

# Full-Time Early Education Places

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## *Summary Consultation Findings*

### **1 Introduction**

#### **1.1 Overview**

The Department for Education gives funding to every Local Authority to provide 15 hours of free early education a week for all children from the term after their third birthday and for eligible two year olds in the term after their second birthday.

All children are then entitled to a full-time school place in reception class in primary schools from the September after their fourth birthday.

The 15 hours of free early education offers all three year olds the chance to attend some form of nursery. Children are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year. This is often taken as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year. Funded early education places are available in a range of different settings. All settings offering funded education places must be registered with Ofsted to check the standard of care and education provided. The different types of setting that provide the free entitlement include: nursery schools; nursery classes within primary schools; private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nursery providers; and childminders. Different settings organise the 15 hour entitlement to free early education in different ways, for example some may offer five half days while others may offer a place for 2.5 days a week.

The 15 hours of free early education is based on evidence from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project (Sylva et al, 2010) that 15 hours' education makes a positive difference to children's level of development. The government only funds 15 hours because of the evidence that spending more than 15 hours in day care or education does not make a significant difference to children's level of development.

Many parents need more than 15 hours of childcare a week to enable them to go to work. Some providers of early education only offer 15 hour part-time education places and do not provide full time places or day-care. However, there are many providers that will offer additional hours of education or childcare that parents can pay for.

Some schools choose to offer full-time places that are not funded by the local authority without asking parents to pay for the additional hours. This is the decision of individual settings.

#### **1.2 Consultation**

Birmingham City Council's Early Years Childcare and Children's Centre Service currently funds free full-time early education places for children who meet certain eligibility criteria. However, we no longer have the funding to continue with these arrangements and are consulting on proposed changes which will reduce the number of funded full-time early education places.

A consultation was carried out to engage the parents, early year's professionals, providers of nursery schools/classes, childcare providers from the private, voluntary and independent sectors, neighbouring local authorities and the general public and seek their views on the proposed changes to the criteria. A

consultation document and questionnaire was provided, both online through BeHeard and in paper form, which outlined Birmingham City Council's proposal and allowed for feedback.

## 2 Data Sources and Scope

The questionnaire was made available to all Birmingham citizens via BeHeard, and circulated via Schools Noticeboard to all Nursery Schools and Primary Schools, emails to all early education providers and Childrens Centres. Three open forum engagement sessions were also held.

The survey ran from 22<sup>nd</sup> February until 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2016.

## 3 Responses

The consultation received 179 completed questionnaires via online and paper submissions.

An additional response was received from a Nursery School in the form of a petition signed by 91 parents. This response has not been included in the response total number but comments raised have been considered and included within the summaries.

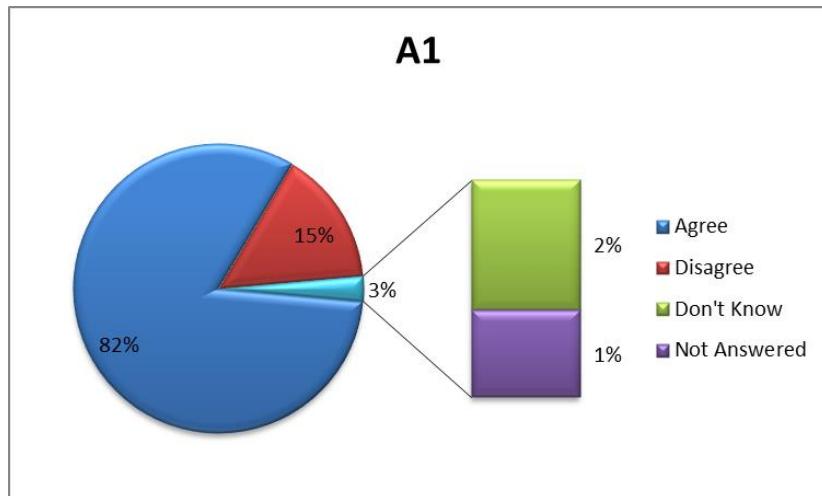
## 4 Key Findings

Respondents were asked to best describe their interest in the consultation – Early Years Professional, Childcare provider from the PVI sector, Nursery School, School with a nursery class, parent or other.

Identifier	Number of responses	% of responses
Parent	75	41.90%
Childcare provider from Private, Voluntary or Independent sector	19	10.61%
Nursery School	19	10.61%
School with a Nursery Class	44	24.58%
Early Years Professional	26	14.53%
Other	24	13.41%

**4.1 Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to continue to offer funded full-time early education places for children who may be at risk of harm or who are very vulnerable, if this is considered to be the most appropriate way to meet their needs?**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. Figure 1 below shows the responses. Overall, **82% indicated they agreed with the statement, and 15% disagreed with the statement.**



**Figure 1: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to continue to offer funded full-time early education places for children who may be at risk of harm or who are very vulnerable**

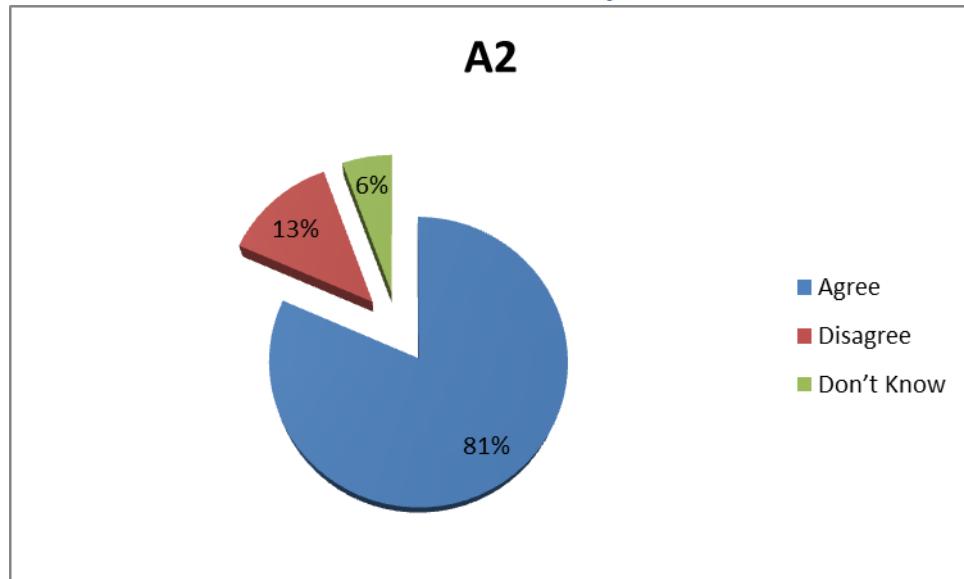
Comments overall were positive and supportive of continuing the offer of full-time places to children at risk of harm or vulnerable. It was suggested that services should also be available to parents in some way, so that the provision is also about helping families to get to the root of their challenges.

Many of those that disagreed felt that full-time places should be available for all children, and there was some confusion with the Government policy of 30 hours which is due to be introduced in September 2017.

**4.2 Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to continue to offer funded full-time early education places to children who have special educational needs or disabilities if this is considered the most appropriate way to meet their needs?**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. Figure 2 below shows responses.

Overall, 81% agreed with this statement, with 13% disagreeing. Of those that agreed, 36% of the responses were from parents with the remainder being from schools, providers or professionals.



