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**Exploring the well-being of the whole child
through the eyes of adult carers.**

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters by Research

Supervisor : Professor Janet Fink

April 2017

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Abbreviations

BERA	British Education Research Association
CWRC	Childhood Well-being Research Centre
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-school Education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
HBSC	Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children
LAEYW	Local Authority Early Years Worker
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Glossary

Change4Life

A campaign by the Department of Health to promote healthy living through diet and exercise.

Cyberbullying

The use of social media, for example, Facebook, to bully others.

Early Years

The period of childhood from birth to eight years. For the purpose of this study, the early years refers to the period from birth to five years.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The period from birth to five years that is covered by the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014). This framework applies to early years settings including school reception classes.

Early Years Practitioners

Those who work in any early years setting, for example, pre-school practitioners, nursery nurses, childminders and reception class teachers.

Key Stage 1

The first two years of compulsory education from the age of five to seven.

Local Authority Early Years Workers (LAEYW)

Those who work in local authority services that support families with children from birth to five and provide support for pre-schools and the early years departments (reception class) of local primary schools.

Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills which is the regulatory body for pre-schools and schools.

Pre-schools

Ofsted registered day care settings that provide education and care for children aged two to five years.

Prime Areas

Physical development; personal social and emotional development; communication and language are the prime areas of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014).

Save Childhood Movement

A charitable organisation that raises awareness about the pressures that undermine the natural development of children.

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Abstract

Through the eyes of adults caring for children in homes, pre-schools and in the wider early years community, this study uses a phenomenological approach to explore the meanings and understandings of child well-being in the early years. The study examines the possible links between adult understandings of child well-being and their provision of environments suitable for supporting children's well-being and explores how child well-being is viewed by adults in the context of the current early years education framework (DfE, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the thoughts and feelings of the participants through their experiences of caring for children. Analysis of the data suggests that there is a close link between child well-being and the environment. Factors such as the influence of everyday practices, relationships and the knowledge of children and their development are also significant. This study not only adds to what has already been written about child well-being, but reveals new understandings of the concept. The study findings introduce original insights into the impact that multiple meanings and understandings have on the way adults provide environments that support children's well-being in the early years.

Key Words : well-being; child; early years; environment; adult carers

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This study explores child well-being through the eyes of adult carers in three environments – the home, the pre-school and the wider early years community. The aims of the study are :-

- To explore adult experiences and understandings of children’s well-being in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision;
- To use Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of human development to analyse the relationship between adult meanings and understandings of child well-being and the creation of environments for children that support their well-being;
- To examine how well-being is valued by adults who care for children in the early years in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision.

After completion of my BA (Hons) in Early Years, I began to question some aspects of everyday practice in the pre-school setting that I managed. I became concerned about the distress that some children showed when they first entered pre-school, particularly when they were separated from their mothers. I felt uncomfortable that whilst they were still crying, children were prised from their mother’s arms and often spent long periods sobbing, or screaming with anger. This situation was occurring more frequently with the increase in the number of children under three accessing the setting following the introduction of early years funding for disadvantaged two year olds (Children & Families Act, 2014). I was also concerned about the growing emphasis of early years education policy on outcomes, for example, school readiness and baseline testing (DfE, 2014). An increasing amount of my time was spent producing data, particularly around targeted groups, for example, disadvantaged children. During an Ofsted inspection, the inspector’s priority for a new frightened 4 year old Kurdish asylum seeker was not how to support his emotional well-being but whether he was making progress towards the learning goals. I was reluctant to believe that despite investing time in making this little boy feel less fearful, we had apparently failed him. This prompted feelings of frustration that education policy was forcing children along a path towards expected academic achievement for which they were not always developmentally ready, described by Steve Biddulph as “like ripping a rosebud to try to get it to blossom.” (Biddulph, 2001, p.xvi).

Sir Al Aynsley-Green, the first Children’s Commissioner, challenges the the UK’s negative attitude towards children and the potential impact that such an environment has on their well-being. Having been awarded the scholarship that bears his name, I was given the

opportunity to find out more about adult meanings and understandings of child well-being and how these shape the provision of environments for children by carrying out this research.

Some early years experts are questioning whether the current emphasis on outcomes in current education policy (DfE, 2014) conflicts with early years pedagogy (Katz, 2011; Save Childhood Movement, no date). Similar concerns are expressed in the limited amount of research around child well-being in the early years. Roberts (2011) identifies a tension between workforce development and the developmental needs of children that hinders early years practitioners in providing rich situations and experiences that promote a holistic approach to children's well-being. This also highlights the challenging path that early years practitioners and early years teachers are beginning to tread between political rhetoric and professional practice. Campaigns against an outcomes approach call for more evidence based policy making for the early years but also express concerns about the erosion of childhood (Leach, 2011; Save Childhood Movement, no date) opening up a wider discourse on children's well-being.

As part of this wider discourse, UNICEF report extensively on children's well-being across the world. Children's rights as individuals in society, were first established in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989). The Convention also acknowledges the importance of the family and that children will grow up to live independently as adults (UNICEF, 1989). In the early years, children are heavily dependent on adults to provide suitable environments in which to grow, develop and learn, but in 2007, UNICEF's *Innocenti Report Card 2007* ranked the UK at the bottom of a table of 21 rich countries for children's well-being (UNICEF, 2007). The 2011 report showed that some progress had been made, positioning the UK 16 out of 29 rich countries (UNICEF, 2011) but more work needed to be done. Many of the indicators of child well-being used in these large scale surveys relate to the homes, schools and neighbourhoods in which children are living, establishing a close link between child well-being and the environment (UNICEF, 2007 & 2011). If adults are to provide environments that support child well-being effectively, adult meanings and understandings of child well-being therefore need to be established.

In academic research, there is an on-going debate about how child well-being is conceptualised (Axford, 2009; Lippman, Moore & McIntosh, 2011; Raghavan & Alexandrova, 2015). The literature focuses principally on measurement and the ability to make comparisons between nations, drawing on data that centres on the experiences of older children (Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009; Ben-Arieh, 2010). The limited amount of research around well-being in the early years calls for a deeper understanding of what well-being actually is (Mashford-Scott, Church & Tayler, 2012). A deeper understanding of the concept also has

positive implications for practice (Roberts, 2011). The Childhood Well-being Research Centre (CWRC) reported in 2010 that child well-being had a weak theoretical basis, that data was limited and children under 8 were generally excluded (Statham & Chase, 2010). This study therefore contributes to addressing this identified gap in child well-being research.

In early years education and care, there have been considerable changes since the Labour Government's (1997-2010) *Every Child Matters* suite of policies in 2003 (DfES, 2003) and its commissioning of the *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project* (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004). The *EPPE Project* found that good quality pre-school experiences have a positive impact on children's overall development and that this is significant for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It firmly identified early years education and care as crucial to improving longer term outcomes for children. Subsequently, free early years education and care places were introduced (DfES, 2006) followed by the first statutory framework for early years education (DCSF, 2008). The subsequent Coalition Government (2010-2015) responded to calls for early intervention (Allen, 2011; Field, 2010) investing in childcare for two year olds and introducing the Two Year Check into a revised Early Years Foundation Stage framework (DfE, 2014). The current Conservative Government continued to fund free childcare places with plans to extend this investment further, however, local authorities are now facing budget cuts, as the Government wrestles with the challenge of tackling social inequalities in the face of economic uncertainty (HM Treasury, 2016).

Child well-being is closely linked with economic disadvantage. In 2014/15, some 3.9 million children in the UK were living in poverty, representing a 200,000 increase on the previous year's figures (McGuinness, 2016). In January 2016, David Cameron, the Prime Minister at that time, announced that the Government's social and economic reforms would focus on life chances with the intention of bringing families out of poverty (The Prime Minister's Office & The Rt Hon David Cameron, 2016). This would be achieved in part by extending free child care to 30 hours a week for families where both parents are working (DfE, 2015), increasing the amount of time children might spend away from home. This raises the question of whether the Government is really concerned about the well-being of all children or just those who come from poor and disadvantaged families and threaten the growth of the economy.

Monitoring the future well-being, or well-becoming, of children is closely linked to social policy as the Conservative Government seeks to assess policy effectiveness in terms of economic growth. In March 2016, Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education at the time, made the Government's approach very clear by stating "We will set high expectations for every child, ensuring that there are no forgotten groups or areas and we will focus on

outcomes.”(DfE, 2016, p.3). There has been no further development in early years education policy since this announcement which may be due to the new Prime Minister Theresa May having to respond to issues around Britain leaving the European Union.

Moving on to the structure of the thesis, as stated above, this study explores adult experiences and understandings of children’s well-being and the relationship between their understandings of the concept and their creation of environments for children. In the context of the EYFS framework, the study also examines how child well-being is valued by adults who care for children in the home, pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision.

In the next chapter the literature around children’s well-being published since 2003 is reviewed. This is framed by two similar reviews, one in 2003 (Pollard & Lee, 2003) and the other in 2014 (Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014) and is divided into three parts. The first part provides an overview of the literature, particularly the challenges in finding publications that were most relevant to the study. The second section of the review examines the limited contribution the literature makes to adult understandings and meanings of child well-being and the lack of theory surrounding it. Finally, the chapter discusses two emerging tensions – the language around child well-being and issues that occur in researching the concept.

Discussing the research methodology, chapter three outlines the philosophy behind this small scale qualitative study that uses a phenomenological approach to explore the concept of child well-being. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is used as a theoretical framework for the study and this is explained in detail. The research methodology is guided by the following questions:

- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers understand children’s well-being and the factors that influence it?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers use their understanding of child well-being to provide environments for children that support their well-being?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers view child well-being in the context of the EYFS framework?

The chapter discusses the data collection methods including the study sample and the recruitment of participants. In keeping with the phenomenological approach, an account of the position of the researcher is also given, followed by reflection on the reliability and validity of the study. Issues of confidentiality and ethics are also discussed.

The data analysis and findings are discussed in chapter four. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is used to structure the participants' experiences of child well-being within the three environments that they represent – the home, the pre-school and the wider early years community. The chapter also examines the adult experiences of child well-being during the transition between the three environments, namely starting pre-school and beginning school. This reflects the dynamic nature of Bronfenbrenner's model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as the child and the environment adapt to and influence each other. The chapter is concluded by stating how the research questions have been answered.

