated occupations (5,6,7). In addition, in occupations which were previously all-female, men who enter the occupation tend to have a faster career progression, to earn more, and to show more career versatility than do women. We were interested in exploring perceptions of childcare as a career with the men and women in our sample, to see to what extent they projected themselves, and saw each other, as people with a definite career trajectory. We were also interested in their expectations of future earnings, and their anticipations about job security and conditions of work.

A related equal opportunities issue is a consideration of how the provision of childcare supports women's entry into and career progression within the workforce. There is obviously a connection between the extent, quality and costs of childcare provision and the uptake of employment of women with young children (8) but there are arguments about the nature of the relationship (9,10). The students we interviewed, women and men, as well as the tutors and providers, were highly conscious of women's changing roles and the increased significance of childcare in supporting them. As well as caring for children, all our respondents saw themselves to an extent as promoting gender equality by supporting mothers who worked. This is a relatively new development in childcare over the last 10-15 years, as the numbers of women in the workforce has risen, and the number of facilities to meet their needs has expanded. (11). This consciousness of their role in promoting gender equality affected women's students perceptions of their rights as women workers and increased the ambivalences they experienced between caring for children as a motherly activity and their own entitlements as women. The prominence of gender

equality as an issue also added to the pressures on both men and women to question the traditional gender roles in regard to the act of caring and amplified the ambiguities they faced.

## **1.2. The Context of Childcare as an Occupation.**

A major consideration in trying to explore childcare as a gendered occupation is the fragmented nature of the field itself, and where its boundaries lie; and therefore of defining what constitutes a career within it. There is not a consensus about these boundaries, and different interest groups interpret them differently and invest the various activities and sectors with different degrees of significance.

In the UK services for young children are widely acknowledged by almost all those organisations working in the field to be fragmentary and incoherent. In practice, access to services depends on geographical location and on ability to pay. The various services have adopted different aims and objectives, are available for different hours, and deliberately or otherwise, select and provide for different groups of children, and employ a different spectrum of workers. (Table 1)

There are a range of out of home services for young children. These include:

- publicly funded nursery schools and classes which are mainly part-time and free;
- private and voluntary playgroups which are part-time services for children aged 3-4 years and which make a small charge to cover costs;
- social services day nurseries which are publicly funded and offer a service,

frequently part-time, to children in need and are available for 1 percent of children 0-5 and for which a nominal charge may be made;

- private for profit day nurseries which normally offer full daycare for children 0-5 providing parents can meet the fees.
- voluntary/community day nurseries (which are non-profit and may be part publicly-funded), where parents meet a proportion of the costs;
- workplace nurseries provided by employers, usually at a subsidised cost to parents.

There are two main forms of in-home care:

- childminders who look after children who come to them in their own homes, parents usually paying all the cost.
- nannies who are employed to look after children in the children's own homes, parents usually paying all the cost.

Very broadly speaking services are divided into education (those employing teachers and having an education philosophy and which are part of the education system and free to users) and care (those offering a non-educational and caring environment and for which users usually pay). There is an overlap between them and both employ non-teachers or nursery nurses who receive the same training for both sectors. The most rapidly expanding sector of out-of-home provision is now private (for profit) daycare. With regard to in-home care, some information is available about the numbers of childminders and the places they offer, but no information is collected about nannying. Much care for the children of working parents is likely to be informal and offered by relatives. (12)

There is no agreed classification or typology of the sector and statistical information relies on categorisation which is not consistent or compatible across subsectors, for instance across social services, education and employment data. This lack of an agreed classificatory system is manifested in a variety of national surveys each of which use different criteria, which in turn gives rise to problems about interpretation of available data and the extent and take-up of different kinds of services (13). Data about sector workforce composition such as age, ethnicity, gender, qualifications, earnings, turnover rates etc and about workplace size and organisation, have not so far been comprehensively or systematically collected.

Variations in the number of places in the care sector over the last 10 years are provided in Table 2. Whereas the local authority sector has shrunk, the private and voluntary sector has greatly expanded.

For the purposes of this research, an analysis was carried out of job adverts over a period of one year in the professional magazine *Nursery World* which has a circulation of 27,000 and is circulated to most training agencies, in the private and in the public sector. Although local papers also carry adverts, *Nursery World* is a main source for published training and recruitment information for childcare workers. The analysis suggests the greatest number of jobs on the open market are as private nannies (Table 6) but no statistics are directly collected about this sector and there is no confirmatory information.

The Childcare sector (with the exception of nannying) is by USA and European standards fairly heavily regulated with regard to health and safety ratios of staff to

children. These regulations are laid down in the Children Act (1989) and are monitored by local and national social service inspectorates. The regulations apply to all non-education provision. Certain other categories, for instance provision on crown property or daycare attached to private or maintained schools, are normally exempt from regulation. "Desirable Learning Outcomes" were introduced by the old administration for those nurseries wishing to become eligible for the newly piloted nursery voucher scheme for four year olds. The current government has ended the nursery voucher scheme, but the "Desirable Learning Outcomes" applied to all providers in the scheme, will continue to apply to providers in the Early Years Development Plans (EYDPs). The government intends to consult on moving to a more uniform inspection and regulatory system for early years services.

There are nationally agreed rates of pay for those working in publicly funded education and social services childcare provision although local bargaining is now widespread. Nationally agreed rates are shown in Table 5 below.

The job market for those working in childcare is therefore diverse, and for the most part low paid and frequently part-time. The promotion prospects for those working as nannies, in playgroups, as childminders, or as nursery nurses in schools or hospitals are poor or non-existent, but there are some prospects of promotion for those working in private day nurseries or local authority day nurseries or family centres. The pessimism of the providers we interviewed concerning job prospects was striking, although this did not extend to the students.

### 1.3. The nature of training.

Training of some description is the usual entry point into a non-manual occupation. With the probable exception of childminding and playgroups, where workers are likely to have had ad hoc local and non award bearing or non transferable training, and of nannies, about whom there is no reliable data, most workers are likely to have some training. The training they receive, and the assumptions about childcare as a gendered occupation embedded in it, constitute the starting point for this study.

The majority of students currently undertaking qualifying courses do so at Colleges of Further Education, although an increasing number of students are now being assessed for work based NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) within their workplaces. Four national awarding bodies compete for students:

CACHE - (Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, previously NNEB, National Nursery Examining Board) which offers only vocational child care courses including 3 levels of NNEB, certificate, diploma and advanced, and NVQs levels 2 and 3. The diploma NNEB is estimated to be equivalent to NVQ level 3.

BTEC (Business and Technical Education Council) which offers a wide range of vocational courses including childcare, the BTEC diploma being regarded as an alternative university route for more able students. Some colleges offer an advanced vocational qualification known as HND (Higher National Diploma) in childcare from the same awarding body.

City and Guilds offers a range of basic short certificate courses including childcare, and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in childcare.

CETSW (Council for Education and Training in Social Work) is mainly a social work training agency but also offers NVQ level 2 and 3 in childcare.

Each of these awarding bodies set and assess college based courses and in addition CACHE, City & Guilds and CETSW also award NVQs.

A new qualification GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) has recently been introduced (also administered by a variety of awarding bodies). Whereas NVQs are aimed at those already in work and are intended to upgrade the qualifications of those already in the labour market, GNVQ is a vocational qualification geared mainly to schools. Foundation and intermediate GNVQs can include a package of care options, whilst an advanced GNVQ can serve as an alternative academic route to University. It has been suggested that the GNVQ courses, once established, may rival the NNEB as an entry route to childcare work.

All the taught courses require practical placements. Taught courses are necessarily limited by the number of placements they can find for their students. In inner London there are a variety of placements and courses have been able to expand; but in other parts of the UK it is highly likely that the viability of courses is limited by the paucity of placements.

Some private employers are participating in "Modern Apprenticeship Schemes" that is NVQs for school leavers who wish to come straight into work. Apprentices are paid a low wage but have time set aside for training and study on the job. Government subsidies are available for such schemes.

The playgroup movement which offers mainly sessional part-time care (averaging 10-12 hours per week) has its own agreed training courses, which offer a basic introduction to work in playgroups. Some of these are located in Colleges of Further Education. Ad hoc local courses for childminders are provided by some local authorities. The Montessori movement offers Montessori training which is a two year privately funded training but which focuses on learning and teaching rather than on care, "a readily identifiable holistic curriculum framework" and which has an international currency.

Given the diversity of qualificatory routes, and the fragmentation of the field, the relationship between qualifications and career prospects is not clear. Many of the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECS) set up by the Government in order to bring together employers and training agencies in a given area have promoted childcare courses, either local and ad hoc and intended to relate to NVQs, or qualifying courses in association with a FE college, on the grounds that they attract women returners and offer a route back into work for those who have dropped out of the workforce for family or other reasons. There is no doubt such courses are popular, and have been expanding, but their efficacy as a route back into work, given the fragmentation of the market, is not yet proven.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of childcare courses are low level, and have traditionally attracted working class recruits with low academic attainments, there is a lobby of practitioners and lecturers, mainly from the education and academic fields, who argue that the nature of the work demands more rigorous training. In response to this lobby a number of new universities now offer

an early childhood degree with various entry routes including non-academic routes such as APL (assessment of prior learning). These courses are mostly but not exclusively non-vocational and do not include supervised placements as part of the assessment. Currently, although individual course brochures are available, there is no overview information about the number of such courses, the variation between them, the take-up, or the outcomes for students. These courses do not qualify candidates as teachers, and would-be teachers must take an additional qualification.

In short there is a range of relatively low level childcare qualifications which can be obtained through a variety of routes (15). Continual adjustments to these qualifications - for example the splitting of the NNEB into three levels, certificate, diploma and advanced, in order to match the NVQ levels 2 and 3 - are being made by awarding bodies and by colleges in order to accommodate to new national initiatives on education, qualifications and training and regulation. Students attending such courses do not usually receive any form of direct grant.

We raise these ambivalences about the level of entry into training, the content of training, further training and untrained workers in our discussions with students, staff and providers, men and women. We attempt to explore the relationship between the types of training available and perceptions and uptake of childcare as a gendered occupation.

#### 1.4. Methodology.

A small sample of London colleges of further education was selected randomly, and within that sample two colleges were selected for immediate accessibility and willingness to take part in the study. Both the colleges are in inner London and take a majority of students

from ethnic minority backgrounds. (see Table 4)

Almost all the students were adult returners. Only one course, a basic certificate course, had a majority of school leavers. The average age of the students was 30 years, ranging from 16 to 52 years.

A comparison of the intake with that of other colleges, grouped by region, from the Further Education Funding Council is attached. (Table 5). It suggests that there are regional differences in the intake of colleges, and that the two colleges we chose to study serve particularly deprived areas, as judged by the numbers of students on benefits. However although this may have affected some of our findings, we do not think it will have substantially affected our conclusions about the gendered and vocational nature of childcare. The percentage of female to male students is the same as most colleges. (16) The level of attainment of students may vary slightly, but this variation is unlikely to be significant, since CACHE do not require a minimum qualification to undertake the NNEB, and it is left up to colleges to introduce their own criteria; and the course itself is highly prescriptive and predicated upon a low basic level of attainment. Organisations such as the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses (PANN) claim that the pressure on colleges to accept students is considerable, so much so that it is "a well aired criticism" amongst their members, many of whom tutor on NNEB courses, that standards of entry are generally poor. (17)

The data is therefore based on a small scale qualitative study of 125 students, 113 women and 12 men, undertaking a variety of childcare courses at these two inner London colleges of further education. Semi-

structured group interviews were held with 15 matched groups of students, including two separate groups of men. Three additional individual interviews were held with men who for one reason or another could not attend the group interviews. At the start of the interview we asked the students to fill in a form with their name, age, number of children (if any) and to indicate whether they had had any previous employment paid or unpaid, working with children.

In each college each of the childcare courses was examined for course content, and a group from each course was interviewed. The courses were matched across colleges.

These courses were:

- NNEB diploma Year 1
- NNEB diploma Year 2
- BTEC diploma Year 1
- BTEC diploma Year 2
- BTEC Certificate course
- CACHE Certificate course  
(approximately NVQ level 2)
- NVQ level 3

All the courses are modular and include practical assignments. Within this limited range they are graded in difficulty with the certificate courses and NVQ level 2 being the most basic and BTEC diploma the most demanding. The colleges operate a selection mechanism, and assign students to whichever level they consider best matches the students level of ability. Students are assessed at a college level for the course which is most appropriate to their level of ability and qualification. A sample assessment form is attached in Appendix 1. As can be seen, expectations of student's capabilities are low.

We made strenuous attempts to obtain background information about enrolment applications, drop out-rates, and employment

take-up at the end of the courses. For a number of reasons this information was not accessible, or else incomplete. Enrolment applications are not filled in or filed in standardised ways, and it was difficult to compare them across colleges, or even across courses, and information about entry levels of qualification, for instance, is likely to be more unreliable, the older the students (18). Because of the modularisation of the courses, it was difficult to tell at what point a student could be regarded as having left, and several of those who missed modules subsequently returned to take them. It seems likely that there is a drop out rate of one third to one quarter of the students on the courses but without precise definitions of what constitutes "dropping out" the information we obtained could not be used in a reliable way. Students do not routinely complete returns about employment once they have left college. The information from students is collected on the basis of voluntary returns. The only way this information could be reliably obtained would be through individual follow-ups. Tutors are asked to make "guestimates" for CACHE about the employment status of newly qualified students, but they are likely to exaggerate their employment prospects - one of the tutors in our sample said about her figures that she "just made them up". However, one small study which attempted to follow up a group of BTEC students for one year after leaving the course suggested that not a single leaver was able to obtain a full-time job in childcare other than as a nanny. (19)

Eight members of staff were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. These included three tutors in each college who covered all the courses whose students we interviewed; and the head of department in each college, neither of whom now taught directly on the courses. Five of these tutors

were white women, one was an Afro-Caribbean woman, and two were white men. None had themselves been trained in childcare, although all but one had had related training in health or infant education.