**Figure 2: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to continue to offer funded full-time early education places to children who have special educational needs or disabilities?**

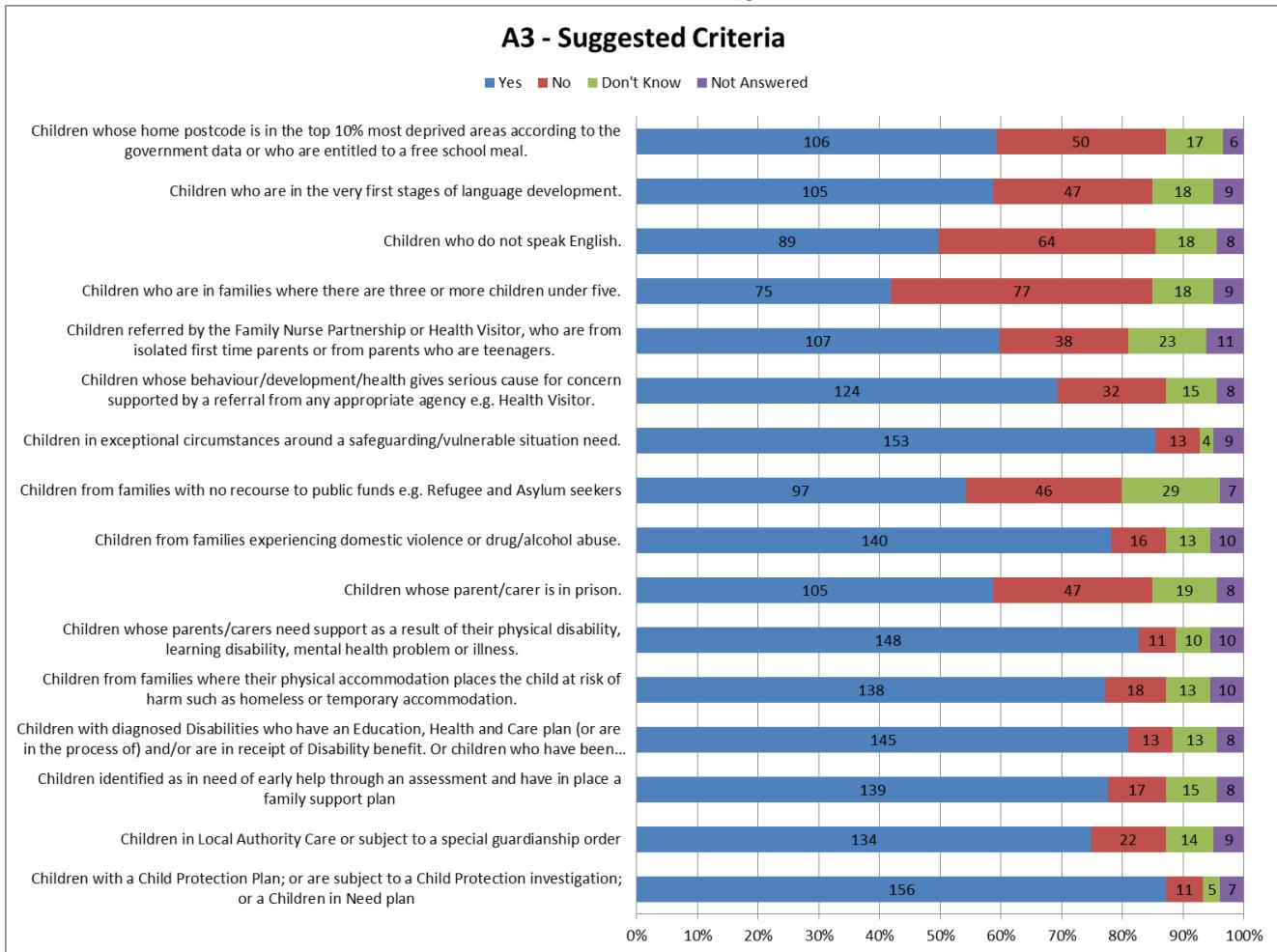
93 respondents made further comments. Of those that agreed, the comments endorsed the proposal for this group of children. The comments of those that disagreed, were concerned that additional hours for such children may not be appropriate, and there was some concern at the additional cost of funding children with more complex needs. Again, there were also some comments stating that the full-time places should be available to all.

***4.3 We are considering new criteria that would help us to identify children who should be considered for a funded full-time early education place. Please tell us whether you think each of the criteria below would help us identify children to consider for a funded full-time early education place.***

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with each of the proposed criteria to target full-time places to children who need more support. Figure 3 shows the responses to each criterion.

Four of the criteria received over 80% of support from respondents. These were the criteria mainly associated to the most vulnerable children (Child protection, SEND and exceptional circumstances around a safeguarding/vulnerable situation), but also included high support for children whose parents are in need of support. There were an additional four criteria that received over 70% support from respondents which again were much focussed on identifying the most vulnerable children (looked after children, connected to early help, physical accommodation and domestic violence/drug abuse). However it is worth highlighting that there were a number of comments regarding the proposed criteria for looked after children, where it was felt that if the child has been placed with foster carers, that there should not be a need to provide a full-time place as the situation has already been addressed.

There were 2 proposed criteria that received less than 50% support from respondents. These included children for whom English is an additional language and families where there are more than 3 children aged under 5. The proposed criteria around children in the first stages of language development received a higher level of support at 59%.



**Figure 3: Please tell us whether you think each of the criteria below would help us identify children to consider for a funded full-time early education place.**

Many comments mentioned the need for more clarity on how the criteria and referral process will be put into place.

When asked to tell us about any other groups of children that should be considered for full-time places, the majority of comments relating to children of low-income and working parents. It should be noted that this is the target group for the new government policy for 30 hours entitlement from September 2017.

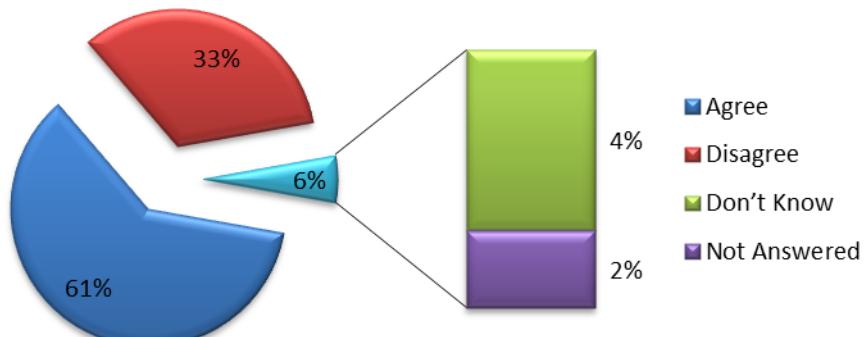
#### **4.4 Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to consider what other support might best help the child and family when deciding whether to offer a funded full-time early education place?**

Respondents were asked to identify whether they agreed with the proposal that children who meet the proposed criteria should not automatically be offered a funded full-time early education place because it would depend on whether an additional 15 hours' early education would be the right help and support for the individual child and family. Figure 4 shows the responses.

Overall, 61% indicated they agreed with this statement. This question received one of the highest number of "disagree" responses (33%). Respondents commented with concerns that if there was a criteria and a

child/family meets it, the full-time place should automatically be offered, otherwise it could lead to different interpretations and an inequality of access.