The final chapter draws together the conclusions of the research by reviewing the study and identifying its key findings before going on to make recommendations and suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2 - A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The literature review is divided into three sections. First I will provide a broad overview and then go on to discuss how the literature contributes to constructing meanings and theorising child well-being. I will then turn to the two tensions that emerged from the literature, the language of child well-being and approaches to child well-being research. This structure reflects the study aims which are:

- To explore adult experiences and understandings of children's well-being in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision;
- To use Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development to analyse the relationship between adult meanings and understandings of child well-being and the creation of environments for children that support their well-being;
- To examine how child well-being is valued by adults who care for children in the early years in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision.

2.2 A Broad Overview

From the start of my literature review, it was evident that a vast amount had already been written about children's well-being from a wide range of perspectives across different disciplines which presented a challenge in deciding which publications should form part of the review. A three-phase method of key term search, title review and content review was therefore used to identify the key literature since 2003. Pollard & Lee (2003) and Amerijckx & Humblet (2014) used similar methods in their literature reviews to understand the position of child well-being research between 1991 and 2010, to identify the main debates and find out how the "notion" of child well-being was presented in the literature (Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014, p.404). However, it was difficult to find publications that explored adult understandings and meanings of young children's well-being which is the aim of this study.

As the title suggests, well-being in the context of this study refers to the whole of the child and not one aspect thereof, so a large quantity of literature was excluded from the review as it considered only one element of child well-being. A few reports on children's well-being provide an overview of the concept, but these also focus on measurement or exclude children under the age of eight (Fauth & Thompson, 2009; Statham & Chase, 2010; The Children's Society, 2016). There are three key publications that take a holistic view and give some insight into adult meanings and understandings of children's well-being in the early

years (Manning-Morton, 2014a; Minkkinen, 2013; Roberts, 2011), two of which propose models of child well-being (Minkkinen, 2013; Roberts, 2011).

It is noticeable, therefore, that literature in the area of my research is extremely limited. The remarkable similarities between Pollard & Lee's (2003) and Amerijckx & Humblet's (2014) literature reviews suggest that this situation has not changed over the 20 year period covered by their work. Structuring the review was made difficult by the lack of relevant literature, although some fluid tensions did arise and these will be discussed later in the chapter.

The focus of the literature is principally around measurement with the intention of using existing data sets to find a single index that could be easily used to make national and international comparisons (Ben-Arieh & Fronese, 2011; Bradshaw, Hoelsher & Richardson, 2007; Martorano, Natali, de Neubourg & Bradshaw, 2014). This approach has been aided by advances in technology that have increased the amount of available data and facilitated complex analysis (Ben-Arieh, 2010). Composite indices that draw together a number of separate measures to produce a single number are believed to be the way forward in providing an effective and easily understood format for presenting trends in child well-being and in holding policymakers to account (Ben-Arieh, 2010; O'Hare, 2014). Whilst these consider many aspects of child well-being, they are quantitative in nature and therefore do not explore meanings and understandings of the concept.

Studies that establish adult meanings and understandings of child well-being through lived experiences are lacking, especially in relation to the early years. This small scale study contributes to the filling of this gap in the literature. Focusing more specifically on the study aims, the next section of the review will discuss how the literature contributes to the construction of meanings and the theoretical perspectives that emerged.

2.3 Constructing Meanings of Child Well-being

The first aim of the study is to explore adult experiences and understandings of children's well-being in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision. There are few studies that explore child well-being through the eyes of adult carers and the literature generally makes a limited contribution in terms of researching adult meanings and understandings of the concept.

Writers continue to wrestle with the term well-being, referring to it as "ambiguous" (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012, p.242) and "difficult to describe" (Fauth & Thompson, 2009, p.85). This results in a wide range of inconsistent definitions (Axford, 2009; Pollard & Lee, 2003) with no

clear consensus (O'Hare & Gutierrez, 2012; Minkkinen, 2013). Manning-Morton (2014b, p.174) eloquently describes well-being as "the most slippery and complex of concepts" which captures the multiple meanings that result from its social construction and the struggle to grasp them. The difficulty in articulating what is meant by well-being has implications for my research but by adopting a qualitative approach and using semi-structured interviews, there was an opportunity to probe these difficulties further with participants to arrive at their meanings.

There is agreement in the literature that child well-being is a "broad" (O'Hare & Gutierrez, 2012, p.614), "multi-dimensional" (Martorano et al., 2014, p.248; Statham & Chase, 2010, p.6), "multi-faceted" (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012, p.242), and "holistic" (Roberts, 2011, p.195) concept. Inconsistencies in definition are largely influenced by disciplinary perspectives which can be broadly grouped into social and economic, psychological and mental health, philosophical and educational (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012). Roberts' (2011) holistic approach to child well-being, for example, is written from an educational development perspective which considers the whole child, whereas research by Bastos & Machado (cited in Fernandez, Mendes & Teixeira, 2012) into child poverty in Portugal limits well-being to basic material needs, reflecting the socio-economic perspective of their study. Similarly, in seeking broad socio-economic trends of child well-being O'Hare & Gutierrez (2012) look to a vast array of statistical data. Researchers use terms that reflect the view from which child well-being is being studied. My research, for example, aligns with the approach by Roberts (2011), exploring the well-being of the whole child through the eyes of the adult participants. The existence of multi-disciplinary perspectives therefore presents a challenge when attempting to formulate a meaning that is universally accepted.

Studies relating to measurement tend to explore perceived risk factors rather than experiences of child well-being. For example, Bradshaw et al. (2007) identify a change in family structure as a major event in children's lives that could adversely affect their well-being. They include the data set *Single parent families 2001/02 (HBSC)* within their composite index on the basis that, children from single parent families "tend to have worse outcomes" (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p.156). This does not account for the diversity of single parent families and makes the assumption that the well-being of all children from single parent families is adversely affected. The resulting league table is described as giving "a picture of children's overall well-being in the European Union" (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p.133), but I would contest this claim on the grounds that the data sets relate to risk factors with only limited use of subjective reporting. Whilst I accept that such indices are useful to monitor social policy, they provide a summary of the existence of multiple risk factors and

not an account of children's experiences of well-being. The league table tells us that children living in Latvia and Estonia are at greater risk of reduced levels of well-being than those who live in the Netherlands and Sweden but cannot claim that children's well-being in Sweden is higher than in Latvia.

There is a marked difference in approaches towards definition between the larger quantitative and the smaller scale qualitative studies. Despite saying that "description is the first step in developing science", O'Hare & Gutierrez (2012, p.610) state that by being clear about the nature of the quantitative data, it speaks for itself and is "often clearer than words" (O'Hare & Gutierrez, 2012, p.614). In contrast, the smaller scale studies include a definition, even if it is only in limited form. Situating her study in early years practice, Roberts (2011, p.198) is concise in her definition of child well-being, equating it to "normal development". In the London Metropolitan University/National Children's Bureau Project *Talking about Young Children's Well-being* the following more extensive definition is given:

Well-being is a state that is dynamic and mutable and for which predisposing factors and experiences are necessary. These factors interact, combine and accumulate to enable or preclude experiencing states of well-being. In this way, factors that are internal/subjective may be enhanced or exacerbated by external social, economic and policy factors and our interpretation and engagement with social factors are influenced by our inner well-being.
(Manning-Morton, 2014c, p.13)

Despite these contrasting definitions, there is a need to emphasise what is meant by child well-being in these small scale studies. Building on the ideas of Roberts (2011) and Manning-Morton (2014c), the meanings and understandings of child well-being constructed by the participants will be made clear at the beginning of chapter four. Establishing these meanings and understandings through an iterative process of analysis will provide a strong basis upon which to analyse how they are used to shape environments for children.

Moving on to the second aim of the study which relates to theory. There is an absence of a unifying theory around child well-being in the literature. Evidence of this is found in the use of a number of theoretical models applicable to specific disciplines, for example, the use of *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* in connection with child health (Underdown, 2007). In the following section I will discuss the contribution that the literature makes to the use of theoretical frameworks in child well-being research, notably the use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that is used as the theoretical framework for this study.

2.4 Theorising Child Well-being

There is a distinct lack of theorising around child well-being which results from the existence of multiple meanings and understandings. Axford's (2009) five point approach that explores children's needs, children's rights, poverty, quality of life and social exclusion to gain a better understanding of the multidimensionality of child well-being is widely cited, but his approach is specifically aimed at the development of social policy. Some of these five points appear in other frameworks but these run alongside each other rather than building towards a unified theory. O'Hare & Gutierrez (2012) add broader paradigms, such as the sociology of childhood and the social policy context. Fleeting references to theories drawn from other disciplines, principally developmental psychology, are made when discussing single dimensions of child well-being, for example, Bowlby with regard to early relationships, and Piaget, Vygotsky and Erikson in connection with cognitive development (Lippman et al., 2011; Minkkinen, 2013; Underdown, 2007).

Some researchers look to the child's surroundings to explain its multidimensional nature, arguing for an inextricable link between child well-being and the environment. Both Roberts (2011) and Minkkinen (2013) argue that whilst the environment has a strong influence in the early years, the rapid developmental progress that children make during this period cannot be ignored. They therefore use Bronfenbrenner's ecological model complemented with ideas from the field of developmental psychology to form structural frameworks for the well-being of younger children. I take a similar theoretical approach. In their early years, I understand children to be reliant on adult relationships for making sense of the world, so social and emotional development is significant at this time. This developmental process is taking place whilst the child is experiencing their immediate environment. I therefore use Bowlby's work on attachment behaviour (Bowlby, 1958 & 1965), positioned within and complementing Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

John Bowlby (1907-1990) developed his attachment theory in his seminal *Attachment & Loss* trilogy (Bowlby, 1997, 1998a and 1998b) by exploring the positive effects of maternal attachment, the anxiety and anger of maternal separation and the sadness and depression of maternal loss. The main thread of Bowlby's attachment theory is maternal deprivation. Bowlby's critics, mainly from a feminist stance, question the origins of maternal deprivation, as the majority of Bowlby's research involved a permanent or long term lack of a mother as opposed to having a mother who is generally distant or periodically absent. This in turn suggests that it is not appropriate to consider any maternal separation as detrimental (Oakley, cited in Holmes, 2014). However, I will be focusing on Bowlby's earlier works where

he explores the nature of the mother and child bond and the behaviours that children exhibit when this is compromised (Bowlby, 1958 & 1965).