In addition we interviewed sixteen providers, from a variety of settings in which the students undertook their placements. These included local authority day nurseries, nursery schools and infant classes, special schools, private day nurseries, community nurseries and playgroups. Thirteen of the respondents were white women, two were Afro-Caribbean women, and one was a white man.

We explored the same themes in our discussions with course tutors, students and providers. These were: reasons for choosing the course, and the variation in choices between men and women; the suitability of the different kinds of training as a preparation for work and the assumptions about gender embedded in them; the actual nature of the work and whether men and women could undertake it on equal terms; and the career possibilities the work offered to men and women.

Transcripts were made of the group and individual interviews with all the participants and extracts from these interviews are used in this report to substantiate our analysis. The transcripts present the usual problem of reproduction of conversation, given that oral syntax and orthography are difficult to represent, and that the notation of intonations, gestures, cueing and overlapping which are an integral part of speech has to be omitted if the written dialogue is not to appear cumbersome. We have edited some of the material, but we have adhered to the original comments and syntax as closely as possible, and we have made considerable

efforts to respect the integrity of the views of those who participated in the research.

A variety of documentation was collected from the colleges, including information about college intake and student profiles, and criteria for selection. We collected careers information and spoke informally to careers officers. Further information was collected from the awarding bodies in the field of childcare. This was contextualised with general information about the childcare field.

## Chapter Two: Doing Childcare Training.

### 2.1. The tutors' view of the students.

Students who applied for childcare courses were likely to have already gone through some kind of informal selection. Teachers and career officers strongly encouraged students to undertake courses that they perceived were most suited to the students' abilities and gender. Female students who expressed an interest in working with children were likely to be advised to go in for teaching if their predicted or actual academic attainments were satisfactory, and were directed towards childcare courses if they were not. Male students were less likely to be directed towards childcare.

Colleges then applied their own internal selection process, through interviews and attainment tests. The most able students were entered for BTEC and the least able were entered for certificate courses. Almost all students were perceived initially as low achievers, although it was hoped that the courses would redress this situation and would offer a sound preparation for work in childcare. Because they had high hopes for the effectiveness of the course, all of the tutors considered that many of the students, particularly the younger ones, were ill-prepared for the courses educationally and often emotionally.

*"They do not understand the academic level required or the depth or complexity of the professional task. They lack study skills."*

*"They can't think. Some have never read a book, have never researched anything."*

*"The amount of work is quite a shock. They don't hear however much you tell*

*them...there is a general view that it's work with children and so it is not hard work."*

*"Writing skills (is) a problem."*

*"They have tremendous emotional needs within themselves in terms of their own background that have to be satisfied."*

*"A huge number of our students are looking for self-esteem, love even, through working with children - it's a problem we have particularly with our client group of students because some of them have been so emotionally damaged or traumatised through horrendous childhoods and adolescences. Some are so hung up on the work that they think that if they love the child and hug it that is enough to make the child respond, that if they want to do it, it will happen."*

*"They come out at the end of the course having grown and developed. They have this amazing ability to cope with what life throws at them, it is a strength in looking after children and certainly in coping with parents in a district like this."*

*"If they can resolve the needs of the child within them then they will be satisfied and may become good workers. If they are just doing their own journey they will be dissatisfied and drop out. If they get to the end they will have a degree of empathy and some skills."*

*"I feel strongly about FE (Further Education). FE offers people another opportunity. Our education system has not got it right for everyone and probably never will. There has to be an organisation that picks people up and gives them another chance to make good. We select the people who we think can make good childcare*



*workers, we make one or two mistakes, we are taking a risk."*

*"(The training) is to build confidence, they have little confidence to start with... We get them to realise their skills, particularly in putting pen to paper and get what they have written to make sense. Also giving them a thorough understanding of child development which is fundamental, but also to be responsible people and help them to be successful which includes boring things like punctuality, reliability and honesty."*

*"Capable people wouldn't fit in well. For instance there was a woman with several years experience .. the standard of her work was nothing below a merit, so I counselled her off. The courses have a remedial function even BTEC."*

Given the difficulties faced by students, most of the tutors felt that many students were ill-prepared for work at the end of the course, although the modular courses made it easier to extend the amount of time students needed to take the course. This unreadiness applied more to their theoretical and underpinning knowledge than to their practical skills -the extent to which practical skills can be acquired without a firm knowledge base was an issue, and some tutors felt that nursery nurses could become solid practitioners, sometimes better than teachers.

*"The students would not like to hear me say this but I would like to see the course extended. Two years is too short. It should be three years. There should be a vast input on play, child development and interpersonal skills..."*

*"It's too short. We are packing too much into two years. We need three years."*

*"They have a lot to learn.. In two years starting from a low base it is not enough. They are not academic at all. We would like them to be more creative .. if the job carried higher status we would attract more able applicants. They are low achievers so they struggle and a lot depends on the work they have done."*

*"We work very hard at giving them breadth of experience."*

## **2.2. The students' views of childcare training.**

Whilst the tutors viewed some students as being in need of guidance, to the point of remedial attention, students were ambivalent about their situation. This ambivalence was indicated by a hostility to schooling and a sense of academic failure engendered by the school system; a minimising of the importance of theory and a view of knowledge as prescriptive and atheoretical; and yet a real sense of pride at their new mastery of academic skills in undertaking the course.

### 2.2.1. Schooling.

Schooling was a painful subject for many of the participants. This was expressed most vividly by one of the men we interviewed, but similar experiences were recollected by many participants.

*"I grew up around here and I was told by teachers that I would amount to nothing, so my basic instinct is to show them. In five weeks I get letters after my name. NNEB. For someone who was told that they couldn't do anything, it's a BIG achievement. The primary school hit me like a sledgehammer and only when I was 16 I started reading books."*

*"There is streaming at school, at junior school I was put into the wrong group, it is humiliating at school, for a year I sat on my own and cried, but there is no support or sympathy."*

Even the more academic students expressed reservations about their school experience. This student, aged 38, had only returned to studying after long avoidance of anything to do with school.

*"School was...I went to an all girls grammar school. It was very academic. ...girls were pushed into going higher but a lot of them got pregnant because they couldn't face it...you were put down.."*

There were comments about the authoritarian nature of teaching as an occupation and school as a forcing house.

*"School is more tense, there is more shouting, children can't do the work."*

*"Nursery is not as regimented as school...there is no pressure for children."*

*"Teachers aren't allowed to show they care, because there is pressure to do so much more."*

*"Children sense, they know. They cuddle me but not the teacher. They don't do it to the teachers. You feel embarrassed for them. Even with a new young teacher or a student teacher (the children) know the authority of the teacher."*

*"They can teach, but they don't know much about children, they don't like them."*

*"Teaching is so inappropriate for this age, knocking their self-esteem."*

*"When you get into the education system...it's about reduction, control, manipulation, think about what they are here to learn, not their full potential."*

*"You need to help them to find themselves, discover themselves, not push it down their throats like at school."*

The comparison of childcare with teaching was a constant theme, partly because the hours of schooling made it an attractive workplace for many women with young children, so that despite any negativity about schooling, it was the most preferred option for work. This point is discussed further below.

#### 2.2.2. Prescriptive knowledge.

The course content is prescriptive; and was perceived by many of the students as the transmission of unquestionable and possibly useful facts which they had to learn in order to obtain a qualification. This view was most strongly held by those undertaking the NVQ underpinning knowledge course. For these students in particular, it was not usually seen as offering transferable skills or as educational in the sense of leading to further intellectual enquiry. For many of the women with their own children, and more so for those on NVQ courses, the child development that was taught was regarded as superfluous; and the theory was unrelated to practice.

*"It's given us lots of knowledge, health issues, diseases, without it we wouldn't know what half the words meant"*

*"I learnt about safety aspects, child-adult ratios, now I understand"*

*"I've learnt nothing new about children, no, no, no, children don't change, they're the same all over the world"*

*"No, I haven't learnt anything, even the child development was repeating what you know because of your own children - like a vicious circle."*

*"This bit of paper is not going to make me any better. I've been in childcare 22 years but I don't feel I'm learning anything new."*

*"Essay writing is hard, those who have a lot to offer might get left out, it's the bit that isn't learnt that is important."*

*"Studying and reading books is not going to help you understand children. If a child is upset and wants to be cuddled, or something is troubling them, you are not going to get it from reading books."*

*"It's a tough course."*

For a minority of students, mostly older women, the course had opened their eyes to the pleasure of learning:

*"Written work is difficult, although it's about something you do everyday. I'm not used to it, you have to show, prove your knowledge, what you have to do, you have to say why you have done something when you do it automatically."*

*"It's good, you can never stop learning, surely you want to extend your thinking, this course is an opportunity to go further if you want to."*

*"There has to be a challenge, but if it was easy there would be no point - how can I gather the evidence, how can I prove what*

*you have to do. It seemed like a mountain but I enjoyed tackling it."*

*"Theory opens up wider knowledge, Freud, Bowlby, child development, how people perceive child development. Theory work comes in useful because it has opened up wider knowledge."*

*"But that's the nature of childcare - new ideas, new policies and practices, the course updates and refreshes you, you can get stale, it opens you up. I've gained more knowledge, a wider perspective of childcare out there and how it functions."*

*"We can use our brains and function and think."*

*"I've learnt a hell of a lot on this course and I will continue to learn now."*

### 2.2.3. Pride in completion

Whatever the trials and tribulations in obtaining it, the actual possession of the qualification was regarded as very important, both as a ticket to a job, but also as a solid achievement for those who had had a poor educational start.

*"The BTEC, I tell them the full name of it."*

*"I say I have a diploma in childhood studies, in brackets nursery nursing."*

*"I'm very proud of it, so very proud of it."*

*"Wouldn't we be classed as middle class, once we've got our certificates? We're studying now and we're classed as middle class. I read that in a book."*

*"I've achieved what I set out to do, to get a qualification."*

*"You feel you've achieved something with a diploma."*

*"You are qualified, you are worthy."*

### **2.3. The providers' views of childcare training.**

The providers were judging students by their practical ability, so the issue about academic skills, or the lack of them, was less prominent. Moreover, since students were sometimes new to work, learning work discipline, - arriving punctually, dressing appropriately, behaving politely - was seen as the aspect of training most directly related to the placement. In answer to the question 'what sort of thing goes wrong with placements,' timekeeping was most commonly cited.

*"Basic expectations such as punctuality, appearance and dress. so if they can get here on time, be well dressed - casual, neat - and be able to communicate with other members of staff."*

*"Punctuality is vital. I have had a terrible problem with one student with that this year, there are ground rules that we expect."*

*"Timekeeping, not turning up on the days when they are supposed to be there."*

*"I tried very hard with this student but she would not come in. She was so unreliable, not turn up at the proper times or late."*

*"Timekeeping and if they are not doing their assignments."*

*"Poor punctuality, not completing course work or observations."*

We asked providers what qualities they would look for in a nursery nurse. The

teachers in schools had slightly different expectations: for them nursery nurses were seen as support staff who had to fit in to the school setting and follow the lead of the teaching staff, whereas the non-school settings expected the students to be more autonomous.

*"Team work. Interest in the children and certainly interest in the different difficulties the children have. Willingness to take on extra training and go to INSET (In Service Training). And interest in the school and being part of the general working of the school. Certainly teamwork is important." (Teacher, special needs)*

*"Good relationships between the members of staff and working as part of a team...at the end of the day the responsibility is mine. I say what the overall topic is going to be but then my nursery nurse is very good at saying if we are doing this topic we could do...So I'll have the overview and responsibility for what happens to children but having a very good and experienced nursery nurse it would be ridiculous to say to her you can't have any ideas." (Teacher)*

*"I would say, and I have said this to lots of NNEB students, have that(teaching) in mind as a possible goal, the financial rewards are far greater, more status and a more secure job .. I think it is worth going for the gold and if you get the silver be happy. (Teacher)*

*"Once they get to school its got to be a gelling situation, they have got to fit in and we have got to fit in with them and then they become part of the team. I could say the usual things about honesty, loyalty, watching the time, but the ability to gel is the most important." (Teacher)*

*"You've got to be enthusiastic... you've got to think of new things to do and ways to stimulate the children, especially the older children...I think keeping your interest is the main thing because if you lose interest you could just doddle along." (Playgroup supervisor)*

*"You've got to have commitment, a good rapport with children that can be either learnt or is within a person, patience you've got to be flexible, and have a knowledge of an early years curriculum and the knowledge to support children's learning." (Co-ordinator, workplace nursery)*

*"Patience. Ability to distract and divert the children from what they are doing if necessary. And to have the patience to tell the children when they are not behaving in an acceptable way and tell them so they can hear."(Senior nursery nurse, private nursery)*

*"The children and their needs have to be your main priority. Some people lose sight of that and get lost along the way. I treat them like I would like someone to treat my children. You've got to make their time happy in the nursery to set the pattern for later on when they go to school. (Nursery nurse in a nursery class.)*

*"Apart from the obvious love of children and the sort of physical caring skills, I think you need to be very organised, to be able to have quite a good view of what's going on around the nursery. You find a lot of students are engrossed in the activity they are doing and don't see the disaster next to them. You have to keep that overall view of what's happening, the safety aspect. (Senior nursery nurse, private nursery.)*

The work itself, and the skills and responsibilities involved in it, were seen to be

different in school and non-school settings, with nursery nurses having less autonomy in school settings. This affected how providers viewed the students. The most negative views of the students came from private and voluntary workplace settings where the workers were supposed to get on with things by themselves with less back-up and support.