#### A4 - Consideration of Other Support



**Figure 4: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to consider what other support might best help the child and family when deciding whether to offer a funded full-time early education place?**

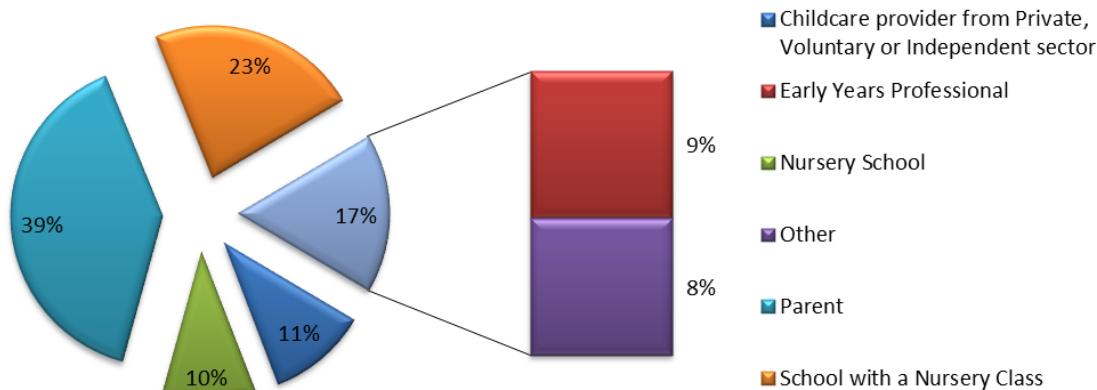
Many respondents also commented that any additional support for the child/family should be provided on top of the full-time place additional hours, not instead of.

**4.5 One group of children who meet the current criteria for a funded full-time place are children with English as an Additional Language who live in areas of high deprivation. Under our new proposals, this group of children would not be eligible for funded full-time early education unless they are at risk of harm or very vulnerable.**

Respondents were asked for their views on the impact of the proposed change on the group of children that have English as an additional language that live in areas of high deprivation that do not have any other vulnerability.

159 responses were received to this question. Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the type of respondents to this question.

## B1 - Impact on Children with EAL/High Deprivation



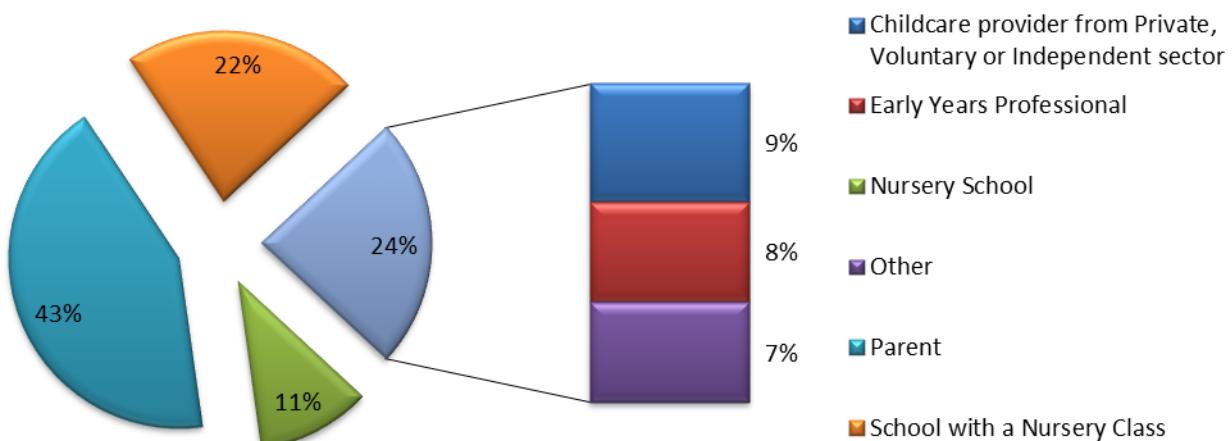
**Figure 5: What are your views on the impact of the proposed change on this group of children?**

The comments in response to this question were split mainly into two categories, whereby people either agreed that EAL should not be criteria or that it should. The largest number of response supported that EAL should NOT be used as indicator for vulnerability – on the contrary – having a second language should be seen as a positive. Many respondents also stated that good language development (irrespective of language) in a child will most often lead to quick language acquisition within the statutory 15 hours early education entitlement without the need for the additional hours.

**4.6 Children who qualify for free school meals and access their free place in a time that means they are in their early education place before and after lunchtime, are entitled to a free school meal. This means that children who receive a funded full-time early education place are likely to benefit from a free school meal every day. The statutory entitlement of 15 hours early education would only provide free school meals on a maximum of three days. Reducing the number of funded full-time places would reduce the number of children who receive a free school meal every day.**

Respondents were asked for their views on the impact of this proposed change. 147 responses were received to this question. Figure 6 shows a breakdown of the type of respondents to this question.

## B2 - Impact on Children for FSM



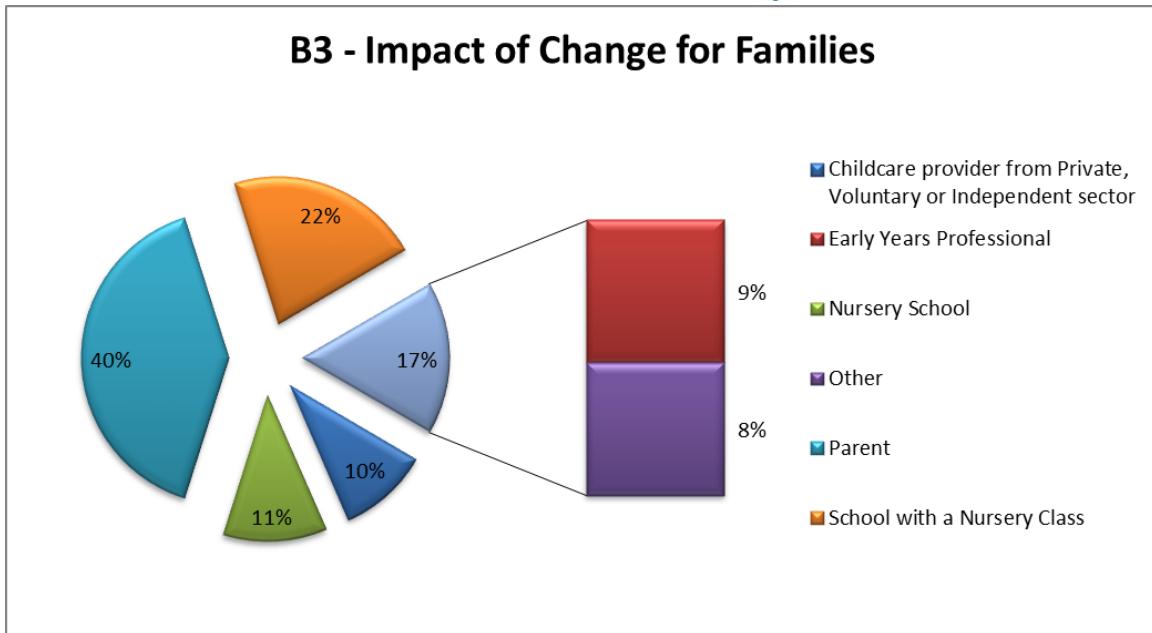
**Figure 6: What are your views on the impact of this proposed change?**

Many comments demonstrated that it is felt that this reduction would be detrimental to children particularly from low income households, as these were the children that are most likely to not qualify under the proposed new criteria. Some concerns were also expressed from settings that the reduction in full-time children and therefore reduction in FSM entitlement may put in jeopardy the ability to offer a hot meal at all, as they have to buy-in. Settings are already beginning to think about how this could be mitigated through offering the 15 hours places in a different way so that children will still attend a whole day, and qualify for the FSM on those days that they are in attendance.