The need to be close to the mother ebbs and flows as the child matures but Bowlby (1958) stresses that the degree to which this occurs is influenced by the environment. When children entered new environments, the participants in my study experienced clinginess, the need to be close by and crying when children were frightened or distressed. Using Bowlby's theory as a lens through which to interpret this behaviour, this response is typical at times of separation (Bowlby, 1958). The participants in my study, especially the mothers, became particularly concerned about children's well-being during times of separation. This often coincides with periods of transition, bringing attachment behaviours and ecological transitions together, linking the theories of Bowlby (1958 & 1965) and Bronfenbrenner (1979). Ecological transition and attachment behaviour will be discussed further in chapters three and four.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), explained fully in chapter three, is frequently mentioned in the literature in relation to child well-being research and provides a theoretical framework for my study. Adults living and working in the home, pre-school settings and local authority early years provision provided me with a lens to explore meanings of child well-being and analyse the relationship between these and the provision of environments that support children's well-being in the early years. I have used the model to explore the adult experience of the dynamic relationship between the developing child and the environment, particularly during periods of transition. This was complemented with Bowlby's theory of attachment as explained above.

Returning to the literature more generally, I will now discuss the two tensions identified in the literature that were mentioned earlier. The language of child well-being and issues surrounding research into the concept build on the five dichotomies identified by Amerijckx & Humblet (2014) - positive versus negative; objective versus subjective; state versus process; material versus spiritual and individual versus community. The tensions I have identified differ in that they are not diametrically opposed but are fluid, with differing views positioned on a scale between the two extremes. These tensions broadly relate to the final aim of the study which is to establish how child well-being is valued.

2.5 The Language of Child Well-being

The state of 'being well' suggests that positive language would be used to describe child well-being and that any measurement would use positive indicators, so a negative approach in child well-being research is initially puzzling to me. However, 'being well' has been linked

in the past with physical well-being and general health, where negative indicators, such as low weight and the existence of disease prevailed (Waters, 2014). As advances in medicine have been made, there has been a shift in well-being discourse away from cure and survival towards disease prevention and quality of life, attributed to an increased interest in healthy living during the 1990s (Ben-Arieh & Frones, 2011) which continues today (DoH, no date). Two major studies in the USA by Land et al. and Lippman et al. (cited in Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014) found evidence of an emerging shift in research towards a focus on what makes children thrive. In the UK, a similar shift was identified by the CWDC in 2010 (Statham & Chase, 2010) however, the literature I reviewed provides little evidence that this trend has continued.

In the media, articles are accompanied by headlines that depict a poor image of child well-being in the UK and use league tables to emphasise how badly the country is faring (BBC, 2015; Granleese, 2016; Owen, 2011). Former Prime Minister David Cameron's commitment to improving the life chances of all children focused on poverty and disadvantaged groups, perpetuating a negative discourse (The Prime Minister's Office & The Rt Hon David Cameron, 2016). This feeds the culture of blaming those who rely on benefits, are unemployed or are failing to thrive, eloquently described in *Chavs* by Owen Jones (Jones, 2012). In the USA, Lippman et al. (2011) deplore the constant mention in the media of factors that portray a desperate social situation and the way in which this undermines public interest in positive measures. They hope that society becomes more interested in what makes children thrive and for the media to be used to educate the public into adopting good, preventative behaviours (Lippman et al., 2011). *Change4Life* (DoH, no date) is an example of how positive campaigns are being used to tackle the physical well-being problem of obesity in the UK, but it is not always possible to maintain a positive emphasis as some social problems are inherently negative. In 2013, the Chief Medical Officer chose to focus her Annual Report on mental health in England, including children and young people (DoH, 2014). The report makes grim reading, identifying digital culture, bullying (including cyber-bullying), suicide and self-harming as key issues linked to a rise in mental health issues amongst children and young people (DoH, 2014). The data used in the report excludes children under five but asserts that similar trends to those of primary school age are found in younger children. These early warnings of a new set of child well-being related problems, that are not exclusive to those living in poverty and disadvantage, now appear to have been overlooked (DoH, 2014; The Prime Minister's Office & The Rt Hon David Cameron, 2016). Musgrave (2013, p.69) attributes this developing trend to "the effects of competitive education, family breakdown and commercial marketing on children". The ability to take a positive view of child well-being might therefore be a challenge to a government faced with a

wealth of social problems, limited spending and a short time frame to effect change. The resistance to positive indicators might also be attributed to quantitative researchers viewing them as “squishy” and “soft” as opposed to robust statistical data that is more convincing to stakeholders (Lippman et al., 2011, p.429; Raghavan & Alexandrova, 2015). Whilst I support a focus on what makes children thrive, tensions do exist because of inherently negative issues such as illness and disease. In my study, participants used both positive and negative language in their meanings and understandings of child well-being.

The literature establishes a link between a positive approach to child well-being and theoretical frameworks, particularly in small scale studies. Childhood is acknowledged as a period of intense growth and development which cannot be ignored when examining child well-being (Fauth & Thompson, 2009; Pollard & Lee, 2003). Child development, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, also features prominently in the data from my study. Associated child development theories must therefore be acknowledged. In a broader context, a positive approach upholds the duties under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to afford children human rights to life and to grow up in “an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding” (UNICEF, 1989, p. 3) and supports theories around the sociology of childhood and social capital (Lippman et al., 2011). However, O’Hare & Gutierrez (2012) identify a particular tension between science and policymakers. The proposed introduction of free early education and care for 30 hours a week for working parents from September 2017 (DfE, 2015) is an example of how policy can challenge child development theory, in this case, the importance of a child’s attachment to their mother in the early years. Similarly, political ideology can have a strong influence on early years practice, sometimes conflicting with practitioner pedagogy.

At the negative end of the spectrum, child well-being is conceived as problem-focused, with an emphasis on what is lacking, while researchers who adopt a positive approach are strength-focused, highlighting favourable qualities. However, both approaches are closely linked to the conceptualisation of child well-being which is complicated by the existence of multiple understandings. In the early years, well-being is closely linked to the mastery of skills which brings child well-being research and child development theory together. Fuelled by negative media stories, child well-being is sometimes at the centre of tensions between research and politics, as issues of the modern world, such as cyber bullying, present new challenges.

Finally, I will discuss issues relating to research methodology, notably, the tensions between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

2.6 Researching Child Well-being

In the last 40 years, child well-being research has been dominated by quantitative studies that use large scale surveys and data sets to monitor social policy. This quantitative approach conflicts with qualitative ontology where well-being is understood to be viewed as an inherently experiential concept that is best explored using data based on real life experiences. A report by the CWDC in 2010 identified signs of a shift towards the use of more subjective data and the direct involvement of children and young people in well-being surveys (Statham & Chase, 2010). This report also revealed that adults and children understand well-being differently (Statham & Chase, 2010) which highlights the importance of outlining the meanings and understandings of child well-being held by participants in research studies of this kind.

Government measures, for example, the *Index of Multiple Deprivation*, have been criticised for not taking into account subjective views about the factors they include, for example, how people feel about their community and neighbourhoods (Fauth & Thompson, 2009). This criticism raises tensions around research aims generally and the effectiveness of mixing quantitative and qualitative data. The 13.7% of subjective indicators included in the *Index of Child Well-being in the European Union* (Bradshaw et al., 2007) become lost in a survey that is primarily about identifying risks factors to child well-being. I would argue that the use of qualitative data within otherwise quantitative measures does not support the aims of the research and presents a weak case for using the index as a measure of actual child well-being. This contrasts with the *Measuring National Well-being : Life in the UK 2016* survey which uses mainly qualitative data to explore older children's personal experiences of well-being in Britain (ONS, 2016). However, I observed that in the *Measuring National Well-being :Life in the UK 2016* survey, quantitative data sets are used in areas that, in my experience, are causes for concern, namely, obesity; disability; mental health; enjoyment of sports and arts activities; the impact of living in poverty and disadvantage; and academic testing. This might suggest that this Conservative Government appears reluctant to hear from children or their adult carers about these topics, relying on quantitative data rather than exploring them through experiences, thoughts and opinions.

The *Index of Child Well-being in the European Union* (Bradshaw et al., 2007) and the *Measuring National Well-being : Life in the UK 2016* survey present information about two facets of child well-being – the visible influencing factors, for example, housing quality, and the less visible personal experiences, for example, happiness and satisfaction. Whilst these types of survey reveal the different facets of child well-being and adopt contrasting research methods, they could be looked at together to produce a fuller picture of child well-being. By

affording both sets of data equal weight in their analysis and findings, patterns, trends and comparisons could be made between the two types of survey to provide a richer understanding of child well-being experiences and the impact of environmental factors.

The call for using more real life experiences in child well-being research (Fauth & Thompson, 2009; Martorano et al., 2014; Mashford-Scott et al., 2012) appears to relate to hearing what people have to say about the experience of child well-being rather than examining factors that might affect child well-being. Bradshaw & Keung (2011, p.91) remind us that “What children say about their lives matters.” However, it is clear from the literature that the views of children under 10 are rarely sought, with the majority of well-being research involving children aged 10 to 15 (Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009; Manning-Morton (2014c); Mashford-Scott et al., 2012; ONS, 2016; Statham & Chase, 2010), deeming those under 10 to be too young to engage with the level of information required (O’Hare & Gutierrez, 2012). This situation prevails in the UK today, resulting in 7,431,000 children, or 11.8% of the UK population, potentially excluded from well-being research (ONS, 2013; ONS, 2016). This prompts the question whether methodological challenges are preventing researchers from exploring the well-being of children under 10.

It is also noticeable that well-being literature relating specifically to the early years is particularly lacking with the most recent child well-being surveys offering limited data for this age group (ONS, 2016; The Children’s Society, 2016). There are challenges in collecting data from children in their early years because during this period, skills in communication, emotional regulation and making relationships are still developing. Some believe that the image held of the child as “immature or lacking insight” and being “incapable of speaking on their own behalf” hampers research in this area (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012, p.240). Researchers have attempted to explore child well-being through adult/child relationships (Mashford-Scott et al., 2012; Roberts, 2011), however, I intended to take a different approach.