*"They seem to have no incentive and have not got a sense of where they are going, you have to push them - it's not to do with the course. They seem to come because it's a way of getting off the dole and they say I'll try childcare. It's a bit naïve." (Co-ordinator, community nursery)*

*"Sometimes I see them go and it's quite frightening that they could be in a job within a few months. I can only imagine they wouldn't get that far because nobody would want to employ them. About one quarter to be fair, probably about three quarters of the students we have are good." (Nursery nurse, private nursery)*

*"I am disappointed with some students, they are not being assertive...40% would not make it. Some people do take a bit longer than others to get into it." (Co-ordinator, community nursery)*

At the other extreme, the most positive comments came from teachers.

*"It's very rare that we don't have a perfect student." (Headteacher)*

*"I expect the percentage is really small, say 1% that won't make it. Some of them do have problems with the course work, keeping up with the academic side. Sometimes the placement may be going really well - a lot of the time we get what are called difficult students...but they are really marvellous*

*here, they have got hands on."(Teacher, special school)*

*"Over seven or eight years of having them I have only had three who had absolutely no future."  
(Teacher)*

#### **2.4. Arranging the placements.**

A key aspect of training was organising the placements for their supervised work experience. In the inner city areas, these placements were mostly in publicly funded settings, either schools, local authority day nurseries, or publicly funded voluntary/community nurseries, although all the courses tried also to include a placement in a private day nursery and an in-home placement. These placements were frequently difficult to organise. Although a necessary and valuable aspect of the course, they were administratively a nightmare and often dubious in terms of quality.

*"We've recently undertaken a review. Everything is wrong - checking for health and safety, insurance arrangements, briefing of the students, how students contact the placement beforehand, the staff who visit and whether they know what they are looking at, making sure it is documented and brought back to college, feeding back to college and placement, jettisoning those that are not appropriate..."*

*"I organise the placements for the certificate students. It has been horrendous. It has made me feel very unsettled. Placements are so thin on the ground and having to find infant schools, families -the whole range...some of the placements I have lost because of the students themselves but mostly because of the placements' expectations."*

*"Often there is a personality clash which may be no fault of either party, say a young teacher with an older student or vice versa. I'm not aware of any sexism. It's more a matter of class. Some students do not understand that teachers are more middle class. Sometimes a young teacher may never have worked closely with a student from an ethnic minority community before and may find it difficult especially if the student is competent."*

*"The negative side is with the placement, The students used to have specific special needs and hospital input and that has fallen by the wayside because it's difficult to get those placements. Students can request it but it's bad that it's not there automatically. They need that experience."*

*"Students are sometimes left to hold the fort in cases of absence or people going on a course. Many of the places (in this Borough) would shut down if it were not for our students."*

A particular item of contention was police checks which are legally required, under the definition of "fit person" in the 1989 Children Act, for those who work in nurseries, in order to see if those working with young children had had any previous convictions, and in particular, if they had any record of child abuse. The colleges could no longer afford to pay for police checks for students.

*"There are no police checks, but then the nurseries won't have them without checks. Students are coughing up money themselves."*

*"We can't afford to do police checks any more and since the regulations say students have to be supervised at all times we think it is dispensable - although we did have a*

*student who we found out had a record for grievous bodily harm. We asked her to leave and she was reluctant but when we found out about her record then she accepted it and left."*

When the placements did work, then they were a successful addition to the course, and complemented the student's learning and written work.

*"We do a good job. We offer students a huge variety of experiences, social work, school, hospital, special needs. We work very hard at giving them breadth of experience."*

## **2.5. Financing the training**

The information about students' financial position, unlike much of the other data, was relatively consistent, since fee exemptions depended on it, and external documentary evidence had to be provided. It may have been forged, but in the view of tutors, this was unlikely. Very few students received any kind of grant or subsidy. Those students under 19 or on Income Support have college fees waived; otherwise students are expected to pay fees. Most students were on Income Support. For example, out of a total of 18 students aged between 21 and 49 years, on a two year BTEC course, just one paid fees and the rest received some kind of benefit and were exempted.

The colleges are caught in a catch-22 situation between the requirements of the courses for a certain number of hours study, and the various requirements of benefits offices about work and studying whilst a claimant. The situation is exacerbated by the colleges' requirement to compete for students, because of the allocation of further education funds on a *per capita* basis, so the pressure on the college was to accept higher numbers of students irrespective of their

academic merit or their financial circumstances. The colleges have compromised by being lenient or ambivalent or vague about the number of hours students were required to attend. For women on social security payments, especially women with children, this was easier to manage providing childcare could be arranged.

Students under 19 are not eligible for benefit and must work and/or rely on their parents. According to tutors and careers officers, some pupils were recommended to go straight on to youth training schemes because they would receive a basic income of £30 per week plus fares. Others who chose to stay on and do GNVQ at school or to go to college, would continue to be supported by their families, and at present would be eligible only for the £10 per week child benefit allowance payable to their mother or main carer.

*"There is the whole funding problem and the constraint of timetabling the course to fit the benefit rules - into 15 hours per week. The women with children are on a book (ie a benefit book containing weekly payments) but if you are not on a book students get a lot of hassle from the benefit office."*

*"We wouldn't get students if we didn't bend the benefit rules."*

*"Those under 19 get their fees paid but they still have to support themselves. They are all working - in Safeway, Sainsbury, shoe shops - to survive. They fall asleep in class, they have not got enough to eat. If they are older and have children they can't pay for childcare."*

Men experienced more difficulty in claiming benefits and attending college and all our male students and some of the tutors indicated that this was a major factor in male

students failing to complete their courses. It was also the case that the dole was regarded as not sufficient for those who had family or domestic commitments, and "moonlighting" was not uncommon. The toll on some of the male students in meeting the demands they experienced was extreme.

*"I dropped out (of the course), I was unemployed for 5-6 months, basically I went down to the job centre and they put me on security work, so it's difficult to get back (onto the course). But I have - always got that instinct where you want to be with children..I now have two professions, one caring, in the other I have to be muscular, all male. The love for the children is always there. But with caring I don't want to switch off, but with the security work I switch off - I don't want to think about it afterwards."*

*"I couldn't get anything. Couldn't get a grant. Couldn't get a business grant. There is no incentive to study. I'm on the dole, they constantly give you hassle to get a job. I do mini-cab driving at weekends. I have to support myself."*

*"I had a bit of trouble with the social security, they keep sending me to job clubs and training but if I say I'm on a full-time course they won't give me benefits. We're only doing it to try and help ourselves. They even sent me to an NNEB course in Camden because I signed on that I was interested in childcare, and that had TEC monies, but I couldn't tell them I was already doing it here. All I want to do is come to college and finish the course, but they would stop my benefit. I work nights, I only get three or four hours sleep a night. If you can prove you have been trying to get work, they leave you alone for a bit. At the moment I don't know where I am."*

## 2.6. Ethnicity and gender

### 2.6.1. Tutors' views on ethnicity and gender.

In both colleges we investigated approximately two thirds of the students were from ethnic minority backgrounds, many of whom had English as a second language. The childcare courses had a similar percentage of ethnic minority students, but tutors identified three distinct groups as presenting a particular perspective: West African women; Asian women; and Afro-Caribbean men.

*"The West African students are culturally dislocated on our caring courses and they have not been in this country very long. They also have a fundamentalist Christian approach. They see childcare as an area where you can set up your own business and they know they need a qualification to do this."*

*"More Asian women are coming through. That must say something about changes in their community and the increasing independence of women...they sometimes have to meet parental demands to get married."*

*"We've had a couple of black male students but I have yet to see one fully fledged black nursery worker. In general I don't think men are welcome in daycare and black males are even less welcome...Men have an aptitude (for childcare) but because of the way they are socialised they cannot bring it out. It is even worse in Jamaica. No cuddles in public, its frowned on everywhere."*

### 2.6.2. Ethnic minority men in training.

There were only two men from ethnic minorities in the sample of 12. One was a Turkish school leaver on a certificate course



who had such problems expressing himself in English that his replies cannot be counted; and the other was a young Afro-Caribbean man on a BTEC course who insisted - despite the denials from his fellow women students - that he was no different from anyone else and who refused to be interviewed separately.

*"I felt I was a natural. ..There were no males, I was curious why.. I suppose it's men and their ego...I was the 13th in my family and I have lots of nieces and nephews. Being with children is an everyday thing, I'm used to changing nappies."*

The women on his course however said they knew how atypical he was and claimed they made allowances for him:

*"You're not harassed because we're tolerant. Women accept that men can exist in the world...we have spoilt and pampered you, made your day."*

As the black tutor in our sample pointed out, black men are more likely than white men to see childcare as a more strange choice, and as an unnatural career.

#### 2.6.3. Students whose first language is not English.

Some of the students clearly had problems with written and spoken English. Most of these had been allocated to basic certificate courses, and had additional ESL (English as a Second Language) support. In the certificate group where 9 out of 10 of the students did not have English as a first language, students doubted whether a competent grasp of English was necessary or sufficient in order to work with young children.

*"Children understand me anyway, what I mean, it doesn't really matter (if I don't speak it well)."*

*"You need practical simple words with babies, you know the English and you also know your own language, so it is an extra."*

*"We can understand children...when talking to them we can't always make ourselves understood."*

*"It is an advantage for non-English speaking parents"*

*"I got onto this course by mistake, I wanted to do tourism because of my languages but I stayed."*

*"The children can put me right."*

#### 2.6.4. Providers' views of ethnicity and gender.

Ethnicity appeared as an issue between providers and students, and between providers and parents. There were conflicting understandings, particularly in relation to men. Some providers considered than men working in childcare was unacceptable to certain minority ethnic groups whose children attended the childcare service.

*"The college take on a lot of refugee students with different backgrounds and cultures and English is not their first language which makes it difficult. They should really have some training before they come on placement in how to behave and how to speak to people. We had a student who had been a teacher in Iran. She was used to dealing with children sitting at tables all day. She was shocked at the amount of freedom and choice the children have here. She said when it was hot she was used to having time off...When it was time for her to leave the staff arranged a tea-party for her and the children had prepared a card and she did not come because she said she had to*

*prepare her husband's dinner...."(Co-ordinator, community nursery)*

*"Initially when I started working in the nursery there was a small drop off in the numbers of children attending the nursery. It was quite a few months later that we found out what was happening. There are largely Bengali and Muslim families here and fathers do not want their wives talking to me, a Western man, and they said to their wives not to go into the school with the children until the men could make arrangements to have them brought and collected by someone else. Some of the fathers started bringing them themselves. After a few months common sense prevailed and the status quo was restored." (Male teacher)*

*"We had one male student .. he was an Asian boy. There were a lot of women here and maybe because of his culture he did not mix well although he would have been a good student. It did not work very well, his culture said he is not to mix with women. It was difficult with the staff."  
(Owner, private nursery)*

*"There was a black child in the nursery and one day her hair was not done, some of the plaits were coming out...The deputy said why don't you ask Tim (the key worker) to do it, he has got a little girl, but the mum wouldn't have it. She was an African lady ..it was more a cultural feeling that men don't do that in their culture." (Nursery nurse, local authority day nursery)*

*" There was one African student who came for a little while and said she did not want to come any more because she felt uncomfortable with there being no black children. We do have some and we did have children from other nationalities but because of the catchment area and where we are*

*there are not very many. I don't think it was to do with us. I hope she did not come across any prejudice, if anyone had made a comment it would have been challenged. They found another placement for her."  
(Playgroup supervisor)*

The relationships between gender and ethnicity concern tutors and providers alike, although it appeared less of an issue, and was mentioned less by the students themselves.



## Chapter Three: The Gendered Nature of Childcare

### 3.1. The tutors' views of gender.

Childcare is deeply gendered, both in the nature of the work itself, and in the limitations and lack of career opportunities experienced by those who stay at home to look after children. All the tutors (men and women) considered that gendered choices had occurred in their own careers, and gender had determined the career paths they themselves had taken. The tutors felt that it should not be so. They saw gender imbalance as a major issue, and pointed out that the courses they provided contained a unit on equal opportunities which challenged gender stereotypes.

The course materials attempted to confront ideas about the "naturalness" of childcare as a woman's occupation and to stress that caring was an attribute which men as well as women could demonstrate. But paradoxically these materials also stressed that men brought something "different" to childcare as "male role models". The extent of the gendered nature of childcare was a lively and disputed topic with the students, as evidenced below.

The tutors expressed unease about the contradictions but essentially saw stereotyping about men and women's roles as inevitable, as a fundamental aspect of society and one which their actions were unlikely to be able to significantly address.

*"Stereotypically it (working in childcare) is an extension of the mothering instinct that women care for children and that is why it attracts so many women. It is perceived as a feminine and not a masculine thing to do. Mores within society would question the sexuality of men who go into it and that is why it does not attract men. There is peer*

*pressure for both men and women from their respective peer groups. Some women, from the perspective of their own self esteem and confidence may see it as an easy thing to get into rather than other career paths."*

*"People do see this work as an extension of motherhood - if you look after your own children successfully you can look after other people's. No it's not the same as having your own child."*

*"We often have the most difficulty with students who have had their own children and think they know it all and don't need to be taught about child development."*

*"There is an element of the practical, noses and bums to wipe, feeding to be done, so it's traditionally women's work, the physical practical caring."*

*"It's difficult to break down social expectations although there are exceptions. To say it is like bringing up your own children shows lack of understanding of the responsibility of the job as does the remuneration. It's not recognised as having high status and that's a problem for women generally."*

*"Tradition dies hard. It fits with their children's lives. It relates to status...It fits with families', girls', schools' and career teacher's expectations. We have a lot of young girls who come in saying 'I love children'; they do not realise the demands and the skills required to carry out the job."*

*"There are lots of social pressures - women are looking after children in the home and when they start looking for a career it seems like a natural extension - more so than for a man. It is still not recognised as a profession*

*and men might not apply because of the lack of status."*

Whilst acknowledging the powerful influence of stereotypes about gender, and because they viewed their courses as challenging such stereotypes, the tutors welcomed male students, and indeed were proud to have attracted them. Both colleges had strong equal opportunities statements and policies and one college had added to their course brochure and flyers "*We would particularly welcome men on this course*". But there was also ambivalence about having men on the courses and the welcome available for them was in the view of some tutors an excessive one.