Many comments conceded that a reduction in the number of meals available over the week was better than complete removal, and there were many comments regarding the additional benefits for socialisation skills that sharing a mealtime brings to children's learning. There was a general acceptance that reduced funding leads to hard choices.

**4.7 Some families who have benefited from funded full-time early education places for their older children in the past would now find that a younger child would not benefit from the same offer of a funded full-time place. Families may be expecting the current provision of funded full-time early education places to continue in September 2016.**

Respondents were asked for their views on the impact of this change for families. There were 149 responses provided to this question. Figure 7 show responses by type of respondent.



**Figure 7: What are your views on the impact of this change for families?**

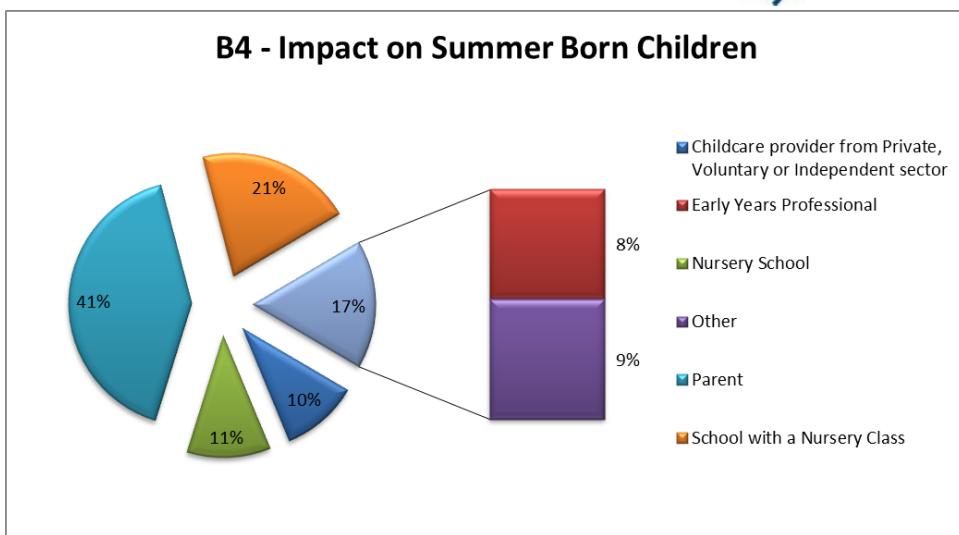
Many of the responses from parents expressed concerns over the affordability of childcare and the impact of the reduction to 15 hours only on their ability to work. However, there were also a large number of responses that acknowledged reduced funding would lead to reduction in services.

It should be noted that the introduction of the 30 hours entitlement by Government in September 2017 will mitigate a large number of these comments as that will specifically target working parents.

The general theme in the responses from providers and schools was that families would need plenty of advance notice to be able to make adjustments to their arrangements in order to continue to support them in work, and although many did not want the changes to criteria to be made, acknowledged that with reduced funding levels come tough choices.

**4.8 Most children who are currently in funded full-time early years places will start in a Reception Class from September 2016 and so will continue in full-time education. Children whose fourth birthday is between April 1st and September 1st 2016 may delay starting reception until September 2017. Some of these children may be in a funded full-time early education place under the current criteria. Under the proposed changes, these children would only be entitled to a 15-hour early education place from September 2016 if they meet the new criteria.**

Respondents were asked what their views are on the impact of this change on children who may be expecting their current funded full-time early education place to continue in September 2016. 136 responses were received to this question. Figure 8 below shows the breakdown of respondents to this question.

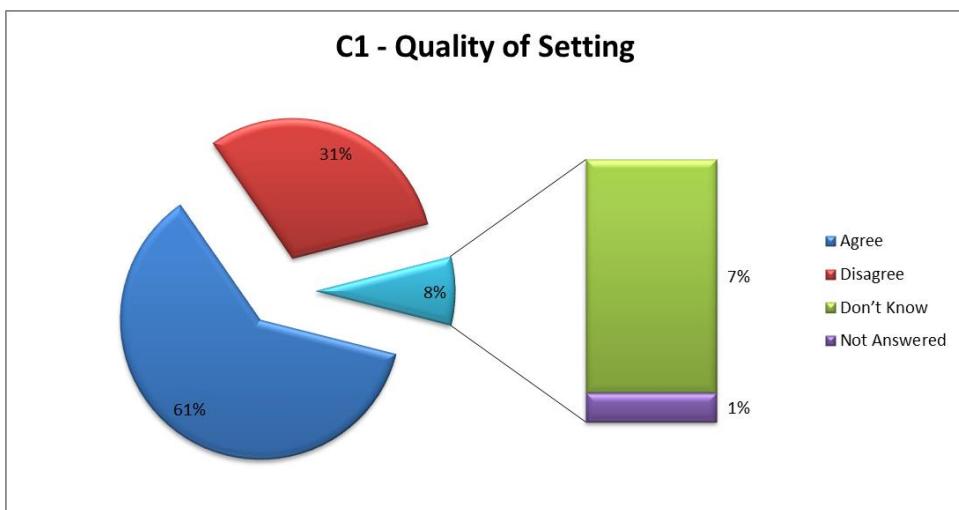


**Figure 8: What are your views on the impact of this change on children who may be expecting their current funded full-time early education place to continue in September 2016?**

There were two themes of comments to this question. The first being that where a child is already accessing a full-time place and they are not moving onto school in September, the full-time place should be maintained and not taken away. The second theme was that parents who make the choice to NOT move their summer-born child to school in September should do so knowing that they are only entitled to 15 hours in Nursery and this should be a factor in their choice. It shouldn't necessarily mean that they should benefit from a full-time nursery place unless they meet the revised criteria.

#### **4.9 Do you agree or disagree with our proposal that funded full-time places should only be offered by providers that are graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding?**

Respondents were informed of the proposal that funded full-time early education places will only be offered by providers that are graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. They were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. Figure 9 below shows the breakdown of responses received.



**Figure 9: Do you agree or disagree with our proposal that funded full-time places should only be offered by providers that are graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding?**