As I have already mentioned in chapter one, the rationale for this study was my curiosity about adult shaped environments and their effect on children’s well-being. Roberts (2011) revealed the importance of the rich experiences and well-being play that adults provide through the environments they create, reinforcing the link between the environment and child well-being. My strategy therefore was to explore adult meanings and understandings of child well-being, not as a means of getting at children’s experiences of well-being, but as a way of understanding the rationale behind the adult provision of environments that support children’s well-being. Talking to adults who provide homes, pre-school settings and local

authority early years provision provided me with a lens through which adult understandings of child well-being could be explored, an approach that was missing from the literature.

2.7 Conclusion

There is an abundance of child well-being literature, the majority of which is focused on measurement, with few publications that relate to adult meanings and understandings of child well-being. There is a lack of research concerning well-being in the early years and this age group is generally poorly represented in the literature as a whole. Theorising child well-being and agreeing on its meaning and understanding are problematic areas. Pollard & Lee (2003, p.64) warn that without a “consistent, unified definition of well-being” measurement and comparing findings will continue to be a challenge. The literature demonstrates how a multitude of environmental factors contribute to the complexity of child well-being as a concept, confounding meaning. The review has identified fluid tensions within the literature that are concerned with the use of language and different epistemological standpoints. My research addresses the gaps in the literature around adult meanings of children’s well-being by drawing together the experiences of adults caring for children in three different environments. The study also analyses the rationale for creating environments for children that support their well-being and examines how adult carers value child well-being in the context of the EYFS framework.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Having established that there is a gap in the literature around adult meanings and understandings of children's well-being, this chapter explains the philosophy behind my research and the methods used. This small scale phenomenological study uses semi-structured interviews to explore children's well-being through the eyes of adult participants who care for children in three different early years environments. These three environments provided me with a lens through which I could view different adult experiences and understandings of child well-being. The study takes a holistic view of the child, echoing the multidimensionality of the concept in the literature (Martorano et al., 2014; Statham & Chase, 2010).

The research methodology is guided by the following questions :-

- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers understand child well-being and the factors that influence it?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers use their understanding of child well-being to provide environments for children that support their well-being?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers view child well-being in the context of the EYFS framework?

The study took place in a town in the North of England which has a varied geography and a diverse population in terms of ethnicity and social stratification. This enabled me to reflect a diversity of experiences of children's well-being in the data. However, the exploration of child well-being within one small area would not be sufficient to capture the full picture of the phenomenon.

3.2. An Interpretivist Philosophy Requiring a Qualitative Approach

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) proposed an alternative theory of knowledge that challenged the prevailing positivist paradigm of the time. His interpretivist philosophy introduced the notion that knowledge comes not from human experiences, but from an understanding and interpretation of those experiences (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The qualitative approach to this study reflects this interpretivist philosophy, relying not on the collection of statistical data but on the understandings of children's well-being voiced by the research participants.

Meanings of the social phenomenon of child well-being are co-constructed by the researcher and the participants through the multiple realities of real life experience (Creswell, 2013), framing the study in the social constructivist branch of interpretivist philosophy.

Social constructivist research examines the views of its participants using methods of inquiry that elicit complex explanations that have been formed through social interactions in time and space. Researchers are aware that their own meanings and interpretations have been similarly shaped and this is acknowledged in the study (Creswell, 2013).

3.3 Epistemological Assumptions

It is important here to outline the philosophical assumptions that underpin this research to provide a framework against which the validity of the research can be judged and give justification to the methodological approach and data collection methods. Carter & Little (2007) propose that this is achieved through a coherent relationship between epistemology, methodology and method.

Firstly, when the researcher enters the social world of the participants, the relationship with them becomes interactive, introducing the possibility that the research will be shaped by the values of the researcher. In acknowledgement that this research cannot therefore be value free, the researcher's views and opinions are made apparent in the study which is referred to as "empathic neutrality" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.13). This represents the middle ground between "value mediated" findings and those that are "negotiated and agreed between the researcher and the research participants" (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.13).

Secondly, there is no single truth about child well-being, as the lived experiences of the participants are context dependent and constantly changing. Whilst similarities may occur, these experiences are unique to each individual participant. Finally, knowledge of child well-being is acquired through induction. The study does not seek to prove or disprove a theory or hypothesis but reveals emerging themes, similarities and differences.

Carter & Little (2007) highlight the influence of epistemology on the choice of methodology and data collection methods. The aim of the study is to further develop an understanding of children's well-being without focusing on a particular event, organisation, culture or change, thus eliminating ethnographic, case study and action research methodologies. The research is not intended to produce a theory of children's well-being nor will it focus on the life stories of the participants, rendering grounded theory and narrative approaches unsuitable.

Langdrige (2007) summarises the four main features of phenomenological research as founded in human experience; focused on meaning; descriptive in nature and mindful of the

role of the researcher, which perfectly capture the epistemological approach and aims of this study.

3.4 A Phenomenological Study

Phenomenology was first developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a supporter of the growing interpretivist philosophy of the time (Gray, 2014; Langdrige, 2007) and emerged as one of social science's "new interpretive theories" in qualitative research in America (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, pp. 22-23). Husserl talked about phenomenology as a "return to the things themselves" (cited in Langdrige, 2007, p.4) stripping away any previous ideas that we may have about a concept and creating a new understanding, found in the experiences of everyday people. Husserl removes any form of reflection, both by the participant and the researcher, stressing the importance of "natural attitude" (cited in Gray, 2014, p.493), the researcher setting aside or "bracketing" (cited in Gray, 2014, p.493) their preconceived notions of the phenomena, ensuring that new understandings are not contaminated by them. The researcher can bracket their ideas by acknowledging them within the study but it is not possible to eliminate their impact entirely. This is explored in more detail later in the chapter.

A phenomenological approach is adopted here to explore the personally constructed meanings of child well-being of a small group of individuals who share the common experience of caring for children in the early years. Langdrige reaches the following conclusion regarding phenomenology :

There is, therefore, no once-and-for-all knowledge to be found about a real knowable world. Instead, we have a focus on our perception of the world and how this is experienced, recognising that this will be differently meaningful to different people and even the same person in a different context.

(Langdrige, 2007, p. 5)

As Gray observes, phenomenological research is not about "looking for answers" (Gray, 2014, p. 30) but seeks to obtain "thick descriptions of people's experiences" (Gray, 2014, p. 30) which result in a better understanding of a concept. This approach shapes the choice of data collection methods that are most effective in eliciting the thick descriptions to which Gray (2014) refers. The methodology and data collection methods that I adopted explored adult experiences of children's well-being as well as the possible influences of the environment.

Langdrige (2007) highlights the role of the environment which is particularly relevant to this study as it aims to understand how meanings and understandings of child well-being shape

the environments that the participants provide either at home or at work. The role of the environment is reflected in the chosen theoretical framework – Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

3.5 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology of Human Development – A Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner developed a theoretical model, the ecology of human development, which he describes as :

The scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21)

Bronfenbrenner refers to the ecological environment as “a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3), describing them using a number of definitions which are often represented by others as a series of concentric circles (Eisenmann et al., 2008).

The inner most ring, the microsystem, is where the development of the child begins through activities and interactions, typically within the home and pre-school setting. These microsystems are shaped by adults who use their own experiences and understandings to provide environments that they believe are best for children to grow, develop and learn in the early years. Bronfenbrenner stresses the importance of experiencing the microsystem as opposed to its mere physical structure. He identifies the home, the pre-school and the local community as the earliest microsystems encountered by children and these are the environments I selected for my study. His examination of pre-school settings as microsystems, acknowledges the early years as a period of rapid growth and development, particularly in personal, social and emotional development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which cannot be ignored when researching children’s well-being (Roberts, 2011; Minkinen, 2013). As I noted in chapter two, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model was complemented in this study by Bowlby’s work on attachment behaviour, acknowledging the phase when young children are particularly reliant on their adult carers in negotiating new environments which coincides with the personal, social and emotional development that occurs within early relationships (Bowlby, 1958 & 1965; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The mesosystem is the next concentric ring and relates to “the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979,

p.25), for example, when a child has friends at home and at pre-school. The mesosystem therefore contains a number of microsystems. Bronfenbrenner acknowledges the influence of phenomenological philosophy, explaining that ecological transitions between systems offer up opportunities for “the systematic study of developmental phenomena” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27). The key transitions for children in the early years are from home to pre-school and from pre-school to school. These transitions were understood by the study participants as periods when child well-being is at its most fragile but at the same time developmentally significant. Bronfenbrenner emphasises the dynamic nature of his model, the role of experiences and how the most meaningful aspects of the environment generate the most powerful influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The exosystem is the next concentric ring and comprises microsystems in which the child does not actually participate but could be influential, for example, parent’s friends and work place. As children are not present in the exosystem, it is not included in this study. The outer ring is the macrosystem which consists of factors that permeate, or could permeate, the other systems, for example, poverty, belief systems and government policy. Bronfenbrenner insists that the macrosystem has no limits to encompass change and development into the future (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The influence of policy is particularly evident in the interviews with pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers (LAEYW), notably with regards to their experiences of working with disadvantaged families. Exploring policy translation with the participants allowed me to examine how child well-being was valued in the macrosystem. Recording these real life experiences was therefore influential in the choice of data collection methods.

3.6 Recruitment & Selection of Participants

The study was situated within three of Bronfenbrenner’s microsystems that influence a child’s well-being namely, the home, the pre-school and the wider early years community. Each group of research participants, three mothers of pre-school aged children, three pre-school practitioners and three local authority early years workers (LAEYWs), represented the three microsystems and acted as lenses through which child well-being was viewed. The sample size was an ideal number for a small scale phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013), providing sufficient data to respond to the research questions within the available time frame.