*"I always tell them its great to have them on the course. They are a minority so they have to have support and positive reinforcement."*

*I think we bend over backwards. Some (men) have dropped out very quickly. One had a drink problem and had a run-in with a teacher on placement. One was doing his own journey...The schools are always very positive about having male students. They are so popular. They start off streets ahead. They start off advantaged. In inner city schools they are seen as a role model."*

*"On the NNEB course there were 3 to begin with but now one has left. He got beaten up by the police and if he is not looked after he won't come back. So the course tutor has been round to his house, like a social worker."*

*"The men are spoilt and privileged, they get looked after by the women, and get away with a lot. The women are so pleased to have them. We are a long way from equity of treatment. It can stop them from growing (ie growing emotionally)."*

Male students were regarded as special and different, and as we illustrate in the subsequent discussion on students, they can only be accommodated in this way, given the power of the stereotypes of women as carers.

### **3.2. The women students' views of gender.**

Bearing in mind that most of the students were low academic achievers, we asked about why they had chosen to come on the course and study, and why they liked working with children. Two main themes emerged: the "naturalness" of childcare as an occupation, something women felt they could already do or had done by virtue of their own children or other experiences of caring for children; and, secondly, a view of young children as a more vulnerable, more dependent and less powerful group than themselves, and therefore who needed and would benefit from their skills.

#### 3.2.1. The "naturalness" of childcare.

The women interviewed felt that they all brought intrinsic talent to the job of childcare, and this talent was at least as important, if not more important than any training.

*"The caring bit attracted me. I feel comfortable around children and they feel comfortable around me. But now I understand more about children."*

*"It's intrinsic to being a woman."*

*"I felt I was a natural."*

*"You can use your own experience as a mum, you feel comfortable."*

*"All the courses in the world will never give you that feeling of knowing and working with children. That feeling comes from within, it's a good good feeling."*

*"At home it's the women's role, that's why women do it, they are used to it."*

*"Mothering is natural, it's an instinct, it comes naturally to most mothers."*

*"You need to be a little bit mumsy to work with babies, it comes from within."*

*"Whether trained or not, if you are not a natural, you can't hack it, you've got to get down to their level."*

Almost all of our respondents, therefore, considered that aptitude was more important or as least as important as training. The most frequently mentioned qualities that were seen as important in caring for children - patience, kindness, understanding, tolerance, flexibility, consistency, reliability- were seen as qualities which students brought with them rather than qualities they had acquired through training.

### 3.2.2. The vulnerability and dependence of children

Tied in with this view of themselves as already caring and competent women, was a view of young children as a more vulnerable group, uniquely susceptible to their influence.

*"They are vulnerable, I want to protect them, they depend on you. When they are older they don't."*

*"I enjoy helping them, the first 5 or 7 years are important to their life, it's important to help them on their way, by 9 or 10 they have learnt it all, the older children answer you back, they are harder to control."*

*"They are more open to learning, older children are more stubborn."*

*"We can control them more. You say don't do it and they understand. You say it to an older child and they get back at you."*

*"Small children, they are still thinking your way, they don't know how to contradict, older children are contrary, but small children are fruitful, they will tell you everything, they will tell you the truth."*

*"They are easier to teach, they don't argue with you, they do whatever you say. You have some power over them. You can tell them."*

*"It's less stressful than working with older children or adults."*

*"At that age they are very tender and need more help to settle down"*

*"You get a sense of achievement through learning children, doing something for them, for the state."*

*"It's very satisfying to see their achievements, forming the letter 'd', getting out of nappies, just simple things, not that they wouldn't have done it anyway, but with a bit of encouragement they can feel confident with you."*

*"It's rewarding. You see their face light up. You've taught this child something."*

But as well as being docile, young children are often good company.

*"They think differently from us the way they express themselves, the things that they do and how they say it. They confide, relate."*

*"They perk you up, they are so lively and cheerful, they bring out the kid in you."*

*"Under fives are so rewarding, they get so ecstatic."*

*"They are innocent, adorable, loving, expressive."*

*"They make friends easily, they are curious about new people."*

*"It's fun, it brings back memories, I enjoy the songs as well."*

*"You can muck about with them, just as they do."*

*"You can express yourself, be a child."*

Many women therefore turn to childcare because it is perceived as easy and unthreatening. It builds on what they know and think they can do, it does not carry too many risks, and it is a useful and fulfilling, and sometimes very pleasant job to be doing. As one student summed it up:

*"You get more self-esteem, it confirms what you already know. I am able to do it."*

### **3.3. The women students' views of men.**

If the women's choice of childcare training turns on the way they see themselves as innately suitable to care for children, and as gaining in confidence and self-esteem through the confirmation and extension of these attributes during childcare training, how do women allow for men who train as childcare workers, and how do the men position themselves in relation to women's views?

As indicated in the interviews with tutors, there are a number of powerful discourses which cut across one another. These are equal opportunities; fear of men as gay and/or as abusers; men as male role models; and fear of men as usurpers of women's jobs.

#### 3.3.1. Equal opportunities perspectives

As well as heightened public awareness of equal opportunities issues, with which students were familiar, there was an equal opportunities unit on the course, and the messages from this were very clear.

*"We had a discussion about gender roles as part of our psychology module. In the schools we asked (the children) about girls jobs and boys jobs. The children were about 8. They had problems with a mayor. They thought the mayor should be a man. But they had views on who should do the shopping, they both should."*

*"We are making a difference to their(children's) lives because we are telling the boys to play with dollies."*

*"Times are changing, equal opportunities policies, so that they can't not give a person a job because he is male."*

*"It's not only women who have to make the changes. Men should make the changes and get involved in childcare."*

*"Childcare is like nursing used to be. In the early stages it was all women but now there is lots of men."*

*"Gynaecologists examine women and no-one questions it."*

*"Men have a right to come on the course."*

*"It is the other side of the coin of women going into men's jobs like carpentry, male labour. Now they feel they should be supporting men even if they don't believe they should let men work with young children."*

*"...you should not discriminate, clear your mind of stereotypes especially in London."*

### 3.3.2. The unnaturalness of men.

On the other hand there was also a fear that men working with children were "unnatural", that they could not be trusted. Even if they were prepared to overlook these risks, the rest of the world would not.

*"There are some men (in childcare) but there are hidden agendas towards men - there is stigma attached to wanting to care for children which involves physical contact. Men are more likely to be abusers."*

*"Men are not encouraged. My brother found that the only vacant course was on childcare. I said go for it but he said "no, they'd think I was a fairy." I said "no, nothing wrong in that," but he said he wouldn't do it, he said "no I'd rather wait for electronics"."*

*"For a man, he's a wally, he doesn't fit in."*

*"(If you were a man) in the pub, when they say how was work today, and you explained you were a nursery nurse, they would say "aye aye, changing nappies, what's going on?" "*

*"You don't see men in nurseries. It's caused by the "taboo thing", it is expected that the nursery nurse is going to be a woman, men are to be steered away from it. Men get a lot of stick from their male colleagues."*

*"If I was a man I wouldn't do it - there are a lot of other things to do, carpentry, mechanics."*

*"Men haven't got a lot of endurance for children, they haven't got patience naturally."*

*"They're seen as perverts, names called."*

*"I don't think men should be given a chance to change a little girl's nappy."*

*"The man is seen as a woman when he changes a nappy."*

*"My boyfriend used to work with the Beavers (boy's club). He would never tell anyone he worked with because of their reaction. He was embarrassed to tell me. It's seen as perverse. It's terribly sad."*

### 3.3.3. Men as role models.

The most powerful discourse was the equal opportunities one; men were *entitled* to work in childcare and therefore allowances had to be made. This was done by seeing the men as special and different; on the one hand they carried risk, and on the other they had something particular and important to offer as men *per se*.

*"I think men should be given a chance... They introduce activities women don't know."*

*"Boys want a man to man relationship so it is very important for men to be in a nursery."*

*"I've met a few men who worked as nursery officers, it was nice for the boys, they could muck in with robust types of play."*

*"Men are more athletic, women are more inhibited about running around."*

*"It's good to have male role models, it's essential but the skills of men are different...It's an attitude to physical activity, an ability to team lead children."*

*"They play with children differently, they get the rough play."*



*"Men can play with the older ones, more physical games, they(the children) get pretty wild but if we said or did the same things as a man would do we'd look silly. They can get away with it."*

*"The experience men have with children is totally different."*

*"A man is different."*

What men had to offer was an image of masculinity, as opposed to the image of femininity which female nursery workers displayed. Many children, because of their family circumstances were unfamiliar with this image, and were seen to need exposure to it. Boys in particular needed to identify with this role model in order to develop their own masculine traits. This image had much to do with physicality, with a more robust and active approach to people and things.

#### 3.3.4. Men as usurpers of women's jobs.

As part of their masculinity, men were also seen to have expectations and responsibilities which women did not necessarily share, to have a career, and to earn money.

*"Men have to get ahead, people just feel that way."*

*"Most men have a wife so there is not the same limits on their work."*

*"They don't have to fit their hours around children. It's a woman's responsibility."*

*"Men, society expects them to achieve more, whereas (as a woman) you can go on working in a shop all the time. I can't imagine a man being in my position working for ten years with no promotion."*

*"You've got to earn a wage if you are a man."*

*"They (men) want to get more money because they are the breadwinners."*

*"Men won't go in for this, there's not enough pay, their expectation of earning is higher."*

*"Most men are not keen on children because the pay is low and because of the work."*

*"If they started out like us they would be very quick up the ladder, they are looking out for men, if you were a man they would seek you out."*

*"Men are more pushy."*

### **3. 4. Men's perceptions of themselves.**

A majority of women students perceived an essential and unbridgeable differences between men and women working in childcare. These perceptions about the essential differences between men and women, and the contradictory arguments for encouraging men to work in childcare, were also reflected in our interviews with the male childcare students. In the men's case there was an additional difficulty in supporting themselves financially on the courses.

#### 3.4.1. Men's reasons for taking a childcare course.

Three of the men said that they had always wanted to work with children, but they had been deflected by the views of their parents or teachers about the unsuitability of childcare as a profession. Other men had come into training through having had, often unintentionally and unexpectedly, pleasurable experiences of working with young children. One young man had been a house-husband, because his wife had had a regular job when he did not, and he had become involved

through taking his child to a nursery class. Others had discovered that they got on with young children, and had somewhat bemusedly registered for the course.

*"When I started taking my oldest to nursery school and they discovered I was at home and not working they (the teachers) asked me to help out. I started with one day a week but was soon doing five because I enjoyed it. They said, you ought to go to college, you need a qualification to do this work. I never realised, I thought it was just something women did to pass the time after their children were grown up - they were all older women at that nursery. Men just don't see it as an option. With me it was an accident that I got into it...at the jobclub childcare is never mentioned as an option."*

*"I worked in a youth club. They recommended me to come to college so I did this course not really knowing what it would involve."*

*"I helped out in a nursery. One of the workers suggested that I try it (the course) out."*

Another had decided that opening a nursery would be a profitable small business.

*"I came on this course because of the research I'd done, I wanted to open up my own nursery or crèche, that's why most people come on the course, it's a business opportunity...but my attitude has totally changed... What I like is that you can run around and be stupid with them and they don't laugh at you."*

For some, taking the course had been a last resort, when other options had fallen through.

*"I had no interest at all in kids when I was a kid...your views do change."*

*"I came on this course because I'd tried everything else. My mother was a nursery nurse and she said 'you'd be good at working with children'. At first I didn't believe it, but then I realised I had been working with children, I'd done various voluntary jobs, I thought I'd give it a try, I won't lose anything, I can always leave. But it looks like I've found a career I can do and enjoy. This is it, childcare is a really fun place rather than anything else."*

*"I took a job in the Inland Revenue for five years then I tried again and failed to get into a PCGE (teachers) course, so I decided to see if I was any good with children so I took the NNEB course."*

*"I'd helped with a friend's children. I was unemployed. I'd changed careers...My father, the teachers had pushed me into building studies."*

#### 3.4.2. Men as unnatural carers.

All the men were acutely conscious of the risks they ran in being seen as potential abusers or perverts or as unnatural.

*"they're negative attitudes out there, you get negative expressions, its the facial expression, the "ah" after a while."*

*"A week into the placement at school when you go to the toilet with the children there are always females hovering. "I'm looking for the soap." Some excuse."*

*"It was hard (to come on the course) because of being male and being suspected of child molesting."*

*"Child and abuse and things like that, I am very conscious of an anti-male feeling. Men*

*are perceived as child abusers. No-one would have a male nanny."*

*"There is lots of social peer pressure about men working with kids; men don't want to put themselves at risk of being accused of abuse."*

*"My mates say getting paid to work with kids, that's not a proper job."*

*"I think men are embarrassed to show how they feel. A lot of men don't like to socialise, they would just rather have their own children."*

*"It could be publicised in the newspapers and journals: IT IS NOT A CRIME FOR MEN TO WORK IN CHILDCARE."*

#### 3.4.3. Male role models

A minority of the men, as did a minority of the women, thought that men and women's roles were interchangeable and the differences were only a matter of individual personality and circumstances. But mostly, the men thought they had something extra to bring to the work.