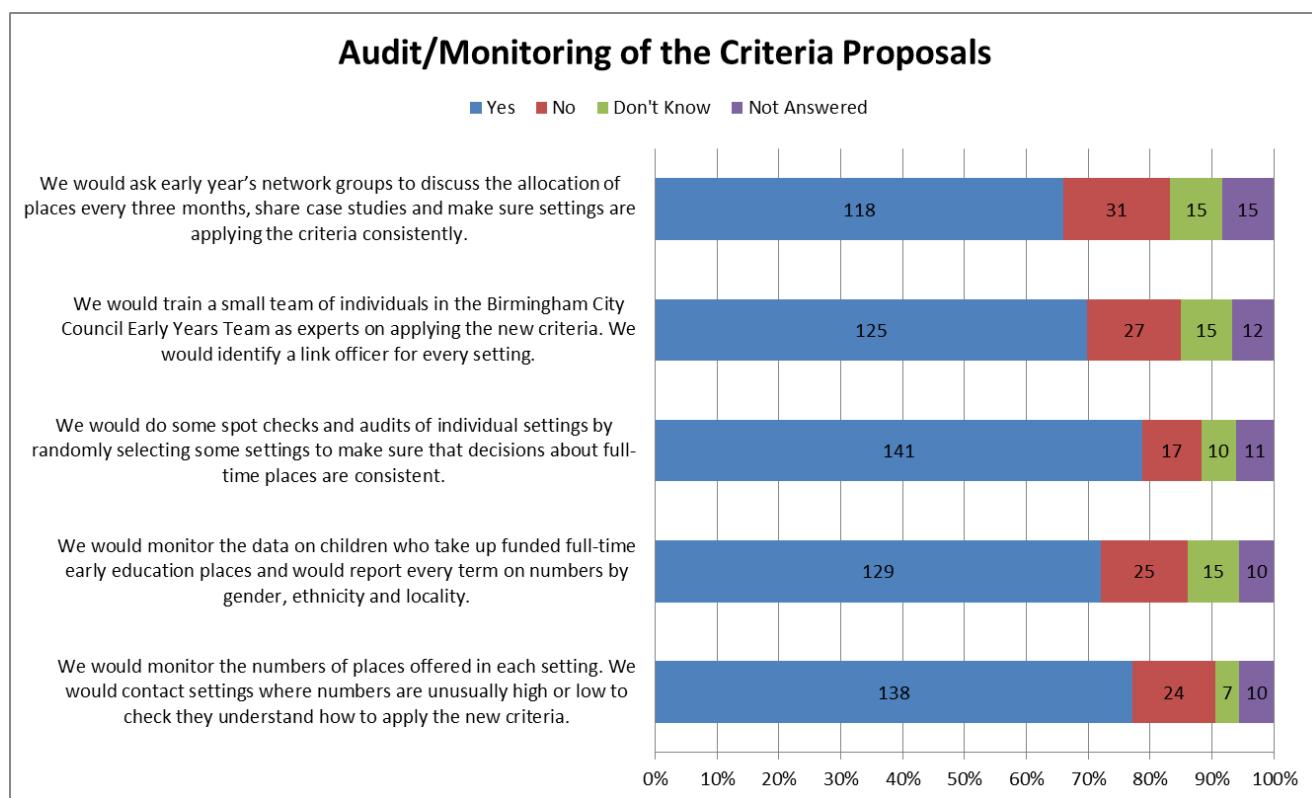
Overall, 61% agreed with this statement, with 31% disagreeing. However, closer analysis of the responses revealed that parents had a substantially different view to providers. Of the parents that responded, only 48% agreed with this proposal, 45% disagreed and the remainder didn't know or didn't answer. Whereas 70% of providers and professionals agreed that the full-time places should only be offered in Good/Outstanding settings, and only 22% disagreed (with the remainder unsure).

The comments received were very varied. There were a number of comments that felt children should be able to access local provision and parents should have the choice, other comments were themed towards school provision being better than PVI and the Ofsted inspection frameworks not being comparable (Note: the Ofsted inspection framework was changed in September 2015 and is now the same framework regardless of setting). However, many respondents were very positive regarding this proposal and commented that quality was very important in making a difference to a child's outcomes.

#### ***4.10 Please tell us your views on our ideas to achieve consistency and fairness and let us know of any other suggestions for us to consider.***

Respondents were asked to tell us whether they think each idea would make the process of allocating places more consistent and fair, to make sure that decisions to offer funded full-time early education places are made in a consistent and fair way.

Figure 10 shows the responses to each idea.



**Figure 10: Do you think this idea would make the process of allocating places more consistent and fair?**

Four of the options were supported by over 70% respondents. The idea of asking Early Years network groups to discuss the allocations was the lowest supported option, but this still received support from 66% of respondents.

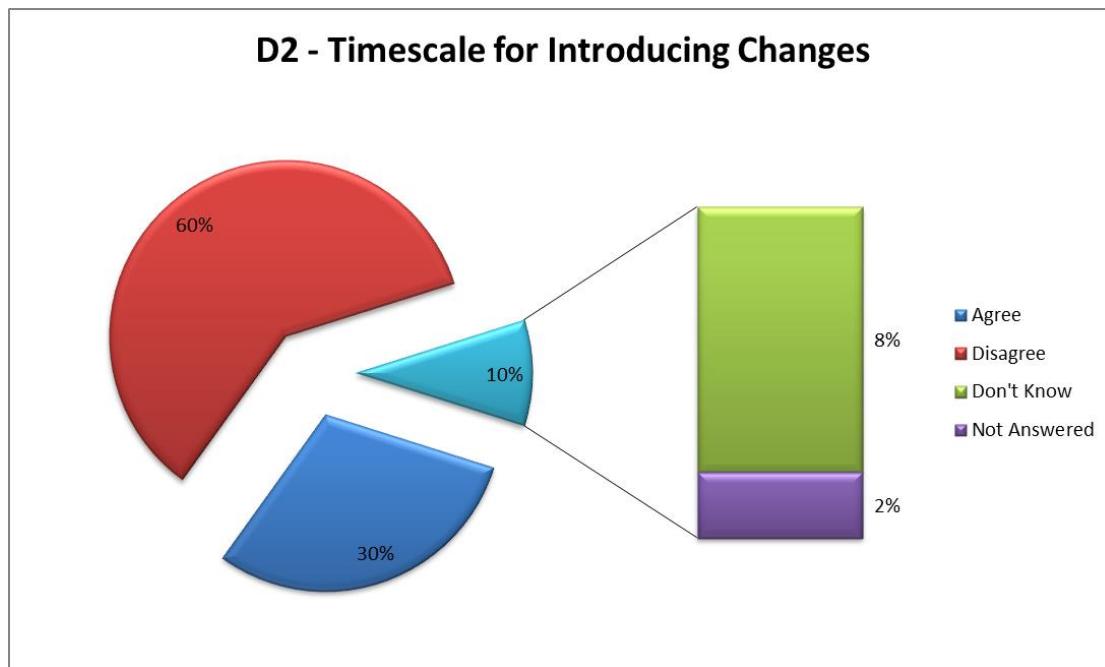
Many comments mentioned the Early Years networks and shared concerns over whether these would still exist in the future to undertake a role. There were also a number of comments around how much it would cost to undertake an Audit/Monitoring function and questioned whether the money would be better used going directly to fund children's places.

When asked to give us suggestions for alternative ways, there were a number of comments relating to a need to ensure that application of criteria can be evidenced, and that there is also a requirement to trust the judgement of professionals. A number of comments refer to a need for audit to ensure consistency.

***4.11 Some early education settings are currently set up to offer a lot of funded full-time places. We are proposing to bring in changes from September 2016 because funding is no longer available to provide the current number of full-time places. Do you agree or disagree that it would be right to implement these changes from September 2016?***

Respondents were asked to tell us whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to implement changes to the criteria from September 2016. Figure 11 shows the breakdown of responses received.