I gained access to the field by approaching three pre-school setting managers known to me through networks I established whilst working in the local early years sector. Their role was to recruit participants in the mother and pre-school practitioner groups, not to offer their setting as a study site. The managers acted in a similar way to gatekeepers that are used in ethnographic studies to gain access to institutions (Flick, 2009). Positioning a third party

between the researcher and the participants reduced the possibility of researcher bias in the selection process but may have influenced the participant/researcher relationship. This was balanced with a brief to the managers regarding the sampling criteria. I was aware that the managers may have portrayed an image of me as a practitioner or researcher. Other than the willingness to participate and the recruitment criteria I had specified, they may also have had their own reasons for approaching specific potential participants. These effects were mitigated by formally introducing myself and my role to the participants and providing everyone with the same information, which included the aims of the research. Once the participants had been recruited, they contacted me directly to arrange for us to meet.

The LAEYW group was recruited directly as they are local community figures and known to me in my previous practice. They were selected according to their role in providing early years children's services within the local community but with the aim of seeking their personal views and not those of the local authority. Gray (2014) warns of the potential impact of this situation on participants as they could face disciplinary action for voicing criticisms of their employer. This applies to all of the professionals involved so any data relating to their employment has been omitted in order to maintain confidentiality and to protect the participants from harm. Further ethical considerations concerning the recruitment and selection of participants are discussed later in the chapter.

3.7 The Study Sample

The participants were purposefully selected primarily for their common experience of caring for children in the early years and their instrumental role in shaping the microsystems in which children grow, develop and learn. They represent the earliest influences on the developing child and, unified by the overarching influence of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014), have their own understandings and experiences within the three microsystems. It was important to conduct the interviews close together during the same policy framework period to uphold the selection criteria of sharing a common experience. Using the pre-school managers to recruit participants assisted in achieving this. Mothers were selected as, in my professional experience, they are the most influential figures in providing home environments for children in the early years. Pre-school practitioners were selected as providers solely of early years education and care, without any extended services or being part of a broader educational setting. The LAEYWs were selected for their experience of wider community environments such as schools and children's centres. The "purposive representation of 'character'" is particularly relevant to qualitative studies to "represent...features of relevance to the investigation" (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003, p. 83).

Attempts were also made to include as many variations within the sample as possible on the grounds of gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, income, experience, qualifications and profession, which represent the diverse population of the early years community. Maximum variation sampling capitalises on the different perspectives achieved within the data which is “ideal in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). The sample reflects the predominantly female early years workforce and the lack of ethnic diversity at more senior levels. An insufficient command of English proved to be a barrier to recruitment from some ethnic groups and members of the Afro-Caribbean community were reluctant to take part. The maximum variation was otherwise successfully achieved. The sample is shown in Appendix 1.

3.8 The Rationale for Semi-structured Interviews

Focus groups were not considered appropriate for this study. In a group discussion, the views of individuals with varying perceptions may be influenced by other participants and the views of more confident contributors may dominate. As Gray (2014) suggests, this would go against the principles of phenomenological research.

Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow the researcher to enter the world of the participants and explore with them their meanings of child well-being and their experiences of creating environments for children. Reflecting the epistemological assumptions and phenomenological approach to the research, the semi structured interviews focused on five questions that allowed me to freely interact with the participants and generate rich data by delving deeper into their experiences and clarifying their responses. Interviews are usually used to collect data in phenomenological studies (Langdrige, 2007) and these tend to be unstructured (Gray, 2014) to allow the researcher flexibility. Wilson & Sapsford (2006, p.113) argue that unstructured methods create a more natural environment for participants to talk about their everyday lives reducing “procedural reactivity”, which describes the artificial responses that interviewees tend to give when constrained by more structured methods.

The challenge was to elicit data that responded to the research questions whilst minimising what Opie describes as “aimless ramblings” (Opie, 2004, p. 118). Creswell observes that “a good interviewer is a good listener rather than a frequent speaker” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for experiences to unravel with the opportunity to use the questions as an anchor. Significant events, for example, the devastating impact of a child’s illness, a mother’s post-natal depression and a child’s aggressive behaviour in pre-school, were crucial in providing a framework for understanding.

3.9 Piloting the Interview Questions

The transcript of the pilot interview identified two issues with my interviewing technique, namely the tendency to rephrase questions in several different ways and the potential to lead participants. My reflective journal notes that “I was conscious throughout of...the need to make questions meaningful in everyday terms.” Drever (2003) recommends rephrasing questions to fit the participant only if there is evidence of misunderstanding, which proved to be effective. My use of prompts encouraged participants to give examples to clarify their thinking which eliminated the temptation to ask leading questions. The pilot interview concluded that the questions were sufficiently open ended as to not constrain the participants, allowing them to freely articulate responses that met the research aims which, according to Arthur & Nazroo (2003), is the principal aim of piloting qualitative research.

The pilot found that the original approach to policy was cumbersome as it involved reading through information during the interview. This was subsequently replaced with a sheet containing the five main themes from the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014) which were learning and development; key person; working with parents; assessment and school readiness. In this way, the participants were able to freely explore each theme.

3.10 The Interview Location & Schedule

As representatives of the three specific study environments, I anticipated that the mothers would prefer to be interviewed at home and the professionals in the workplace, however, some preferred to be removed from the environment they represented. This might have been more convenient for them, but may also have been a means of negotiating a position of power in the interview. Giving the participants the choice of venue allowed them to define the boundaries within which they felt able to express their opinions. It is possible that by being interviewed at work, one of the practitioners tended to take a corporate stance, finding it difficult to separate her personal opinions from those promoted by her pre-school setting.

As a relatively inexperienced researcher, I chose to prepare a schedule that provided me with a structure for the interviews, an approach discouraged by Mason (2002) who recommends the skill of recalling the research aims during the interview. However, as Corbin & Strauss (2008) argue, I was confident that the use of a written schedule would ensure that the research questions were addressed and although the interview questions were written into the schedule, I was able to probe deeper if needed. The interview schedule, which was piloted beforehand, therefore enabled me to conduct the interviews comprehensively including the appropriate use of time, prompt materials and recording equipment (see Appendix 2).

3.11 The Use of Prompt Materials

The prompt materials, a set of photographs of children at play, were intended to act as a stimulus, a technique used with focus groups to stimulate conversation about the subject (Denscombe, 2014). The pilot participant observed a connection between the images and her positive experience of childhood which linked appropriately to child well-being. The photographs unexpectedly revealed participant reflections on and comparisons between their own childhood experiences and modern childhoods, illustrating the impact of personal experience on socially constructed phenomena. The prompt materials did not appear to influence the content of the recorded interviews as participants focused on the well-being of the children currently in their care.

3.12 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using an iterative approach, returning to the content of the interviews several times to seek deeper, alternative meanings. Initially, I listened to the interview recordings and read my field notes to capture a general feel for the data and how it linked with the study aims which are:-

- To explore adult experiences and understandings of children's well-being in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision;
- To use Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development to analyse the relationship between adult meanings and understandings of child well-being and the creation of environments for children that support their well-being;
- To examine how well-being is valued by adults who care for children in the early years in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision.

This provided me with the first level of analysis. I returned to the data by reading the interview transcripts several times to establish the key themes which were gathered together to make comparisons between the individual participants. However, this resulted in an overwhelming number of conflicting ideas that proved to be too cumbersome for further analysis, but the themes of relationships, everyday practices and knowledge of the child and their development became firmly established as a second level of analysis.

The key themes, whilst they remained strong, tended to overlap, making it difficult to explore the similarities and differences between the participants. Having observed that the themes occurred within the home, the pre-school and the wider early years community, but with varied emphasis, I created a third level of analysis by arranging the themes within the three

environments. It was only at this level that the strong contrast in views between the mothers and the professionals became apparent. The final structure of the analysis demonstrated the close fit with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and on reflection, has shown that data cannot be forced into themes of analysis.

3.13 Using a Reflective Diary

I kept a reflective diary during the study to record key thoughts and connections which highlighted my personal standpoint. Reflective journals promote metacognition, allowing researchers to distance themselves from their actions and examine their thoughts (O'Connell & Dymont, 2011). A phenomenological approach demands that the researcher sets aside any preconceived ideas of the subject to allow the phenomena to "speak for themselves" (Gray, 2014, p. 24), resulting in a new, deeper understanding. The reflective journal allowed me to bracket my pre-conceptions, for example, my own ideas about child well-being. I noted "Whilst considering the literature around conceptualising well-being, I fell to thinking about my own definition" but this was not shared with participants at any point in the study.

As an experienced pre-school practitioner, I also harboured pre-conceived ideas concerning pedagogy, practice and policy. Whilst I could identify with the participants, my position as a researcher was now as an outsider looking in. It was essential therefore that I bracketed my own thoughts and attempted to remove them from both data collection and analysis. The data analysis is supported by raw data examples and my personal experiences and views are fully acknowledged.

The journal was particularly useful in venting feelings of frustration and a lack of confidence. Entering the research world involves developing an understanding of philosophy which requires the learning of a new language. Immersion in the research community, by attending forums, sharing experiences with fellow researchers and reading, was crucial in understanding the terminology that sometimes alienates new researchers. However, there were moments recorded in the journal that reinforced these new understandings. Discovering that Bronfenbrenner's ecological model was widely cited in the literature, that well-being is not mentioned in the current EYFS framework (DfE, 2014), that Scandinavian countries are noted for high levels of child well-being and that 'disappointing' interviews resulted in rich data, were moments that boosted my confidence in the research design and my belief in the study as a relevant and valid piece of research.

3.14 The Researcher/Participant Relationship

It is not possible to completely remove the researcher from the data gathering process as a relationship exists between the researcher and the participant. Within this relationship, not only is the interview formed by the researcher, but the interview has a forming effect on the researcher (Gray, 2014).

I was aware that, in my role as a researcher and as a former pre-school manager, the balance of power between me and the participants might vary. As a researcher, I might be deemed to be academically superior to the participants yet it is the participants who are powerful in holding the information that I was seeking (Sikes, 2004). There was little that I could do to change this perception of me except to adopt a friendly, polite manner and demonstrate good listening skills (Denscombe, 2014).

As a former pre-school practitioner, I might have been perceived by the mothers as an authority on what is best for children or representing the establishment. Seeking validation of parenting practices or not wishing to be critical of social policy are examples of how data might be affected by this power differential. This effect was mitigated in the study by my confirmation that I was not seeking to judge participants but to record their thoughts and opinions. Providing reassurance that their opinions were valid and thanking them for their contribution gave participants validation, resulting in more natural and fluent responses.