*"There are so many broken homes, children without men in their life, children need a bit of male stimulation, they look to me as a man different from women...They see men doing practical things, building, car mechanics, electronics, but they never see men in a care setting."*

*"Women mothering, it's difficult to pinpoint, I get the feeling that they are softer with men."*

*"I think males have a different status, to do with their voice control, it makes a massive difference. You don't have to scream, it's the*

*way that you say it or your physical actions or something."*

*"Women have got certain attributes men have not got, women in general find it easier to hug a child more lovingly than a man does."*

*"It's just the sexes, you've got male and you've got female."*

#### 3.4.4. Men as usurpers of traditional women's jobs

These men for the most part also had higher expectations of a career within nursery nursing, but were also partly resigned to its limitations.

*"I want status in ten years, but I know you have got to be single-minded. I need a lot more information and financial backing. A hell of a lot of obstacles in your way."*

*"I will work in a nursery, in theory go up the ladder."*

*"Us being blokes it's easier to get a job. Schools like males, the children need a male to look up to, the majority are crying out for males. But if it's like that then you can pick and choose the job you want, send out your CVs."*

*"I didn't come into it for the money but I didn't know it was so bad...education and welfare holds the country together, it's looking after the future of the country, but it's not recognised, the money is crap."*

*"The more men the higher the pay will get, if men kept going I reckon it would rise by 30 percent."*

*"I am prepared to trade off the status and pay of a teacher against the flexibility of*

*being a nursery nurse. I might change on that."*

As Williams (20) has suggested, men carry their "masculinity" with them into traditional women's professions, rather than replicate the practices and attitudes of the women already in those professions.

### **3.5. The providers' views of gender.**

All the providers, experienced people working with young children, felt that their own careers reflected their gender. This was put most firmly by one of the teachers.

*"Oh yes totally. I have been the main carer, the mainstay. So if my husband wants to get off and get a job on the other side of London he does so. It goes even further back than that, it goes back to the bonding process where you are the main link at the beginning of their lives and it carries on from there. They cut their knee, who do they go to? It builds up, this whole process. I have spent years trying to un wrangle it. Also, I was never prepared to have anyone else looking after my children."*

The providers views about gender mirrored that of the tutors and students, and the same discourses emerged: the naturalness of women doing the job, the importance of equal opportunities; the risks in employing men, the fact that men offered a different role model to the children and were likely to want more of a career for themselves.

Since these discourses mirrored those of the other respondents so closely, these quotations covering each discourse, will suffice to make the point.

*"Mainly I just loved children, babies in particular, I've always loved babies. I knew I never wanted to do anything else. never*

*thought about doing anything else."* (Nursery nurse, private day nursery)

*"No, I would feel very suspicious of a man who wanted to work here. He would have to try much harder to convince people. I would question his motives because of the pay. Why should he do it for practically no money - it would not keep a family .. it's always in the back of your mind, why are they doing it. "* (Playgroup supervisor).

*"No problem with the staff because we are all committed to equal opportunities."* (Coordinator, community nursery)

*"Men have a different thing to offer. We had a very good male student on his final teaching practice in the nursery. He was very good with the children and the children absolutely loved it and many of them have not got father figures at home. It's very valuable. It's a fatherly figure, the discipline seems to be different and the way that they actually relate to the children."* (Teacher)

*"We have had one(man) and it was disastrous - about three years ago. He had a real attitude. He thought we should bow down to him. He said I was like a sergeant major and that I worked him and the staff too hard. He had to go."* (Co-ordinator, community nursery)

One private day nursery owner raised the question of credit worthiness and considered that she would have had a much better deal from the bank had she been a man.

*(As a man) I would have been able to go to the bank and get money just like that - for a woman there are obstacles. I went to Midland with whom I had been banking for 30 years. They said no - you have no collateral. They asked why are you giving up*

*your profession (as a nurse). Then I went to Nat West who said yes but wanted me to transfer all my banking to them. So I went back to Midland with the letter from Nat West. They said they wanted to talk to me but in a week's time. I said I need to see you now, I have already started interviewing staff. They said tomorrow. A man came and I showed him the £700 I had from parents in fees and said "do you want me to put it in another bank." He gave me a cash flow of £4000 and cheques immediately."*

Credit worthiness may turn out to be an issue for those seeking to open their own business in childcare, but it was not investigated further in this study.

## Chapter Four. Childcare as a Career.

We were interested to see how women and men rated the status of childcare as a career, and what career choices they considered were open to them once they had finished the training. We asked them to reflect on the status of childcare compared with other jobs; and on their own employment prospects and their long term future

### 4.1. The status of childcare

We asked each group of students, male and female, to rank the status of nursery nursing and other childcare jobs against a range of other gendered jobs such as teaching, nursing, hairdressing, shopwork, clerical, social work and domestic work. We also asked if respondents could identify a comparable men's job.

For all the groups, local authority jobs in schools and local authority day nurseries were ranked highest. The job which received the highest rating from most of the groups was that of a nursery nurse in a school, where, by proxy, she was seen as a teacher. Private day nursery staff were mostly ranked lower, as shop assistants or hairdressers. Playgroup workers, childminders and nannies were consistently seen as having very low status on a par with domestic workers and cooks. When we asked about men's jobs which were comparable to nursery nursing, the comments revealed that however much nursery nurses wished to convince themselves of their status, and thought that their work should be valued, in reality they understood that it was seen as a low status job by most people outside the profession.

*"A typical male job - roadsweeper or dustman."*

*"A mechanic, an average job. It's the money. You would categorise someone as around £250 per week in a council flat, that sort of thing."*

*"It's like a hairdresser, shop assistant, plumber, bricklayer."*

*"You've got to go out in the world for very little."*

*"A lot of people think that as a nursery nurse you are just there to wash their faces or take them to the toilet."*

*"A comparable men's job - unskilled labourer - hard work and graft. Anyone can get a job on a building site basically and it is the same with childcare, you're only getting the toys out and wipe bums. It's so depressing."*

*"Parents sometimes look at you as if you were dirt."*

*"A man's job, shop assistant, factory worker, warehouse packing."*

*"An equivalent man's position, not on a building site, too low, some kind of repair man, not as high as a manager, a skilled manual worker."*

*"A factory worker, something low down the scale."*

### 4.2. Employment prospects.

Students were asked what they saw themselves doing when they finished the course. In the introduction to this study we pointed out that childcare is a somewhat fragmented field, and its boundaries are blurred. The options students described were working for a local authority in a school or day nursery; working in home-based care

such as a nanny or childminder; working in a private sector day nursery; going onto further education; or dropping out. No-one mentioned play-centre or playgroup work.

#### 4.2.1. Working in a school.

Many of the respondents wanted a job in a school because the timetable fitted in with their own childcare arrangements, and because the job was perceived as more secure and responsible.

*"I want to work in a nursery or a reception class. It's about the setting and the money although the money is way down the list. It's the organisation really in the state sector and the people you meet."*

But there was a great deal of ambivalence about the job of nursery nurse in relation to that of teacher, and sharply perceived demarcations between them. Many considered that although they were doing a similar or even a better job to that of a teacher, their competence was unrecognised, for reasons of vocabulary, or because the teacher herself was ignorant of what went on.

*"(What teachers have) it's access into the middle class terminology that teachers use, it's learning the jargon to get involved in a conversation."*

*"We don't have to think about it, we just do it. It's the jargon. I comfort a child because he is sad, not because he is having an "emotional crisis"."*

*"We have heaps of experience and we want to be recognised for what we are doing. I know of people who look great on paper and then when they get to nursery they are frightened of children. One student teacher said to me, "I suppose children having problems is like a virus in the computer." "*

*"Our practice is too sophisticated, a teacher with a degree can't believe what we do."*

*"You work hard but no result, you just see the teacher sitting back whilst you do all the work."*

*"There is not much real difference in the work, you get treated as an equal but you accept a lower pay."*

*"Teachers are not experienced, they are not mature, they can't take control."*

*"Parents feel more comfortable talking to nursery nurses. Teachers are a bit up there."*

*"In school nursery nurses are nearly on the level of the teacher but not quite. We do similar work. Parents treat (us) as nearly the same. If they didn't know who the teacher is and walked in they wouldn't know (the difference)."*

#### 4.2.2. Home-based care: nannying and childminding.

Generally childminding and nannying were seen as unattractive options. Some of the students had been nannies or childminders but had come on the courses in order to improve their chances of getting what they considered to be a better job in a day nursery or in a school. Although there are no conclusive statistics, nannying probably offers more job opportunities than any other childcare avenue - for instance the magazine *Nursery World* which is the professional magazine for those working in childcare, carries hundreds of advertisements from nanny agencies and for posts as nannies every month, produces a regular "Professional Nanny" supplement, and organises an annual Professional Nanny Conference which is very widely attended - unusually so for what is essentially domestic work. The only job adverts on the notice

boards at the colleges were posters from nanny agencies. But for men, for most black women, and for women with children nannying was not seen as a viable option, since those families who were most likely to hire nannies were perceived to be white middle class, and unlikely to employ anyone other than young single white girls. As one of the male students quoted above said *"No-one would have a male nanny"*. A couple of younger women students did regard nannying as a possibility.

*"A nanny is a good job these days, I can save a bit of money if I worked in an agency, I might do it for a bit, but not to live in. You have to live out. A single parent couldn't do it."*

*"A nanny can do what she wants, it's a more relaxing job, not really stressful, you can sit down."*

But these views were exceptional. Mostly respondents were negative about nannying.

*"Nanny, that's even lower (than a childminder), it's like a hairdresser or apprentice hairdresser, a Saturday job, cook."*

*"Rich children choose a nanny because it sounds right and then they get you to do the housework."*

*"I'd rather use a childminder than a nanny because I wouldn't want someone in the house."*

*"What, go on a course and become a childminder!"*

#### 4.2.3. Private Day Nurseries:

All students had done a placement in a private day nursery, and many were critical of what they had seen, both in terms of the practices, and in terms of the protection for workers.

*"I went to one private day nursery. It was really disgusting the way they treated the children and the parents. The woman who ran it was just in it for the money. It was in an old church, they had taken the pews out and the room was divided by these big wooden screens. The day the children became three they went from one side to the other and did worksheets at the desks... they never moved from the desks except when they were taken out for anti-social behaviour or when they switched the TV on. In the other room the staff just sat and when I set something out for the children they said "Oh no we don't do that here, we just watch them"."*

*"Private nurseries are not as good as the local authority nurseries, they do what they feel like doing."*

*"Government nurseries have in-service training once a term but private nurseries don't do it."*

*"There is bad practice in placements, mostly in private placements."*

*"You see very bad practice."*

*"Private nurseries, people seem to be totally unqualified and do the same work that a qualified person would be expected to do."*

*"You get taken for advantage, skivvy, make the tea, do everything."*



*"In a private day nursery you do what you are told, what she (the manager) lays down. In a local authority there are (regulations), it's laid down (properly).*

Despite the low status of private day nursery work, and the criticisms of it, a sizeable group of respondents, many of whom were West African women, believed their future prospects lay in opening their own day nurseries.

#### 4.2.4. Further education

A minority of students, mainly those on BTEC courses saw themselves going onto further education, as teachers, social workers, psychologists or nurses, or in one case law. In the most ambitious group, a first year BTEC course, two of the 12 in the group wanted to go directly into local authority work, and the other ten were considering higher education. However the scanty evidence from college returns suggest that few in fact may do so. Those doing the basic certificate courses saw the course as a first step to the NNEB and did not think they would be employable with only a certificate.

*"We all need to get more training."*

*"Without the NNEB you would not get a very good job, not as good as the NNEB."*

*"There are not many adverts for a certificate, you can't go straight into a job."*

For those who failed to be accepted onto the NNEB, because they were too young, or immature or lacked basic skills, then working for an agency as a nanny or a au pair or in a play centre were the only options.

*"The NNEB, if I didn't get onto it then maybe apply for a nanny agency, or work in a play centre."*

We had asked the students to fill in a form with their name, age, number of children and to indicate whether they had had any previous employment paid or unpaid, working with children. This part of the form proved difficult for students to fill in since many had had baby-sitting jobs, but were not sure whether to list these as paid or unpaid work. Similarly many students had helped out in playgroups or in out-of-school clubs, and similarly, because of the casual and/or voluntary nature of the work were not sure how to describe it. Generally working as a nanny or a childminder or in a play centre, was seen as useful experience *before* coming on the course, but less of an option after completing the course.

#### **4.3. Long term future.**

##### 4.3.1. Lack of ambition

In answer to the question what do you think you will be doing ten years from now, many of the women were vague and said they did not know and could not imagine that far ahead. For others gaining a qualification and finding a job was the limit of their ambition.

*"Just working."*

*"Having a diploma in nursery nursing."*

*"Working full-time, well established as a nursery nurse."*

*"It's a long way off - contributing to the field of childcare in some way."*

*"A nursery nurse"*

*"I prefer to stay in a nursery class but not the same one for 10 years."*

*"Same thing, different place."*

*"Still working with young children."*

*"I've achieved what I set out to do, get a qualification."*

*"Where I am now."*

#### 4.3.2. Domesticity.

Many of the women saw their future in domestic terms - predictably, given their view of themselves as natural mothers.

*"My own family, part-time work."*

*"Happily married, but not with another littl'un."*

*"A decent wage, decent level of income so I can have a holiday, a house, a car without saving up for years."*

*"Married with another child. I'd like to be a kept woman. Years ago it was respectable, over the years that has changed, now that sort of role is rare, it's totally turned about."*

*"To be a good mother and give a good education to my child."*

*"Maybe married."*

*"With children of my own."*

*"My own place, my own home."*

*"Have a job, I hope it won't be that long, have a settled life, be married."*

*"A lady of leisure but with children. I would love not to work. As women we've all got full-time jobs at home as well."*

#### 4.3.3. Developing a career.

A few women and most of the men, had a long-term view of their careers, and saw themselves succeeding either having obtained another qualification, or in terms of management.