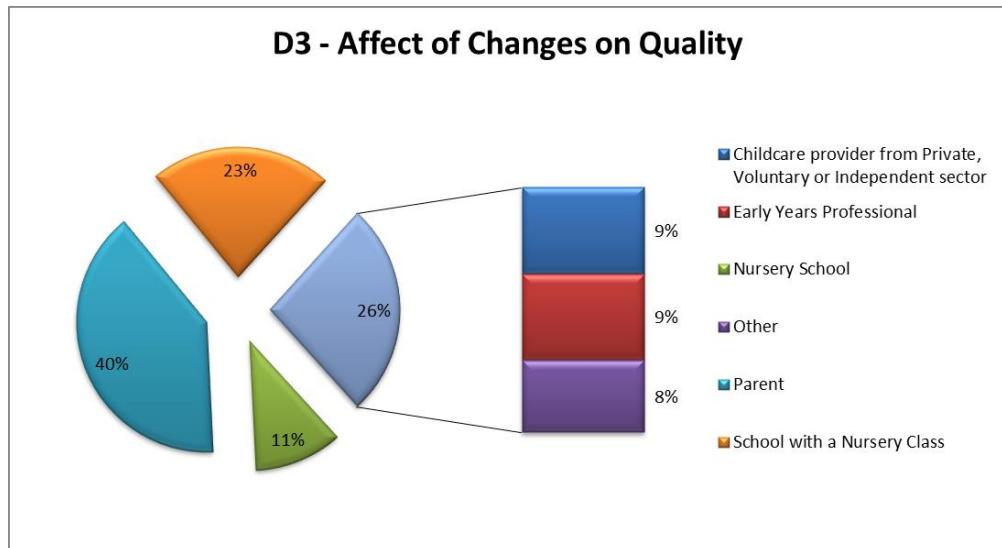
60% of respondents disagreed with the proposed timescale, which was the largest response in the consultation questionnaire in disagreement. The comments reinforced this negative view with many respondents stating that the timescale did not allow adequate time for either parents or providers to make alternative arrangements.



**Figure 11: Do you agree or disagree that it would be right to implement these changes from September 2016?**

**4.12 We want to make sure that all early education settings are supported to deliver great early education. What are your views on how the changes we are proposing might affect the quality of early education provision?**

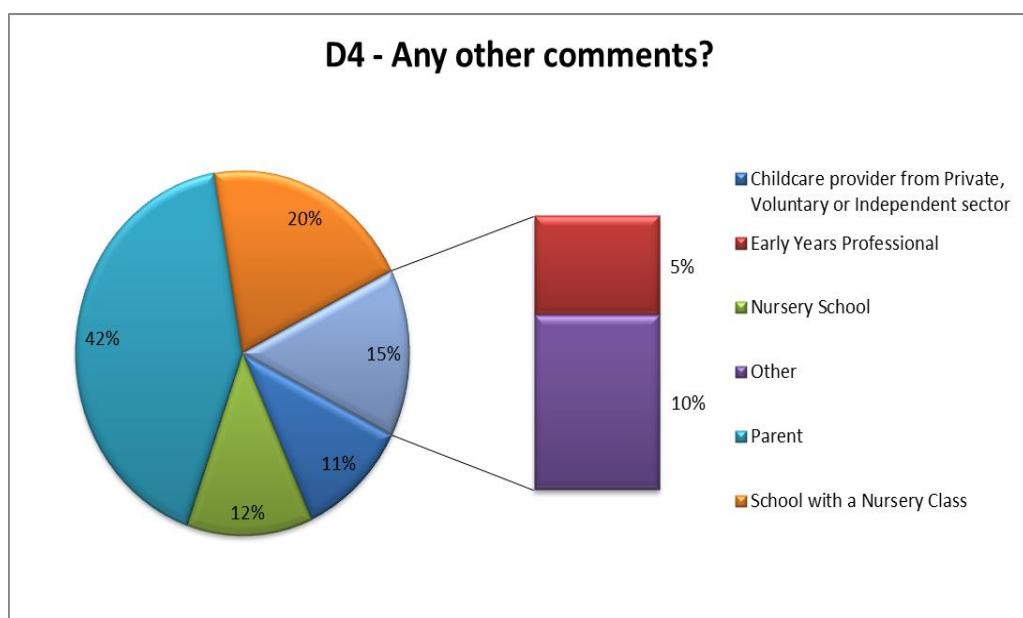
Respondents were asked what their views are on how the proposed changes might affect the quality of early education provision. 128 responses were received to this question. Figure 12 below shows the breakdown of respondents to this question.



**Figure 12: What are your views on how the changes we are proposing might affect the quality of early education provision?**

Most respondents did not feel that the changes would affect the quality of early education on offer, however there were some comments that the quality for individual children who in future will only get 15 hours will experience lesser outcomes.

**4.13 Any other comments or views you would like us to consider as part of this consultation?**



**Figure 13: Any other comments or views you would like us to consider as part of this consultation?**

Responses varied quite significantly depending on the type of respondent.

Respondents were asked to provide comments or views that are in addition to any other areas that they would like to be considered as part of the consultation. 74 responses were received to this question. Figure 13 shows the breakdown of respondents to this question.

Again, **parents** provided that largest single group of responses. 31 parents made an additional comment. The majority of responses were supporting the continuation of full-time places in their current form, expressing concern that early education should be a priority for funding and not being cut-back. There was some confusion again expressed where parents appear to have confused this consultation with the governments new policy for 30 hours entitlement for working parents from September 2017, which when introduced will go a long way to addressing some of the comments made within this consultation. There were some comments also that made reference to the current system in Birmingham not being fair, and that any changes should help to address this.

**Childcare providers from the PVI** made responses that themed more around ensuring fairness and equity between the settings that are able to offer full-time places, with more than respondent commenting that children that have been in attendance in their setting for often a number of years, are then moved to schools to enable access to a full-time place, whilst other parents have chosen not to access a full-time place that their child is eligible for as they haven't wanted to move to a school as is the current requirement within the exiting criteria.

**Schools with nursery classes** cited the time period as the largest issue, stressing the need for as much notice as possible for making any changes. There were also concerns expressed that the proposed changes would mean less children from low-income families would qualify (within areas of deprivation) which would lead to a widening of the achievement gap. A number of comments also related to a concern that a reduction in the number of full-time places would lead to an increase in demands for other services such as the MASH as there would be less early help as a result.

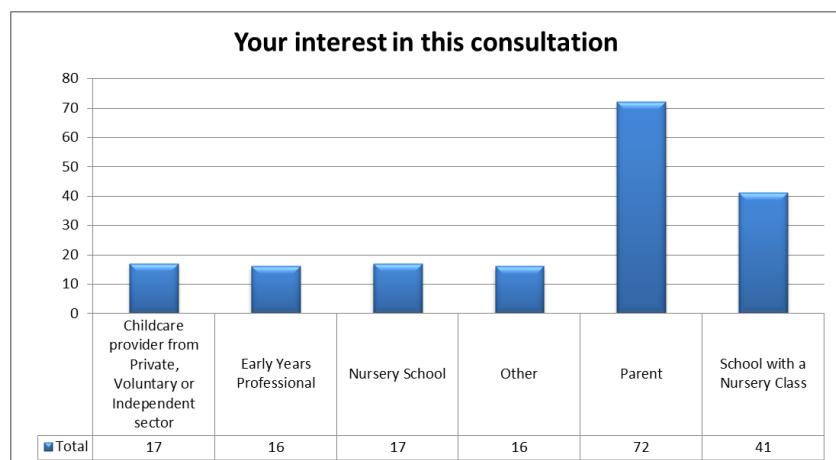
The remaining responses were themed around ensuring fairness and equity between settings and ensuring that provision is made available to a child that is of the best quality. More than one respondent cited the presence of qualified teachers leading practice as being a key factor to achieving high quality. Again there were a number of comments that acknowledged when resources are dwindling, priorities have to be identified – even though an aspiration would be for all children to receive a full-time place.