The relationship with the early years professionals was different. As a former pre-school manager, professionally I held a more senior position than the pre-school practitioners. I observed a reluctance to offer their personal opinions, choosing to offer responses that reflected practice in the setting. However, the opportunity to talk freely about policy broke down these barriers and revealed some of the tensions that existed. Their views about policy were more closely linked to their personal feelings about child well-being.

From my perspective as a former pre-school manager, the power relations were reversed in the LAEYW group as they represented local government where the power to influence budgets and training lies. The interviews were approached in the knowledge that I was seeking their personal views and not those of their employer, addressing these power relations. Participants made a clear distinction between personal and local authority opinions and any data relating to their employment is not included in the data or my analysis of it.

3.15 Reliability & Validity

Hammersley (cited in Lewis & Ritchie, 2003) claims that research is never completely valid as reality is never truly known. In this study, the reality of children's well-being is perceived

differently by the participants, shaped by personal experience, resulting in a concept that changes and develops in time and space.

Reliability relates to the degree to which a study can be replicated. There is a debate in the literature about the degree to which qualitative research can be deemed reliable (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). In this study, the significance of context and the assumption that knowledge consists of multiple realities leads to an emphasis on the rigour of the research design in reaching conclusions about the data rather than replication. Gray (2014) raises concerns about the generalisability of small scale studies, suggesting that replication is secondary to description and analysis where only similar patterns can emerge rather than identical results. The aim of this study is to discover more about adult understandings of children's well-being and its connection with providing environments for children. It would not be possible to replicate the study exactly but carrying out comparable research may result in similar findings.

Newby (2010) expresses the need for transparency in the choice of research design. This study is designed to focus on the phenomenon of child well-being and establishes a justifiable link between its underpinning epistemological assumptions, its phenomenological approach and choice of data collection methods. The interpretation of the data is rooted in direct quotations that provide a descriptive record of participant experiences, incorporating the researcher's reflexive position throughout (Flick, 2009). The reflective journal also gives credibility to this position. Creswell (2013) states that meeting such standards makes for a reliable phenomenological study. The use of an interview schedule, recording interviews for accurate transcription and checking with participants that the transcription accurately reflects their views, increase the validity of the study (Gray, 2014). When analysing the data, care has been taken not to force statements into themes (Creswell, 2013; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003) with unexpected or inconsistent patterns acknowledged and interpreted, demonstrating the validity of the findings.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) raises the issue of ecological validity, the extent to which the environments experienced by the participants marry with the assumptions that the researcher has made about those environments. This raises the question of researcher bias. The choice of location for the interview suggests that feelings of being judged may have existed with participants, especially the mothers. Whilst pre-school settings and local authority early years provision is relatively universal and publicly accessible, home environments are private and likely to be very diverse. Researcher bias towards the participants was mitigated by collecting demographic information at the end, rather than the beginning of the interview. Any prejudgements were acknowledged in the field notes and

bracketed away from the analysis of the data, relying only on the interview recordings and transcripts.

The triangulation of methods improves validity and establishes the research as robust. When the interviews were compared with each other and with the literature, the themes were consistent and similar patterns of meaning emerged. It is reasonable to conclude that this consistency through triangulation deems the study to be reliable (Denscombe, 2014).

3.16 Confidentiality & Ethics

The study was conducted in accordance with the British Education Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2011) and approved by the School of Education and Professional Development's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee. The research was not considered to be of a high risk to participants, who were not deemed to be a vulnerable group. However, steps were taken to ensure that they were not harmed, that they fully consented, their privacy was respected and they were not deceived in any way.

At the recruitment stage, participants were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix 3) that explained the research project and their involvement in it. The information clearly stated that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. This was reinforced at the start of the interview and later, when the participants were sent their interview transcript. Written consent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix 4) and none of them withdrew from the study at any point.

Confidentiality has been maintained throughout by anonymising data, so that individuals and their workplaces cannot be identified. The pilot interview also confirmed that confidentiality and anonymity could be preserved with mothers (Opie, 2004) but particular care had to be taken with professionals. Any data that relates to their employment has therefore been omitted from the study to protect professionals from the risk of disciplinary action. By providing copies of the interview transcripts, participants could decide if any of the data should not be included. One participant withdrew some parts of her interview and these have not been included in the study, respecting her wishes (BERA, 2011). The anonymised data has been stored safely and the recordings destroyed. The participants had the option of answering some personal questions to establish their social and economic positions and they all volunteered this information.

The participants were not coerced into participating in the study. The participant information sheet was included in the pilot interview and was found to be easy to understand and accurately reflected the study aims and the commitment required by participants. The data

collection process was transparent and data analysis was substantiated by direct quotations from the participants.

Chapter 4 - Data Analysis & Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on the data collected to undertake this study of child well-being and it uses Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), set out and explained in chapter three, as a framework for their analysis. Discussion is guided by the questions that have underpinned my research :

- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers understand child well-being and the factors that influence it?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers use their understanding of child well-being to provide environments for children that support their well-being?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers view child well-being in the context of the EYFS?

I will analyse the data using a similar structure to Bronfenbrenner's model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), viewing the home, the pre-school and the wider community as nested rings within which child well-being occurs. Relationships, everyday practices and knowledge of the child and their development are three emergent themes that feature to varying degrees within each of these three contexts. Structuring the analysis in this way allows for comparisons between environments to be made, but at the same time providing an additional layer of analysis of the three themes. The structure of this chapter places greater emphasis than Bronfenbrenner's model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) on the dynamics between environments. By addressing the transition into pre-school and the transition into school under separate headings, I add two further nested rings to the structure of the analysis.

First, I will examine the construction of meaning by the participants. Meanings of child well-being constructed by the participants through their experiences within the home, the pre-school and the wider early years community are central to this study and are present in all three of the study environments. Meanings of child well-being are perceived as the core of the data analysis framework, similar to Bronfenbrenner's positioning of the developing child at the centre of his ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.2 Meanings and Understandings of Child Well-being

Participants in the study constructed their meanings and understandings of child well-being through their real life experiences as individuals as well as in the different roles of mother, pre-school practitioner and LAEYW. All of the participants have experienced childhood and some of the professionals will also be mothers. Their stories provided a framework for meanings to emerge, although final conclusions about the concept of child well-being proved to be difficult to reach. The struggle to conceptualise child well-being was palpable during the interviews and was further highlighted when transcribing the data. The number of hesitations, frequent changes in direction of thought and unfinished sentences demonstrated how difficult it was for participants to articulate their meanings and understandings, however, some common themes emerged.

Analysis of the data revealed that the participants constructed their meanings around three core dimensions – physical well-being, personal and emotional well-being, and social well-being. Physical well-being included “welfare”, “health” and being “comfortable” while social well-being referred to “having friends”, “feeling at ease”, being “confident in the surroundings and with the [sic] people” and “belonging”. Personal and emotional well-being was the most frequently mentioned dimension and included being “content”, “satisfied”, “safe”, “confident” and “secure”. Participants also associated personal and emotional well-being with feelings of “self-worth” and “happiness”. These dimensions not only confirm the multi-dimensional aspect of child well-being identified in the literature (Fauth & Thompson, 2009; Minkkinen, 2013; Raghavan & Alexandrova, 2015) but also represent the three main disciplines of health, psychology and sociology within which many of the child well-being discourses are situated (Ben-Arieh & Frones, 2011; Mashford-Scott et al., 2012; Underdown, 2007).

The concept of happiness featured strongly in attempts to define child well-being. Participants described happiness as an emotional state that resulted from feeling either physically comfortable, emotionally secure or socially at ease, demonstrated by children through their demeanour and behaviour. Whilst these descriptions of happiness mirror the core dimensions of child well-being mentioned above, I would argue that there is a subtle difference between the two, an idea that Dawn, a pre-school practitioner, appeared to be wrestling with here:

The term well-being to me means looking at the, the inside of somebody, you know, you know...are...are people happy on the inside, that's the term well-being that means to me, you know.

I think you show happiness...I think you show happiness rather than actually...you can actually, I think that's probably how you can define happiness by, by looking at somebody and observing whether they're happy or sad and what kind of emotions they're feeling and things like that.

...if a child is unhappy then obviously, you know that their well-being...there is something going on with their well-being. *Dawn*

Dawn appears to make a distinction between well-being and happiness. She suggests that happiness results from high levels of well-being and that this is visibly evident in “children’s eyes” and when they are “laughing” and “smiling”. This implies that happiness and well-being occur at two different levels. Emotional responses, with happiness at one end and sadness at the other, are seen to be volatile, whereas well-being, is a more complex, deeper and enduring state that responds more slowly to change. Raghavan & Alexandrova (2015) state that a child may experience moments of happiness, for example, becoming excited at joining in with an activity, but may also be generally unhappy and vice versa which supports the concept of happiness and well-being occurring at different levels. This contrast between happiness and well-being is reflected further in the data, as some participants use happiness to describe momentary changes in emotional state, for example, the excitement of seeing their key person, whereas others express well-being in terms of deeper, longer term feelings of general self-confidence, security, contentment, being loved and feeling at ease. Pre-school practitioner Jill described this depth of feeling when talking about her own childhood :

But it's something that just gives you confidence in yourself, doesn't it, it builds your self-esteem and makes you, sort of, feel secure in yourself. And that feeling of...I can always remember that, that feeling at home where you...I can remember my mum being there, but I didn't have to be with her, I didn't have to be doing anything with her but I can still know that feeling of her being in the house. And it, sort of, gives you that security that you're fine, doesn't it, and that you, you know, you can, you can play, you can do whatever, but you can go and find somebody if you want it and...yeah. The sun's shining and you can go out and...I...all that, sort of, feel good factor I guess. *Jill*

Participants appeared to find it easy to talk about happiness but well-being presented them with a problem as they seemed to be searching, like Jill, for an elusive element to well-being that floated across the three dimensions of physical; personal and emotional; and social development, rendering their meanings incomplete. Participants were aware that there was something missing from their meaning of child well-being that they could not grasp,

supporting Manning-Morton's belief that child well-being is the "most slippery and complex of concepts" (Manning-Morton, 2014b, p.174). Jill chose to call this the "feel good factor". This reinforces the phenomenological nature of the study as child well-being is "differently meaningful to different people and even the same person in a different context." (Langdrige, 2007, p. 5) as discussed previously in chapter three.