*"Art therapist"*

*"Clinical psychologist"*

*"Teaching sports and child development in a secondary school."*

*"I want to be more than a nursery nurse, I'm not content to sit on the bottom rung."*

*"I might change fields eg police child protection but you have to work in the police for five years in order to get into the unit."*

*"I'll be in management in a child related career."*

#### 4.3.4. Starting up a nursery.

The most popular long-term career move was seen as starting up in business and opening a nursery. Although many criticisms were expressed in the discussions about the private sector, a sizeable number of those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and almost all of those from West Africa, wanted to open a private nursery. Sometimes their bad experiences of placements were seen as an incentive to do better. In reply to the question where do you see yourself 10 years from now, opening a nursery was frequently cited.

*"I want to open my own nursery in Canada or America."*

*"Open a nursery (for childcare for children) 0-17"*

*"Own business"*

*"Own private nursery"*

*"Own nursery in own country (Ghana)"*

*"Own nursery, but I'll need a management course before then."*

*"My own nursery in Ireland."*

*"A franchised nursery chain in the Cayman islands."*

*"My own nursery in Jamaica."*

*"An entrepreneur with my own nursery."*

*"I don't care where I am but in my own nursery."*

*"In my own nursery, but I won't be in this country."*

*"Own nursery, with my teaching experience (as a certificated teacher in Nigeria)"*

*"A private nursery, they have a negative outlook, I'd like to make it more positive."*

*"I'm at a private day nursery. I am not really happy where I am. I'd like to open a day nursery and run it properly."*

#### **4.4. The providers' views of childcare as a career.**

We asked providers to rank the various childcare jobs. We also asked if they would recommend childcare as a job to a young person just starting out. The providers saw the status of the various childcare jobs in much the same way as the students, with

home-based jobs having the lowest ratings. The exception were the playgroup providers who ranked themselves much higher than did anyone else.

In reply to the question about choice of career, a surprising number of respondents, including nursery nurses themselves, considered that nursery nurses if possible should aim to become teachers.

*"I do say to the young students especially if they are good why don't you go on and do teaching. But they are fed up with having no money, they want to break out on their own. They say I want to work and get money so I say, well do it for a couple of years and then think again." (Nursery nurse, school)*

*"No (to nursery nursing). Maybe as a stepping stone to something else but it doesn't tend to be that without further training. People tend to stay here, they have been here a long time, especially the support staff. There are no career prospects or no promotion prospects within it." (Teacher)*

*"No. You reach the top of the scale and there is nowhere else to go, whereas a teacher can get promotion within the school and become a head. In day nurseries there is but then you have those long hours and less holidays....it does open a range of possibilities with an NNEB from nannying to right through, but if you want a well-paid career, no." (Teacher)*

*"Career meaning that it is progression. No, no it's so limited. My niece wants to go into nursery work. I have recommended that she goes into nursery teaching rather than nursery nursing." (Officer-in-charge, local authority day nursery)*

*"I don't know about a young girl, I would say maybe they would like to go into nursery teaching. The job I do is more suitable for a mum. If I would have gone into this career when I didn't have children I would have gone into teaching...I am lucky because I have had a partner to support me. If I didn't have a partner maybe I would have gone further. (Playgroup supervisor)*

Others considered that childcare was a viable career, providing the young person was ambitious.

*"Yes, if you want it to be. You can move right through the hierarchy within the nursery and beyond if that is what you want." (Coordinator, workplace nursery)*

*"Yes if you are doing different things. I don't think anyone can stay in the same place for years and years. You need to set a goal and move on. There are opportunities. I will be a manager after three years experience." (Deputy, private day nursery)*

*"Yes, there is a career ladder here. I've been (on) it for some years now. The role of the nursery officers has changed so much." (Deputy, local authority day nursery)*

*"This is a good company to work for. They are keen to promote internally. They prefer to appoint from inside, somebody they know. I was promoted to 3rd in charge within a year." (Senior nursery nurse, private day nursery)*

There were two Afro-Caribbeans amongst the providers, one who already had her own nursery, and the other who was working in a community nursery, but wanted to open her own nursery.

*"I would like to have my own place. There are so many private nurseries and I know I could do so much better. All I need is the collateral to be able to go and get on with it."*

In general, the wider the perception of the field, particularly if it included schooling, the less childcare training was seen to offer a route to a satisfactory career; whereas for those in day nurseries in the local authority or private sector, incremental steps to promotion within the system were seen as career opportunities. It is of note that three of the providers quoted above, working in day nurseries, who said they had had career opportunities, also said their long-term ambition, in ten years time, was to stay at home or find a job compatible with their family. (The fourth had an additional qualification and was applying to be a nursery inspector)

*"A lady of leisure - no joking. I should be so lucky. I'm just trying to think about how to get to the end of the week. It's hard enough trying to think about getting married in two years time. Hopefully not going down or back into being a nursery nurse. It can be very stressful out there on the floor." (Senior nursery nurse, private day nursery)*

*"If my mum had anything to do with it, in a school somewhere so I get the holidays and shorter hours. She does not think I should be here she thinks the hours are wrong and with my oldest starting school full-time in January she thinks I should be available in the holidays .. I don't know what I will do." (Deputy, local authority day nursery)*

*"I'd like to have a family. I wouldn't especially want to have a family in London. Not bothered about working or carrying on working, I'd like to be at home with the*

*children. I think it's something I can always go back to." (Deputy, private day nursery)*

Generally the status of childcare work was perceived to be low, and those working in the field saw themselves as having relatively limited career opportunities.

#### **4.5. Workplace organisation.**

The provider interviews suggest that the organisation of the workplace differs considerably between school and non-school settings; and to a lesser extent between local authority and private and voluntary settings. One indication of this was union membership. Generally the higher the professional qualification, the more likely the provider was to belong to a union, and to see such membership as an important means of securing salary increases, safeguarding pay and conditions, and of having the backing of professional representation in difficult circumstances. Those working in local authority setting were more likely to see benefits in union membership than those in the private and voluntary sector.

*"..I think the helpers are members of a union because they also have to work with the older children and there has been a lot of work done in the school, before I started, on awareness about how accusations can be made and how accidents with aggressive children can happen. It was stressed at that point you will need union back-up if at no other point in your life and how important it is to have that insurance policy." (Teacher)*

*"Every year teachers get a pay rise but do nursery nurses? Although they are working in a school they seem to get missed out, they get a cost of living rise but no-one seems to be fighting for them." (Teacher)*

*"We stuck with Unison. It is preferable as far as operating in the Borough is concerned because Unison is in the know as far as cuts and budgets are concerned."(Co-ordinator, community nursery)*

The staff in the local authority day nurseries were also all unionised, but had little to say about it. Those in the voluntary and private sector had not mostly not considered it or considered it irrelevant, or considered they had enough support from their colleagues in the field, or simply misunderstood the question.

*"Some do go to Unison. I have never felt the need. Many years ago it was very conflicting to be in the union and a manager." (Workplace nursery co-ordinator)*

*"The teacher does belong to a union. She advised me to join a union but I have not. I can't imagine anything going wrong. We get on so well, we have planning meetings at the end of every day and a major meeting on Thursday...." (Nursery nurse, primary school)*

*"No speaking for myself I have never looked into it. It's never occurred to me. It's never come up. If something happened and the need arose I would look into other sources (for information) in Nursery World. Mr B.(the owner) does offer a pension scheme but I haven't thought of that yet." (Deputy, private day nursery)*

*"No. In terms of how we keep contact with what is going on in the field we get Contact magazine from PLA (Pre school Learning Alliance) and the list of training courses from the local authority."(Playgroup supervisor)*

The most vulnerable employees and the lowest paid were therefore those who were least likely to belong to a union or to see benefits in collective membership, although arguably they have the most to gain from it.



## Chapter Five: Summary and Suggestions

### 5.1. Summary of findings.

We have tried to show in this study how gender issues permeate training in childcare. Childcare is a deeply gendered field. The overwhelming majority of respondents, whether tutors, students or providers, saw the roles of men and women as being separate and distinct.

Childcare training was seen as vocational, and building on the skills and aptitudes that women already possessed. Given that many of the women on the courses had experienced educational failure, this made it an attractive career choice, somewhere where they could succeed. Most of the women students considered that motherhood and/or their experiences of caring made them "naturals" for working with young children. They considered that aptitude was more important or at least as important as training. The most frequently mentioned qualities that were seen as important in caring for children - patience, kindness, understanding, tolerance, flexibility, consistency, reliability - were seen as qualities that women brought with them rather than qualities that they acquired through training. Tied in with this view of themselves as already caring and competent women, was a view of young children as vulnerable and docile. Children were seen as dependent and powerless, needing and benefiting from nursery nurse's skills.

Many women therefore turn to childcare because it is perceived as an easy and unthreatening; it builds on what they already know and think they can do, it does not carry too many risks, and it is a useful and fulfilling, and sometimes very pleasant job to be doing. On the other hand there is considerable ambivalence about whether the domestic and

intimate tasks on which they base their practice as childcare workers are in fact worthy tasks which require skill, or whether they are lowly tasks which anyone could do. As our respondents vividly illustrate, childcare has a low status despite the best efforts of students, tutors and providers alike to view it as a professional and worthy occupation. The low status relates to the domestic and physically intimate nature of the tasks involved, which are traditionally the private domain of women. One of the constant themes in our discussions with students was about nappy changing - whether it could be regarded as a legitimate and important childcare task which women, by virtue of their own experiences as mothers and carers undertook skilfully and smoothly, or whether it was a trivial and unpleasant task which could be done with equal facility by men and women. There was no consensus.

Because women saw themselves building on and extending the caring skills they already possessed, there were problems about including men on courses, and in employing them. The equal opportunities perspectives stressed on the course emphasised men's right to undertake childcare training and to work in childcare. On the other hand men who wanted to undertake training and to work in childcare were "unnatural" and ran the risk of being considered as perverts or as potential abusers. These conflicting views were partly reconciled by considering men as something special and apart who could be included in childcare as "a male role model". Men were seen, both by women and amongst themselves, as more inclined to physical activity and games, more energetic, more direct with children, less caring, and more career orientated. Strong gender stereotypes of men and women underpinned childcare. Caring for young children was essentially seen as a woman's job, and in effect students



perceived that a special, and often fast track, category for men was being created inside the profession. This is likely to be the case given the examples of nursing and teaching, professions where women predominate, but where a disproportionate number of senior positions are occupied by men.

These perceptions were complicated by considerations of class and ethnicity. In particular ethnic minority men appeared to be less likely than other men to take up childcare as a career.

Can anything be done to challenge these perceptions of childcare, and to achieve a more equal representation of men and women within it? We put forward some very general suggestions and some more specific ones.

## 5.2. Suggestions

### 5.2.1. Public measures to address the roles of men and women at home and at work

We have suggested that stereotypes about men and women's roles in relation to young children are deeply embedded. In a number of countries where there has been an attempt to promote equal opportunities, the need to challenge such stereotypes has been perceived as important, and has been tackled through employment legislation and related publicity measures - the most well-known example being the poster of Sweden's leading male wrestler with a baby cradled against his biceps, advertising paternity leave.

The European Commission has highlighted gender issues, and the European Childcare Network has been particularly active in drawing attention to the need for measures to reconcile family and work, including paternity leave and family leave which can be taken by either parent (21). Two of its publications,

Men as Carers (22) and Men as Workers in Childcare Services (23) consider the roles - and feelings - of men as carers of young children at home and as employees in childcare services. There are a number of local initiatives in the UK, where nurseries and childcare centres have attempted to document their experiences of men and women working together (24). There are also some recent studies exploring the boundaries of fatherhood, as well as motherhood. (25)

It is beyond the remit of this report to speculate about legislative reforms, but Government and local education authorities could draw on such reports and research and be more proactive in disseminating information which challenges gender stereotyping - and also features ethnic minority men - in the care of young children.

### 5.2.2. Locating child abuse in the wider context of promoting children's interests.

Fear of being seen as perverts or potential abusers was seen by all our respondents as a major deterrent to men who might want to work with young children. Child abuse is a highly emotive issue, and some organisations go so far as to advocate that no men should be allowed to work with young children. (26)

We cannot argue against the need for extreme care in matters of child abuse. It was a major cause of concern to our respondents that the colleges could no longer afford to do police checks on students undertaking childcare courses, which meant that male students in particular were limited in the work they could undertake on placements.

However we would question the perception of child abuse as a major source of harm to children. In fact far more children are killed or maimed in accidents which are arguably the result of unsafe environments, but such

environmental issues receive far less attention (27). The problem is more to do with perceptions of childhood and children. As in the Nordic countries for example, a variety of pro-child measures would lead to a society where children are more highly and publicly valued, and where their rights are more fully and sympathetically understood. Utting (28) in his recent report on violent children drew the analogy with wife beating. It was once commonplace for men to beat their wives, but much greater consciousness of women's rights and reinterpretation and application of the law means that what was once viewed as normal is now seen as a crime. Similarly it has been argued if children's rights were given more prominence, children would be less vulnerable in a variety of ways. (29)

Unless the issue of child abuse is addressed in the broader context of children's rights, it is likely to continue to be a deterrent to men who might otherwise want to work with young children.

### 5.2.3. Upgrading training

One of the unresolved debates in childcare training is the relationship between skill, experience training and qualifications. Many of the women in our study saw the training and qualification as the icing on the cake; that is they viewed themselves as already skilled, experienced and competent in looking after children, and the training was a confirmation of these skills. This was particularly true of the older women undertaking the courses which aimed to provide underpinning knowledge for NVQ assessments. Looking after children was seen as vocational and atheoretical.