## 5 Demographics

### 5.1 *What best describes your interest in this consultation?*

Figure 14 shows 40% of those who responded identified as parents. 23% identified as a school with a nursery class. 9.5% identified as childcare providers from the PVI, 9.5% as nursery schools and 9% identified as EY Professionals. 9% stated other (Governors, retired teachers, elected members, etc) or did not answer.

**Figure 14: What best describes your interest in this consultation?**



## 5.2 In which constituency of the city do you live?

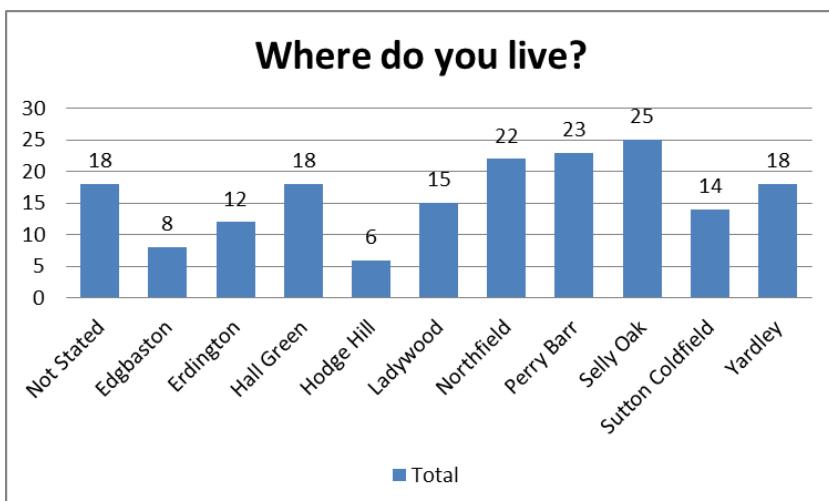


Figure 15 shows a range of respondents across the city varying from 14% of respondents who live in Selly Oak whilst only 3% from Hodge Hill. 10% of respondents did not state.

**Figure 15: In which constituency of the city do you live?**

## 5.3 Age: Which age group applies to you?

Figure 16 shows below shows respondent age group. The majority of respondents were spread over the 30 to 59 age band. There were no responses from anyone over the age of 74 or younger than 20, and 13% of respondents provided no response.

**Figure 16: Which age group applies to you?**

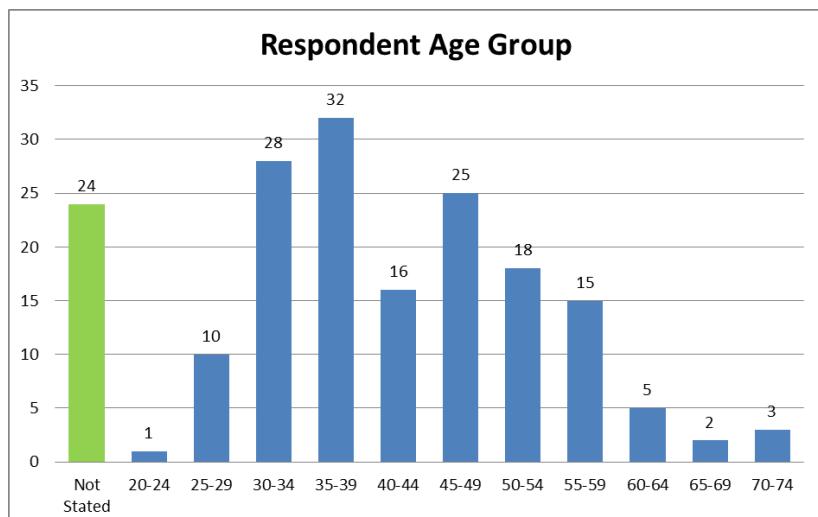
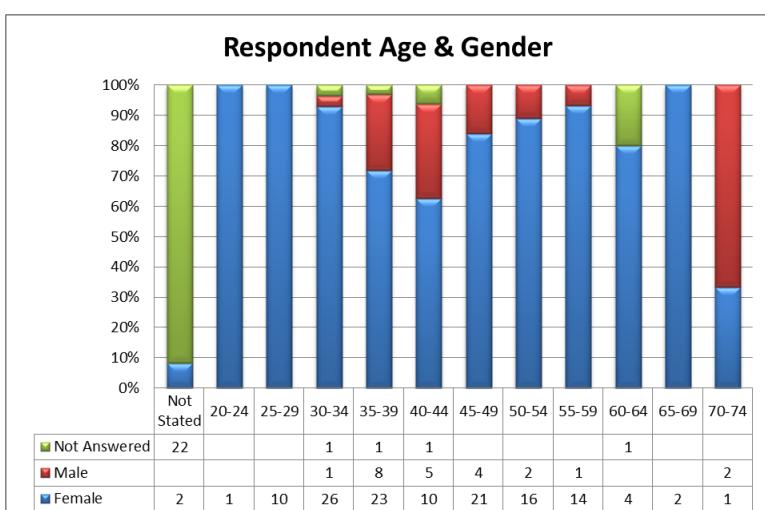


Figure 17 shows respondent age group by gender.

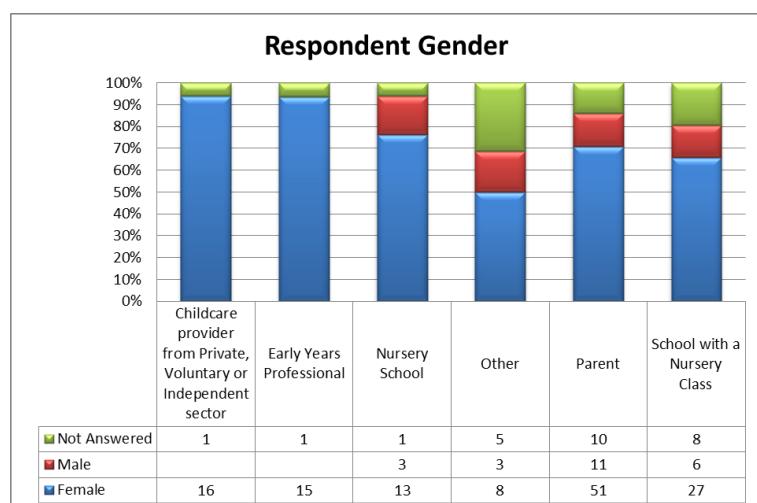
**Figure 17: Respondent age group and gender.**



## 5.4 Gender: What is your sex/gender?

Figure 18 shows that 73% of all respondents were female, 13% male and 14% did not answer or preferred not to say.

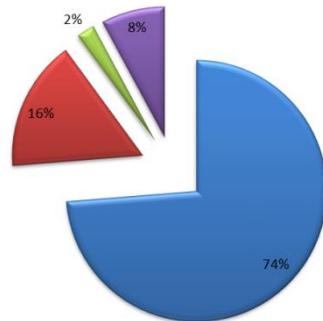
**Figure 18: What is your gender?**



## 5.5 Disability: Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

**Respondent Disabilities?**

■ No ■ Not Answered ■ Prefer not to say ■ Yes



Only 8% of respondents stated they had a physical or mental health conditions lasting 12 months or more (Figure 19).