While the participants identified common dimensions of child well-being, their individual meanings and understandings of child well-being can only be fully defined when they are able to find their personal elusive element. The study cannot therefore identify one distinct meaning of child well-being as this holds something different for each participant depending on their unique experiences (Langdrige, 2007). However, the study provides a better understanding of the concept and contributes new knowledge of adult meanings and understandings of child well-being in the early years.

I will now discuss child well-being within the three ecosystems used in the study, reflecting Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) viewed the transitions between the systems as important points where development took place as the developing person begins to interact with a new environment. The discussion therefore includes how the experience of transition between environments informs the participants in their understanding of child well-being.

4.3 Child Well-being in the Home

4.3.1 Introduction

The home, and the many different activities within it, was viewed by all of the participants as having a strong influence on children's well-being. The LAEYWs particularly, positioned the home in a similar way to Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) with the child at the centre, then the parents, the home environment and wider outside influences. Julie, a LAEYW, identified the home as one of the most significant environments where relationships allow children to learn rules that equip them as social beings in the future. Maria, a LAEYW, described how the various ecosystems might influence child well-being:

So, obviously, starting at home. So you've got parenting, parenting styles, you've got culture, you've got religion, you've got everything that that child's... brought in to that home environment. *Maria*

4.3.2 Family Life

Claire, a mother, and Sam, a pre-school practitioner, described how different aspects of family life have a positive effect on children's well-being:

family, their family life, if they've got a, you know, settled, settled family life and things...I mean, we're lucky, not, I suppose, everybody, everybody is. We have a really big extended family and we're all close, and things like that, so, as far as we're concerned, probably, we are quite, that side's fine. *Claire*

...just, kind of, their home life...like, things...what's available to them, kind of, food and water and security and comfort [long pause]. And love and all that kind of thing, yeah...and emotional support. *Sam*

This view of the family reflects the core dimensions of physical, social and personal and emotional well-being described by the participants. This implies that the participants value well-being as an essential component of family life. The use of positive language is noticeable. Claire, particularly, stresses the importance of the home and also talks about her daughter being "comfortable" in this environment.

Two of the pre-school practitioners focused on the structure of the family rather than family life as an influencing factor. They perceived families where parents had divorced and remarried, or where unmarried women had children by several partners, as chaotic and damaging to children's well-being. Whilst stigmatising families in this way is problematic, as a former pre-school practitioner, I can identify with the increasing complexity of modern families and how this might impact on the support that early years practitioners offer them. Bradshaw & Richardson's (2009) findings suggest, however, that there is no correlation between well-being and "broken families" (Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009, p.319), emphasising that relationships and everyday practices in the home are more influential. However, it is the role of the mother in children's well-being that features most prominently at times when children are feeling less at ease.

4.3.3 The Role of the Mother

The mothers perceived their role within the family as the person who organises, co-ordinates and maintains the balance of the various activities that take place in the home, in the same way as a conductor might lead an orchestra. Everyday practices, for example, morning routines, eating regular meals, bath time and reading books at bedtime foster feelings of safety and security and played an important part in achieving this balance. The mothers portrayed their role within the family as the provider of a home that anchors its members in a

safe, secure, settled environment where everyone is comfortable and at ease, reflecting their understandings of well-being. The mother's well-being is therefore important in providing a structure for family life that supports the well-being of its members, including the children.

Two of the mothers had the "double burden" of working in a paid job as well as being a housewife and mother (Oakley, 1974, p.95). Duncombe & Marsden add another aspect of a mother's role as called "emotional work" (cited in Haralambos et al., 2013, p.550-551). It was only by probing deeper into the data that this became visible, suggesting that the mothers might not even be aware of it. Two mothers, Emily and Saira, spoke of how they manage to support the needs of everyone in the family, which involves making some difficult choices and decisions:

We'll go to, like, play gyms and stuff and, but we have to try and find one that's suitable for the age gap. *Emily*

Obviously I'm on maternity leave at the minute, but when I got back to work I'm gonna have to work when he's off so it's a bit... *Emily*

There's at times when I've handed her over to Dad and got a good night's sleep, you know, just gone up to bed and let him put her [Zara] to sleep, left her [Zara] over at her Grandma's for a few hours, just so I could do some housework, have a bit of peace myself, with Mira in school, and her [Zara] there. *Saira*

There is a sense that the mothers prioritise the rest of the family above themselves and there is little time available to support their own well-being. Oakley (1974) found that children added to the pressure of getting everything done, causing tension between the roles of housewife and mother (Oakley, 1974). For Emily and her husband, having two incomes was the only way they could provide for their family but this meant that they would see less of each other. Saira called on family members to support her with childcare so that she could complete her work and have some time to focus on her own well-being.

As I have noted previously, the mother's well-being is crucial to the running of the family and supporting the well-being of its members including the children. Adult well-being in this context was only covered briefly in the literature. Underdown (2007) writes about the impact of good maternal pre- and post-natal health on the mother's ability to parent and provide for her children. Manning-Morton (2014d) writes briefly about the well-being of early years practitioners, principally from a professionalism and training perspective, however, she does identify a lack of understanding of children's rights, attachment and well-being. This gap in

the literature reveals a need for further research into the impact of adult well-being on the well-being of children.

4.3.4 Significant Events

Some participants alluded to the effects of unforeseen circumstances that might temporarily upset the smooth running of the home and the well-being of the children. Antonovsky, (cited in Bradshaw et al., 2007) developed the concept of *salutogenesis* where well-being is maintained by an individual's strength and capacity to survive the difficult situations that they encounter in life. This fuels the notion that adult well-being has some foundation in resilience, particularly the resilience of mothers, which can potentially impact on the well-being of the child. Rutter & Smith (cited in Underdown, 2007) identified several factors that promote resilience, including secure attachment and harmonious family relationships.

For the mothers, their experience of significant events in their children's lives was the key factor in understanding children's well-being. When discussing the factors that influence children's well-being, the mothers constructed their meanings and understandings around situations where they believed their child's well-being was compromised. It was only in these situations that the mothers talked about the importance of the mother/child relationship. Claire described well-being as "feel [sic] confident in the surroundings and with the people" and similarly, Emily cited "situations, environments, and people" as the main factors influencing child well-being. Both women described situations where their children displayed behaviours which they associated with reduced levels of well-being:

When they did the Christmas show, she cried hysterical when we were all sat in the audience. She did not want to do it at all, and I had to sit on the stage at the...behind her, to make her sit there, and, I mean, eventually she did join in, but she'd done the dress rehearsal with parents watching absolutely fine, but I wasn't here. *Claire*

So every time the...and they took bloods every day, so every time anyone dressed as a nurse or in that colour, came anywhere near her, before they'd even said what they were gonna do, she got upset and cried and wouldn't...like clung to me and stuff, so she wouldn't...like, so they represent, like, hurting her. *Emily*

The children demonstrated through their behaviour a lack of confidence or fear and this formed part of Claire and Emily's understandings of reduced well-being. They both felt that

new or unusual situations were emotionally challenging for their children, so they regularly supported them by giving comfort and reassurance.

Bowlby proposed that good mental health and personality development were underpinned by the premise that “an infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute – one who steadily ‘mothers’ him) [sic] in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.” (Bowlby, 1965, p.13). Bowlby brings together “sucking”, “clinging”, “following”, “crying” and “smiling” as the main component parts of “attachment behaviour” which begin directly after birth and continue to around the age of three (Bowlby, 1958, p.362). The three mothers constructed meanings of child well-being through their own experiences of attachment behaviour prompted by significant events. Marrone (2014), interpreting the work of Bowlby, states that these behaviours are in response to situations that are unknown to or not fully understood by the child and require the support of a stronger, more experienced person. He says that this is only found in social contexts and follows a “recognisable pattern and predictable course in all human beings” (Marrone, 2014, p. 32). Whilst Marrone’s (2014) view that attachment behaviour is a response to a temporary change in circumstances, Bowlby’s (1958) understanding of attachment behaviour usefully points to a longer term set of behaviours that indicate general levels of mental health, including well-being. Whilst both women use momentary incidents of crying and clinginess as indicators of reduced well-being, they convey an understanding that their children also had generally low levels of social well-being. This is experienced by the mothers through the lack of confidence generally of Claire’s daughter in social situations and the fear of all people in uniform felt by Emily’s daughter. Both mothers fear that these social well-being issues will be long lasting and, as a result, anticipate that their daughters may continue to need extra support from adults caring for them in the future.

Saira constructed her meaning of social and emotional well-being by comparing the impact on her two daughters of her own behaviour within the mother/child relationship as a result of post-natal depression:

I don’t want every stranger to come and pick her [Zara] up, but she’s, she’s confident, she’s secure in the environment. Mira wasn’t. I’d take her somewhere, she’d Mummy, she’d want...she was clin...she was clingy to me, you know, that was a difference. That’s a big difference. The environment of security was that Mira was a lot more clingy to me, she’d want Mummy to feed her, she’d want Mummy to change her, but it’s because she didn’t know anything else and she was so used to Mummy.

But with Zara, a lot difference because when I go over to my parents, she actually hasn't...she sleeps with my Mum in...her travel cot is in my Mum's bedroom, I get to sleep in my own room and my eldest is with my sister in her bed. So actually on the weekend I'm basically baby free! But with Mira I didn't have that, because I wouldn't allow it, and I think that's a difference in within me, and the child [Zara] is much, much more confident. She's able to play, she knows Mummy's gonna come back, so, you know, it makes a hell of a lot of difference. *Saira*

In this extract Saira demonstrates a heightened awareness of her relationship with her two daughters. As a first time mother, Saira was initially unaware that Mira's behaviour indicated over attachment to her mother. In contrast, in the absence of post-natal depression when the mother/child relationship was more relaxed and open, Zara displayed a more easy temperament. Saira blamed herself for this contrast, using these behaviours as positive and negative indicators of social and emotional well-being, when this could have been the result of the two children's different temperaments. Using Bowlby's thesis about attachment behaviour, Mira's initial interest in her mother would be seen as based on her primary need for food and warmth and her built in drive to cling to her mother for survival, both of which are equally powerful (Bowlby, 1958). Bowlby's theory suggests that Mira's social needs only developed when she learned that her mother brought gratification (Bowlby, 1958). Saira's belief that she had inadvertently taught Mira that gratification could not be obtained from others, contributed to her understanding that children are shaped by their mothers, and what they learn within and about the mother/child relationship. This experience prompted Saira to invest heavily in nurturing Mira's relationships with other family members, with positive results. Mira is now a confident three year old, but like the other two mothers, Saira said that she is still cautious and prepares Mira for situations that involve meeting new people.