On the other hand, in the education sector, where many of the students hoped to work, training is regarded as much more demanding and requiring a substantial knowledge base.

Students struggled with the contradiction between their own view of looking after children as a vocational activity, and that of the teachers they worked alongside, who regarded themselves as highly trained professionals. Most of the providers we interviewed, in retrospect, regarded teacher training as the better option for a career.

Childcare training for historical reasons has been separate from education training, rather than providing a route into it. Whilst the new system of national vocational qualifications are being seen as a radical route into the professions, it is difficult to see how this might work for NVQs in childcare, given that they are pitched at level 2/3 whereas a teacher would, if the system were ever adopted for teachers, be assessed at level 4/5. The new modular early childhood degrees being set up offer an alternative route into work in integrated care and education settings, but they are still too new for their efficacy to be evaluated.

There is an extensive discussion of this issue of training in Moss and Penn (30). In relation to this study we would argue that the NNEB and similar forms of training and qualification should be developed and promoted not as an avenue in itself, but as a *first step* towards a more demanding and more academic course such as an early childhood studies degree, in order to challenge the gender stereotypes we have described, and to provide more career openings. Unifying education and childcare training would be a major undertaking but not an impossible one, and several precedents exist in other countries. (31)

### 5.2.4. Positive recruitment policies.

Both colleges we investigated had clearly stated equal opportunities statements which were widely circulated to potential entrants and to staff. But both colleges had also

undergone recent reorganisation and restructuring and this had been a serious preoccupation for senior staff. In this context actively pursuing equal opportunities policies and seeking to achieve gender/ethnicity balance on childcare - or on any other courses - was a minor issue.

Imaginative and proactive recruitment policies in schools, with careers officers, and at the colleges themselves might succeed in attracting more men onto childcare courses, although as we have suggested above, it would almost certainly have to be as part of a package to upgrade training and address gender stereotyping more widely in order to make a significant difference.

Our research suggested, although the evidence was slight, that men from ethnic minority communities were even less likely to come on childcare courses than other men. Any recruitment policy would therefore have to address ethnicity as well as gender.

#### 5.2.5. Financial Support for Students.

Almost all the students in our study were working class (ie from low income households residing in poorer districts of London) and only a couple of students paid college fees. Most were on some kind of Income Support. Tutors suggested that those not eligible for Income Support, for instance students under eighteen, had part-time jobs since their families could not easily support them. This raises the wider issue of financial support of those in further education.

Only one of the men in our sample was a school leaver. Most of the others had come into childcare by accident, having tried other work or training first, and then finding through experience, and to their own surprise, that childcare was enjoyable. If indeed this is a typical route for men, then

being able to finance themselves on the course is an important issue.

For women returners with children, this was less of a problem. If they could find childcare (both colleges had crèches) they could still retain their social security payments if they were not supported by a partner. However those men and women who were classed as unemployed, and who were in receipt of unemployment benefit had to be able to demonstrate that they were ready and available for work. Studying for a childcare course did not provide an exemption. Some of the men in our study were in receipt of unemployment benefit, and as a result were continually chivvied to take on other work which they did not want to do. As well as missing tuition, they also missed placements which were an essential part of the course. These gaps could not be made up, and several of the men we interviewed had dropped out and come back again to restart a module. Both their tutors and fellow students told us that this was the main reason for men leaving the courses, although we had no independent evidence that this was the case.

Again, it is beyond our scope to suggest legislative intervention, but possibly some kind of discretionary grants, administered by TECs or by local authorities, might, judiciously used, help to sponsor men to train for work in childcare.

#### 5.2.6. Changes in regulation of childcare.

As we pointed out in the introduction, childcare facilities in the UK are already heavily regulated. The evidence suggests that regulation and guidance are carefully followed by local authorities and employers (32). If the Department of Health were to recommend gender equality in employment of staff, with new safeguards for investigating staff prior to appointment, and for monitoring

staff in post, this would be a powerful incentive for employers to seek to employ men.

The Department of Health is currently sponsoring a research study into men working in childcare (33) and it may be that this study will also indicate ways in which use of the regulatory and guidance systems can promote the employment of men.

#### 5.2.7. Partnerships with unions and professional organisations.

We pointed out in the study that the higher the professional qualification of the worker, the more likely he or she is to be unionised or to belong to some kind of professional association. As Penn (34) has pointed out in an analysis of local authority day nurseries in the UK, staff in nurseries ultimately judge themselves by locating their practice against what they see to be the current professional, parental and public perceptions of their work, and where those expectations are minimal, then the nurseries in turn do not provide very much. Unions and professional organisations also have a part to play in promoting the interests and helping to define the practices of those they purport to represent. Gender equality is certainly on the agenda of many unions and professional organisations concerned with childcare, and a concerted partnership with government, national and local, could also serve to highlight the gender inequalities that we have documented.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

This research study explored the ways in which men and women undertaking training in childcare see themselves as future workers, and how their hopes and expectations matched up to those of their tutors, and those of the providers where they undertook their placements. The study suggests that perceptions of gender are deeply embedded.

These perceptions of gender are also intertwined with perceptions of class and ethnicity.

There is no evidence that the numbers of men coming forward to work in the field has changed over the last 10 years. The colleges and most of the providers had written equal opportunity statements, and the courses themselves include modules or sections on equal opportunities, but these appeared to have made little, if any, difference to recruitment. The inherent contradictions in the training offered and in the childcare career choices available suggest that without substantial and positive intervention at a national and local level change is unlikely.



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Table 1

	Type	Administration	Values - Philosophy
Publicly funded & provided	Nursery Schools	Education	To enlarge a child's knowledge, experience, and imaginative understanding and thus his awareness of moral values and capacity for enjoyment; and ... to enable him to enter the world after formal education is over as an active participant in society and a responsive contributor to it". (DES 1990)
	Nursery Classes (attached to primary school)	Education	
	Reception	Education	Introduction to formal schooling, and the National Curriculum.
	Day Nurseries	Social Services	Day car services emphasising the care and protection of vulnerable children.
	Family Centres	Social Services	Emphasis on a programme of work involving parents and children. Usually compensatory.
	Combined Nursery Centres	Social Services/Education	Vary widely in their emphasis and approach, but usually include a combination of care and education.
	One O'clock Club	Leisure/Social Services	Recreational emphasis - frequently non-directive play, with mother or carers present.
	Playcentres	Registration Duty of Social Services if parents leave their children	
Publicly supported	Playgroups (May also be private)	Registration & Inspection duty of Social Services  Majority affiliated to Pre-School Playgroup Association (PPA)	Loosely modelled on nursery education. Parents committees manage the groups and parents often help on a rota basis. The emphasis is on PLAY as the tool for learning. May provide opportunity groups for children with disabilities. Emphasis on parental development and support.
	Voluntary Nurseries	Registration and Inspection duty of Social Services	Centres generally established by voluntary childcare organisations focusing on community development or ....'self help' centres that have grown out of voluntary community groups
	Family Centres		
	Family Support Centres		
	Specialist Resources		
	Toy Libraries	Play Matters (National) Toy Libraries Association	Lends toys, at minimal cost, to children and families. Undertake community work.
	Out of School. (May also be private)	Kids Club Network. (Education/Youth Services/Leisure) Registration & Inspection duty of Social Services for 5-8. (Children's Act 1989)	Promotes play/care services for children before and after school and during school holidays.
	Parent - Toddler Groups	Often supported by the PPA	Often self-help initiatives that offer a drop-in service for parents to meet and toddlers to play. Parents must be present.
Private	Childminders	Registration & Inspection duty of Social Services	A private arrangement between parent and childminder offering full day care in a childminder's home. Emphasis on 'extension of home' and individual care.
	Nannies	Private or Registration duty of Social Services if Carer is involved with 3 families or more. (1989 Children's Act)	Day care for children within their own homes provided by a carer who comes to the home. Emphasis on individual care.
	Nurseries	Registration duty of Social Services.	Day care of working families or students. Educational content & quality of care can vary enormously. Emphasis on group care. Profit driven.
	Nursery Schools	No requirement to Register not inspection necessary, other than school inspection if part of a school.	Varies. Often emphasis on formal education, the 4 'R's. Profit driven.



Staffing	Ratios	Age	Opening Times	Access	Charge	% Attendances
Nursery Teachers, Degree, PGCE Nursery Nurses Primary Teachers, Degree, PGCE	1-23 (Teaching)  1-13 (Overall) 1-30/40	3 to 4 yrs	Part-time (Sessional) 2.5 hours  Rising 5's (Reception Class)	Self-referral Applications considered by individual schools.	Free	26% of 3 to 4 yr olds   21% of 4 yr olds
Nursery Nurses (NNEB)  Nursery Teachers and Nursery Nurses	Recommended 1-5 (2-5)  1-3 (0-2) 1-3 (Children with special needs)  1-2 (0-2)	0 to 5 yrs	Full-time, although sessional care common.  Varies Full-time	Generally criteria based on need.	Usually means tested.	0.9% of 0 to 5 yr olds. (See family centres - Voluntary Sector) No national data - 40 groups are members of National Association
Play Leaders often unqualified	2-?	0 to 5 yrs	Sessional Extended Day	Self-referral, although may be changed to 'children in need'.	Covers food costs.	No figures available.
Play Leaders PPA Trained Volunteers	1 to 8	2.5 to 5 yrs	Sessional. Varies but usually between 5 & 15 hrs per week	Self-referral	Average £7.50 per 2.5 hr session.	60% of 2.5 to 5 yr olds.
Social Workers, Nursery Nurses (NNEB) Volunteers	Recommended the same as for day nurseries Not applicable	0 to 5 yrs	Flexible - may offer sessional, full day or out of school. Varies	Self-referral bases on catchment areas or targeted to 'children in need' Self-referral.	Minimal charges to cover costs of free. Minimal charges. 10p or toys	Unknown - but 500 centres belong to the Family Centre Network. No national figures available.
Play Leaders Volunteers	1 to 8	3 to 8 yrs	Out of school hours	Self-referral, often based on catchment areas.	Varies	700 Club Kids Club Network Annual Report Dec 1993.
Volunteers	Varies	0 to 5 yrs	Generally one or more sessions per week	Self-referral	Minimal to cover costs	No figures available
Women at home, may have short vocational training	Registration generally 1:3 under 5 years inc own children	0 to 5 yrs	Full day	Self-referral. Private arrangement. Based on ability to pay.	National Childminders Association guidelines £50 - £90 per week.	7% of 0 to 4 yr olds
Nursery Nurses or Untrained	Varies according to family size	0 to 5 yrs	Full day	Private arrangement. Based on ability to pay.	Varies	No figures available.
Nursery Nurses PPA or Untrained	1:3 0-2 1-4 2-3 1:8 3-4	0 to 5 yrs	Full day	Private arrangement. Based on the ability to pay	£50 - £200 per week	2.9% of 0 to 4 yr olds
Teachers Nursery Nurses	Varies	2 to 5 yrs	Varies	Private arrangement. Based on the ability to pay.	£50 - £200 per week	1.4% of 0 to 4 yr olds

Source: Penn & Moss (1996) Transforming Nursery Education. Paul Chapman

Table 2

## CONDITIONS OF WORK IN 10 PRIVATE DAY NURSERIES

	Pension	Holiday (days)	Sick Leave	Compassionate Leave	Paid Overtime	Free Uniform	Free Meals	Staff Room	Trades Union Membership	Childcare Place
1	-	-	no	yes	unpaid	no	yes	no	no	no
2	no	20	yes	yes	1.33	no	no	yes	no	yes
3	no	21	yes	yes	#flexi	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
4	no	20	discret	discret	1.5 & flexi	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
5	no	-	no	no	unpaid	no	no	no	no	no
6	no	25	no	yes	TL*	no	yes	yes	no	no
7	no	15	yes	yes	flexi	no	yes	no	no	no
8	no	-	no	no	unpaid	no	no	no	no	yes
9	no	20	yes	yes	TL	no	yes	yes	no	yes
10	yes	30	discret	yes	1.5	yes	yes	yes	no	no

\*TL = time in lieu  
#flexi = flexible staff

## PAY, CONDITIONS, STAFF SUPPORT AND QUALITY OF CARE IN 10 PRIVATE DAY NURSERIES

	Basic Pay £	Conditions of Work	Support & Training	Domestic Support	Childcare Qualifications of Owner	Group & Spatial Organisation	% employed for one year or less	Responsiveness and Sensitivity of Staff	Adult/Child Interaction	£ per week to parents
1	6-8000	1	1	cook	NNEB	2	33%	2	2	£60
TT T2	6-8000	3	1	-	-	2	100%	1.5	2	£96
3	6-8000	4	5	cook/ cleaner	Teacher	5	8%	4.5	4	£80
4	6-8000	5	4	cook/ cleaner	Teacher	5	8%	4.5	5	£50
Table 5	-	1	1	-	-	1	33%	1	1	£80
6	8-1000	3	5	cook/ cleaner	Teacher	5	0	3.5	5	£85
7	6-8000	2	5	cook/ cleaner	Teacher	4	29%	5	4	£80
8	- 6000	1	1	-	-	2	90%	1	2	£80
9	6-8000	4	1	cook/ cleaner	NNEB	2	0	3	3	£78
10	8-1000	5	3	cook/ cleaner	NNEB	3	20%	5	4	£85