**Figure 19: Disability: Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?**

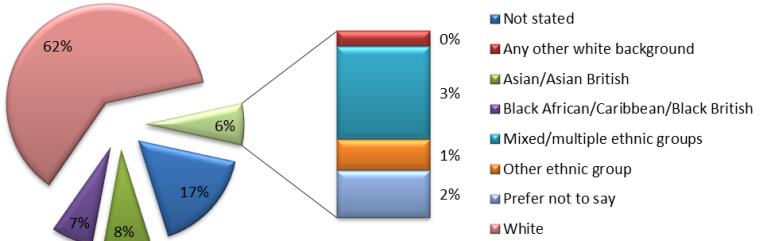
## 5.6 Ethnicity: What is your ethnic group?

Over half of respondents (62%) identified as White or White British. This was followed by Asian / Asian British with 8% (Figure 20).

Other included Kurdish.

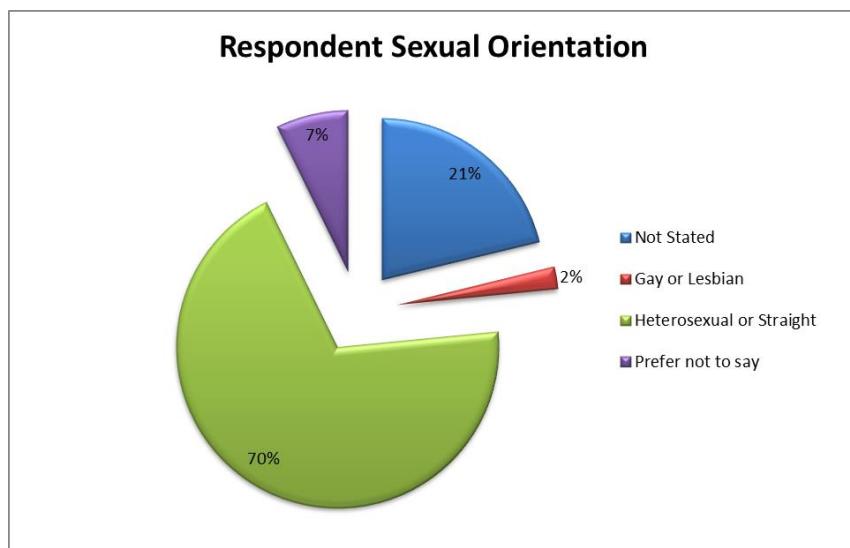
17% chose not to answer this question.

**Respondent Ethnicity**



**Figure 20: What is your ethnic group?**

## 5.7 Sexual Orientation: What is your sexual orientation?

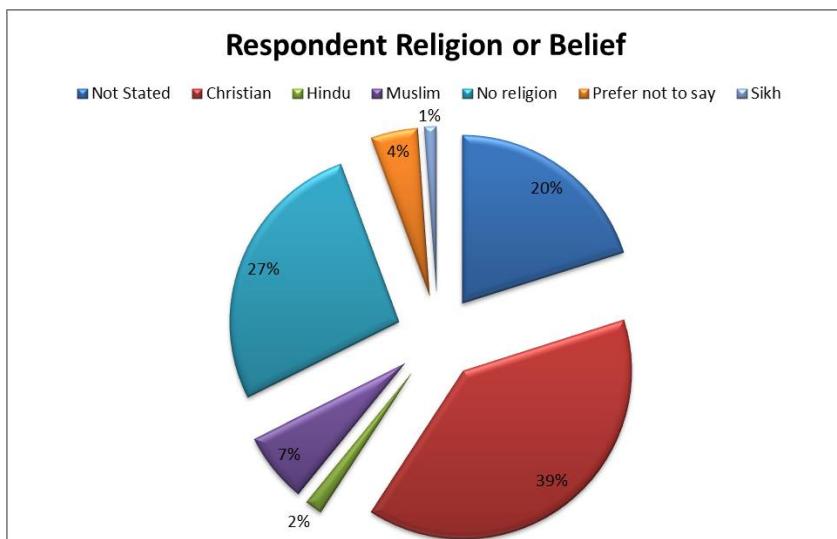


70% of respondents identified as heterosexual, with 7% preferring not to answer and 21% providing no response at all (Figure 21).

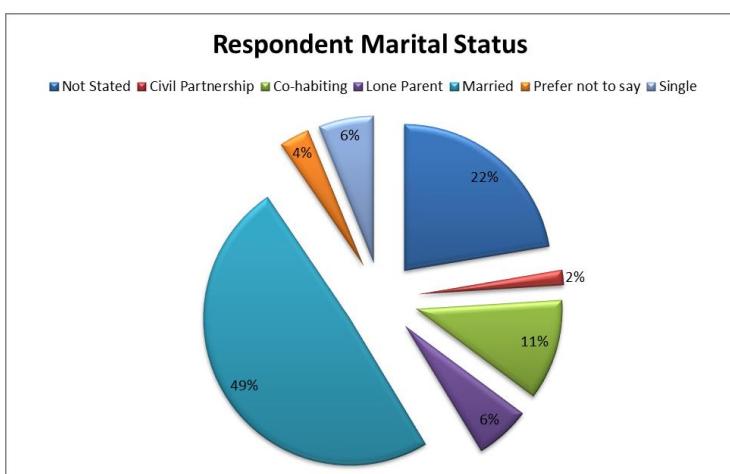
**Figure 21: What is your sexual orientation?**

## 5.8 Religion: What is your religion or belief?

39% identified as Christian, 27% chose no religion and 20% did not state at all (Figure 22). 7% identified as Muslim, 2% as Hindu and 1% as Sikh.



**Figure 22: What is your religion or belief?**



## 5.9 Marital Status: What is your relationship status?

49% of respondents stated that they were married, 11% co-habiting, 6% single, 6 % lone parents and 2% in a civil partnership (Figure 23).

22% did not provide a response and 4% preferred not to say.

**Figure 23: What is your marital status?**

## 6 Summary

The Consultation achieved a good representation across gender, ethnic and geographical groups. In addition, workshops and focus groups were held by BCC to engage as many stakeholder groups as possible and their feedback has been included within the consultation. A petition was also received from nursery school which has been included as an appendix to this report.

The proposed changes to the criteria and process as outlined in this consultation has been met, overall, with a positive response, the majority agreeing with the proposed aims and outcomes, whilst also highlighting some areas for debate.

In particular, the **timescale** for making the proposed changes were highlighted as an issue, and although there was acceptance that **English as an Additional Language** was not a good indicator, language acquisition delay in general was seen as a better indicator and one that was preferable.

Where **children are currently accessing a full-time place** and will not proceed to reception class in school in September, there was strong argument and support for the provision of a full-time place to remain.

**Needing clear criteria, which was auditable** was raised. This was particularly important in ensuring consistency of application across the city.

Offering provision within **settings based on quality** was well received.

There was some element of **confusion from parents** regarding this consultation and the current funded full-time places for children in Birmingham as opposed to the **Government's introduction of 30 hours childcare** for working parents as agreed in the Childcare Act 2016 which is due to be implemented in September 2017. A number of the concerns expressed by parents around support for working parents with low incomes will be addressed through the new Government policy.

Overall, the consultation received a positive response, with majority agreement on the proposed changes to the current model of full-time places, but with disagreement on the proposed timescale. The need for quick and timely communication of changes agreed with schools, settings and parents will be key to securing public buy-in and parent engagement in any new model for the provision of full-time places.

**Lindsey Trivett**

*Interim Head of Early Years, Childcare and Childrens Centres*

April 2016