Source: European Early Childhood Research Journal, V3. No 2 1995 pp29-42

Table 3

## Staff working in Early Childhood Services

	Teacher	Nursery Nurse education	Nursery nurse social services	Playgroup worker	Childminder	Private day nursery
approx no employed	7000 (excluding reception)	7000	7,500	40,000	100,000	25,000
generally acceptable qualification	Bed or degree/PGCE minimum 4 yrs post 18	certificate/diploma in nursery nursing (NNEB/BTec) 2 yrs post 16	certificate/diploma in nursery nursing (NNEB/Btec) 2 yrs post 16	no legal requirement: local playgroup foundation course/playgroup practice diploma/NVQ	no legal requirement: local childminding course approx 6-10 weeks, 1 session per week. NVQ	no legal requirement; usually senior staff NNEB/NVQ
age-range	3-8, 3-11	3-5	0-5	2-5	0-8	0-5, 0-8
adult/child ratio	1:13	1:13	1:3(0-2); 1:5(2-3); 1:8(3-5)	1:8	1-3	1:3(0-2); 1:5(2-3); 1:8(3-8)
contracted weekly hours	1265 hours/195 days per yr	35 inc breaks	37-39 without breaks	average 5-15 hrs per week	average 50 hours, no breaks	37-40 without breaks
contract hours with children	average 25-30 hrs per wk	average 25-30 hrs per week	37-39 hours per week	5-15 hours per week	50-60 hours per wk	37-40 hrs per week
shifts/working hours	9-3.30/4, no shifts	9-3.30/4, no shift	8-6pm, 2/3 shifts	average 9-11.30 no shifts	8-6pm continuous	8-6pm, 2/3 shifts
overtime pay if extra hours	no	yes	yes	no	maybe	usually
holidays	12 weeks	12 weeks	3-6 weeks	12 weeks (unpaid)	3 weeks (half-pay)	3-4 weeks
sick pay/pension	LA conditions	LA conditions	LA conditions	none	none	unusual
career prospects	promoted posts	no promoted posts	9 grades promoted posts	none	none	no national scale
parity with other groups	with teachers	none	none	none	none	none
basic pay scale	£11,880/£13,500 - £18,000	£9,300 - £10,797	£8,226 - £21,357	hourly rates, approx £2/3	hourly rates, approx. £2/3	£6,000 - £18,000
recognised unions	N T/NASWT	Unison/T&G/GMB	Unison/T&G/GMB	none	none	none
line manager	only teacher	only teacher	NNEB/social worker	none/mgmt committee	none	private employer
staff facilities, staffroom etc	yes	yes	yes	no	no	maybe
supply cover arrangements	yes	yes	yes	no	no	maybe

Source: Moss & Penn (1996): Transforming Nursery Education. Paul Chapman

The Children Act which regulates private and voluntary provision does not contain a specific training requirement but leaves it open to Local Authorities to impose their own requirements. In the case of playgroups and private day nurseries these are likely to vary throughout the UK. Similarly pay and conditions vary considerably, and in the absence of reliable information we can only make guesstimates based on extrapolations from existing data.

**Table 4**

**Childcare Student profile in Two Inner London Colleges of Further Education**

Course	Average	No.	Own Children	Ethnicity	Experience of Paid Childcare Work
A.Men	25 (20-30)	6	1	white	pdn (private nursery), sports coaching
A.NNEB1	30 (17-52)	10	5	all black in ESL	playscheme, babysitting, pdn, lunchtime supervisor
A.NNEB2	35 (25-50)	10	8	all black inc ESL	special needs assistant, pdn, babysitting, playscheme
A.BTEC1	27 (17-43)	12	5	all black inc ESL	creche, playscheme, kibbutz, babysitting, homecarer, childminding, playgroup
A.BTEC2	26 (21-34)	5	4	all white, no ESL	nannying, sports coaching
A.Cert (Basic)	29 (17-44)	9	6	1 white, 8 black in ESL	babysitting, childminding
A.BETC cert (NVQ)	42 (33-51)	7	6	all white, inc ESL	childminding, creche, private nursery, meals supervisor
A.BTCert (NVQ)	36 (31-43)	6	5	3 white, 3 black inc ESL	nursery nurse, creche manager, meals supervisor
B.Men	25 (21-30)	5	1	4 white, 1 black	
B.NNEB1	35 (18-46)	8	5	2 white, 6 black in ESL	school dinner lady, shoppers creche, childminder
B.NNEB2	24 (18-35)	8	2	5 white, 3 black inc ESL	YTS, childminding, babysitting, agency, nanny, playscheme
BBTEC1	32 (23-42)	10	8	3 white, 7 black inc ESL	teaching in Nigeria, nursing
B.BTEC2	35 (24-51)	10	8	all black in ESL	special needs helper, creche, childminding, after-school
B.NVQ3	36 (26-49)	9	5	3 white 6 black in ESL	playscheme, dn, creche, childminder, pdn
B.Cert (Basic)	17 (16-18)	10	-	8 white, 2 black inc ESL	playscheme, babysitting

Number of students interviewed from colleges A and B

Total number of students - 125

Number of men - 12 (inc 1 on A.Cert not listed separately)

Average age of student - 30 yrs

% of students with own children - 48%

% of ethnic minority students - 63%

**Table 5****Showing Students on Childcare Courses by Region, Gender and by Benefit**

<b>REGION</b>	<b>BENEFIT</b>			<b>NON-BENEFIT</b>			<b>% IN RECEIPT</b>
	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>OF BENEFIT</b>
ER	1,003	15	1,018	4,610	50	4,660	17.93%
EM	948	19	967	2,953	37	2,990	24.44%
GL	1,827	66	1,893	3,111	69	3,180	37.32%
NR	752	12	764	1,829	17	1,846	29.27%
NW	1,320	36	1,356	4,698	79	4,777	22.11%
SE	455	17	472	4,118	49	4,167	10.17%
WM	1,793	50	1,843	4,344	71	4,415	29.45%
SW	808	15	823	2,818	52	2,870	22.29%
YH	950	21	971	2,921	59	2,980	24.58%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9,856</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>10,107</b>	<b>31,402</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>31,885</b>	<b>24.07%</b>

Source Further Education Funding Council

**Table 6**

**Number of ads placed in Nursery World (Main national recruitment magazine for childcare) period July 1995 - May 1996**

<b>Date</b>	<b>LA Soc Services</b>	<b>LEA</b>	<b>Health/ Hospital</b>	<b>Vol Org</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Family in UK</b>	<b>Family Abroad</b>	<b>Other</b>
13.7.95	3	5	3	4	14	34	134	26	1
10.8.95	5	-	2	4	20	35	128	45	1
14.9.95	1	6	-	5	13	12	40	9	2
12.10.95	1	1	2	1	17	23	136	43	2
9.11.95	5	2	-	4	12	23	116	57	3
14.12.95	1	1	-	1	18	22	114	10	3
11.1.96	2	3	4	5	16	20	107	28	5
15.2.96	3	1	2	3	12	26	98	32	-
14.3.96	2	1	3	3	16	21	95	27	2
11.4.96	1	-	4	2	12	22	91	26	2
9.5.96	1	1	3	4	13	34	124	35	1

i) The number refers to the number of advertisements in the category. The local authority social services and health adverts tend to be block adverts for several staff and represent a cross section of England. The LEA adverts are mainly from individual schools in London and home counties.

ii) Some of the agencies specialise in placing nursery nurses in schools or day nurseries; others include nannyng.

iii) Other includes playscheme workers, lecturers, inspectors and holiday camps at home and abroad.

Table 7

## Types of Training Provision

(Source: Starting with Quality DES/HMSO 1990)

Table A

## Main Training routes for nursery nursing

	BTEC	NNEB	CPQS
Entry Requirements	<p>BTEC (National diploma in Caring Services (nursery nursing))</p> <p>16 minimum age</p> <p>Qualifications are: 4 GCSE passes at Grade C or above or BTEC First Certificate or Diploma or CPVE certification equal to either of the 2 previous qualifications: or a 14-16 preparatory course with a profile of attainment.</p>	<p>16 minimum age</p> <p>Officially no entry requirements but colleges generally seek students with 2 passes at GCSE Grade A B or C.</p>	<p>Minimum age 21</p> <p>Open to professionally qualified nursery nurses: holders of a BEd or Teaching Certificate with specialism relating to primary or nursery education: State Registered or Enrolled Nurses: and certain additional categories.</p> <p>Minimum of 2 years practice in professional care of young children following qualification.</p>
Length	2 years full-time	2 years full-time or 3 part-time. 350 days of full-time study or its equivalent in part-time study.	6 modular units which can involve distance learning amounting to at least 720 hours in all.
Academic equivalent	2 A-level GCE passes. Whether on its own, it will provide for direct entry to initial teacher training will depend on additional factors, eg a sufficient and suitable subject specialism.	No equivalent academic recognition.	Variable dependent upon the relevance of the CPQS modules to the course applied for.
Availability	Approximately 80 colleges of further education	Approximately 180 colleges of further education	Approximately 50 colleges
Content	Courses follow a unit structure over two years of full-time study. Units include child development and behaviour, child health services: First Aid and the sick child; educational and cognitive development: special needs: home environment studies; personal and social development: creative activities: nursery nursing; caring services and children in society.	The college course is devoted to vocational studies, social studies and complementary studies covering children's growth and development; physical development and keeping children healthy: cognitive development and learning through play; emotional development: social relationships: the rights and responsibilities of children and the family, the nursery nurse in employment. Children studies can cover communication and the creative arts, environmental studies and living in society.	Knowledge skills competencies required of senior level in childcare setting. Personal and social development.

Early Years primary ITT courses

	PGCE	PGCE (part-time)	PGCE (ATS)	BEd	BEd
Entry Requirements	Degree of UK university or CNAAs of equivalent qualification  GCSE passes in English and Mathematics at grade C or equivalent	Degree of UK university or CNAAs of equivalent qualification  GCSE passes in English and Mathematics at grade C or equivalent	Degree of UK university or CNAAs of equivalent qualification  GCSE passes in English and Mathematics at grade C or equivalent	Nonnal academic requirements for admission to first degree course (minimum 2 A levels) or exceptional entry eg via access courses  GCSE passes in English and Mathematics at grade C or equivalent	Minimum of 1 year HE in appropriate subject(s)  GCSE passes in English and Mathematics at grade C or equivalent
Length of Course	1 year	2 years	2 years	4 years	2 years
Availability	44 ITT institutions	2 ITT institutions	4 AT schemes	32 ITT institutions	1 ITT institution
Content	Schools experience and teaching practice: special subject applications: other curriculum studies: educational and professional studies	Schools experience and teaching practice: special subject applications: other curriculum studies: educational and professional studies	Schools experience and teaching practice: special subject applications: other curriculum studies: educational and professional studies	Schools experience and teaching practice: special subject applications: other curriculum studies: educational and professional studies	Schools experience and teaching practice: special subject applications: other curriculum studies: educational and professional studies



Appendix 1

Score Sheet

Personal Writing

		<b>Banding</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Level</b>	<b>Criteria</b>		
0	Almost unintelligible sentences with very little or not sentence structure Answers do not address the question	0-4	
1	Very limited range of sentence structure and vocabulary Little grammatical accuracy Reasonable attempt to address questions	5-9	
2	Simple sentence structure Intelligible and coherent communication of meaning Answers directly address the question	10-16	
3	Mixture of simple and more complex sentence structure Coherent sentences which address the questions in some detail Wider range of vocabulary	17-220	

Reading Comprehension I

<b>Level</b>	<b>Criteria</b>		
	<b>Number of questions correct</b>		
0	1-2 correct	0-2	
1	3-4 correct	3-4	
2	4-6 correct	4-6	

Reading Comprehension II

3	These points are supplementary - there is therefore no banding	1-7	
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Problem Solving - WRITING

		<b>Banding</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Level</b>	<b>Criteria</b>		
0	Almost unintelligible sentences with very little or not sentence structure Or not done	0-4	
1	Very limited range of sentence structure and vocabulary Little grammatical accuracy	5-9	
2	Simple sentence structure Intelligible and coherent communication of meaning	10-16	
3	Mixture of simple and more complex sentence structure Coherent sentences which express meaning in some detail Wider range of vocabulary	17-20	

## Problem Solving

Level	Criteria		
0	No attempt to answer the task Not necessarily to be done	0-4	
1	An attempt to prioritise logically An attempt to explain reasons for first choice	5-9	
2	The ordering of the tasks shows attempt to prioritise logically Some reasons given	10-16	
3	Ordering of the tasks shows ability to prioritise and order logically Shows that implications have been considered to some extent Reasons made fairly explicit	17-20	

### TOTAL SCORE

Level	Banding	Score
0	0-14	
1	15-31	
2	32-54	
3	55-100	



## APPENDIX 2

### CHILDCARE AS A GENDERED OCCUPATION

#### REVISED FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE STRESS CONFIDENTIALITY

1. Ask students to fill in form with name, race, marital status, no. of children if any, details of previous paid and unpaid work with children.
2. Ask each student why they came on the course.
3. Ask as group discussion question whether they would think that way if they were men.
4. Ask as a group discussion what it is they like about working with young children (would they feel the same way about older children/adults).
5. Ask what qualities they need for working with children.  
Prompt for "braininess" - academic ability, writing skill/life experience/broad culture and education, self esteem, child development and learning etc.  
Can these qualities be taught or is it like being tall, you either are or you are not? Balance of innate ability versus acquired knowledge and skills.
6. Group discussion - ask if men or women would be better at these jobs.
7. Go round group and ask each person whether they know yet which job they want to do (or anything else) and why. Prompt for ease of access, attractiveness of pay & conditions, career prospects.
8. Ask about job status. As group discussion fill in prepared chart.
9. Ask about a comparable "men's" job.
10. Refer back to 4, and ask as groups discussion whether training offers what they need to do for the job.  
Prompt for academic preparation/general education/ practical experience.
11. Ask about placements: what were the good things? The bad things?  
(Prompt for work discipline)
12. Go round and ask each person where they think they will be in 10 years time.



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