Whilst Saira responded to visible behaviours to determine her child's well-being she also said "I was very close to her in that sense of her well-being" suggesting that child well-being is not only visible by mothers but can be physically felt within the mother/child relationship. The mothers kept these experiences at the forefront of their minds whenever their children encountered new environments, for example, the pre-school. These periods of transition between home and pre-school and pre-school and school were identified by participants as points where children's well-being was at its most fragile. I will now discuss how the participants responded to the first of these significant transitions.

4.4 The Transition from Home to Pre-school

4.4.1 Introduction

Upon entering pre-school, the adult is now observing the child participating in more than one environment or microsystem – the home and the pre-school. As described in chapter three, the ecosystem that is formed by more than one microsystem is called the mesosystem and transition from home to pre-school is the child's first encounter with it. This "ecological transition" (Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.26) links the mothers and the pre-school practitioners who took part in the study and introduces the notion of sharing everyday practices and knowledge of the child and their development across more than one system. Social interaction now becomes more complex as both the adult and the child begin to make new relationships outside the family. At this point, adults anticipated and prepared for the separation that was to come.

4.4.2 Expectations

The link between the two microsystems is evident in the way the mothers use their understanding of child well-being to shape the choice of pre-school that they make for their children. The mothers sought a pre-school environment that offered the safety and security that they provided for their children in the home, fearing that the wrong choice of setting might compromise their child's well-being. The mothers were less concerned with the physical structure of the environment but focused on the adult/child relationships within the setting and the way the children were looked after. This was captured in Emily's expectations of an early years setting:

Just pretty much the same really. Just make sure she's safe and she's got everything she needs. Obviously, there's all the other children to play with and they go outside and just to make sure if she's fallen over, to give her, like, the same comfort that I'd give her at home. *Emily*

When choosing a setting for her child, Saira rejected a big and apparently chaotic setting in favour of one that was small and calm, with welcoming and friendly staff. She observed that the adults were attentive to the children, spending time with them, often on a one to one basis.

Both women expected that a pre-school setting would provide a safe and secure environment that was similar to their home. Claire recognised that pre-school practitioners were not able to provide one to one care all the time but she expected that there would be someone who would know her child well enough to notice if something was wrong. Some research suggests that aspects of the home should be present in an early years setting (Elfer, Goldschmied & Selleck, 2003). In contrast, Dahlberg et al. (cited in Elfer et al., 2003) argue that the pre-school is not a replacement for the home but a new environment in which

children can experience different kinds of relationships that are not expected to be intimate. However, in this study, the mothers sought a pre-school environment with a homely atmosphere, expecting the adults to have intimate relationships with their children, spending time with them and comforting them when they were hurt. This conflict of ideas around supporting children's well-being in the setting could be the source of tensions between parents and pre-school practitioners, for example, the safeguarding implications of physical intimacy. Multiple understandings of child well-being therefore prompt the question as to how far pre-school settings can meet the individual needs of children and the impact that this might have on mothers.

4.4.3 Preparations

There was a sense in the mothers' interviews that this transition was important as it was the first time that the mothers would leave their child with someone other than family or friends. Saira was also aware that as a result of her over attachment, Mira might have difficulty in making relationships in the future which was evident in her anxiety about leaving Mira at pre-school for the first time:

But I didn't want...this is where the well-being thing comes in...her going into a phase where...I'm thinking... 'My Mum's just dumped me here.' She needs to be able to enjoy where's she's going because that's going to be more effective for her learning and she'll be a more happy child. *Saira*

Claire expressed similar concerns, knowing that her daughter lacked confidence in social situations. She too recognised that her child's well-being might be compromised by a new environment and the people within it:

She does spend a lot of time within the family where she's comfortable, and I think to go from that to reception class, fully to school full-time, is too big of a jump. I think they need that transition of other adults being involved that aren't family, you know, and other children. *Claire*

However, Claire also expressed feelings of guilt at having been "soft" at home. For Claire, the transition to pre-school represented the beginning of assessment and being compared with other children that would result in her child being pushed out of her "comfort zone":

So just pushing them to do the bits, cos at home, I wou...you know you say 'it doesn't matter, you don't have to do that' whereas, I suppose, at school, it's just, you know, pushing them to try things that they wouldn't try, or do things. *Claire*

Children who have experienced activities with others in a variety of environments build cognitive and social skills, which are then argued to manifest in a “motivational momentum” that continues when they leave that environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 213). This momentum eventually becomes normalised and children begin to be socially competent (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Saira and Emily speak about their children engaging in activities outside the home with others, for example, bike riding with family friends and attending birthday parties, whereas Claire’s daughter spends most of her time within a close extended family. This might explain why Claire’s daughter found the transition from home to pre-school more challenging.

4.4.4 Separations

The mothers were aware of their own emotional reaction to being separated their children, so they wanted to prepare their children for the feelings of separation that they themselves might experience. Emily recognised that some children “don’t like going to pre-school” but after a few tears, her daughter “was fine”. Saira knew she “had to separate” from Mira and she was pleased that Mira eventually settled in well. Using Marrone’s (2014) interpretation of attachment behaviours exhibited by the children during this transition period, emotional reactions are to be expected. Having been reassured by pre-school practitioners that their child would be alright, the mothers were encouraged to walk away from their crying child. The mothers felt uncomfortable about this and this experience provided them with evidence that this transition might have a negative impact on their child’s well-being. However, in most cases, pre-school practitioners reassured parents that their children quickly stopped crying and settled in.

This raises questions about how far adults should go in forcing separation when the well-being of both mother and child is clearly adversely affected, sometimes over a long period of time. Claire speaks about how her eldest daughter struggled with the transition into school, crying every day for four years. She fears that her youngest will follow a similar pattern and this has resulted in an agreed strategy for arriving at pre-school that involves “peeling” her crying child off her. Claire’s daughter then continues to exhibit attachment behaviours with her key person before gradually settling in to the session. Similarly, Saira talks about a mother at the pre-school who wants to withdraw her child because he is so distressed that he regularly wets himself. In these situations, it could be argued that the child still needs to be mothered (Bowlby, 1958), and is not ready to make the transition alone. The pre-school practitioners expressed genuine concern for children in this situation and wanted to offer a friendly, welcoming environment as Jill described:

Our intentions are to make them feel comfortable in the environment. To be confident enough to ask for things if they want them. To quickly be able to learn the routines at the snack...going for a snack and going for a drink, or ask...showing them where the toilets are, asking them if they need some help and sort of, just quickly to be able to gain confidence and enjoy being within our group. *Jill*

However, the repeated use of the word “quickly” here, suggests a sense of urgency for the settling in process to be completed. Jill seemed fearful of the settling in process, worried that “once one cried then you get about five crying”, implying that she is either uncomfortable with children being upset or a prolonged settling in period interferes with other plans. Jill’s reference to “diversion techniques” as a means of settling children suggests that practitioners are wary of giving the cuddles, comfort and nearness that children seek when they are frightened (Bowlby, 1958). This reinforces the above mentioned tension over how mothers expect pre-school practitioners to behave towards their children and the possible safeguarding implications of intimate relationships. Fearful of being blamed or judged, the professional participants tended to choose compliance with policy over children’s well-being.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to support well-being during transitions in the early years, for example, home visits and accompanied visits to the setting. Children need to feel safe and accepted before they “feel ready, willing and able to make the most of the new situation” (O’Connor, 2013, p.100). However, as Jill’s fear of the settling in process illustrates, pre-school practitioners may not be aware of how children’s well-being is best supported in these circumstances. Linda, a LAEYW, detects a general lack of understanding of well-being by practitioners, which, as a result is being ignored. She says that “it’s a bit like PSED, it sort of floats about in the ether, and nobody’s quite sure what it means.” O’Connor (2013) stresses the crucial role of the key person in successful transitions and lists knowledge of attachment and emotional well-being, proactive and creative support and empathy as important skills. However, she acknowledges that practitioners need time and space to support children effectively and if transition is not a priority then their role can be compromised by “‘top down’ expectations, routines and organisational procedures”, pressures that were identified by practitioners in the study (O’Connor, 2013, p.100).

4.5 Child Well-being in the Pre-school

4.5.1 Introduction

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.164) highlights a “curiously one-sided picture” of research in pre-school settings with a strong research focus on outcomes and a lack of insight into their

everyday activities, a feature that was evident in my review of the literature. In order to explore child well-being in the pre-school through the eyes of adult carers, it is necessary to enter their world and examine their everyday experiences. I will now discuss how these experiences shaped the way participants create environments for children, which relates to the second research question guiding the study.

4.5.2 Providing a Suitable Environment

I asked the pre-school practitioners to tell me how they personally provide suitable environments based on their understanding of child well-being. Dawn associated child well-being with a healthy lifestyle, providing plenty of outdoor play and healthy snacks. She also stressed the importance of listening to children and providing them with resources that facilitate the expression of feelings and emotions. Her approach was child centred and particularly about understanding children's needs. She illustrated this with an example from her experience:

Play dough allows, you know it, play dough is a stress reliever and it allows them to and, you know, in our setting we've got a little boy who, he finds it a comfort, playdough, because he transports the play dough, a piece of play dough, everywhere that he goes, and that is...it's his comfort factor. He doesn't need a blanket, he needs a piece of play dough. *Dawn*

Dawn implied that some pre-school practitioners would not be prepared to listen well enough to know that this child's needs were different to others. Similarly, Sam was quite clear about her personal priorities when providing an environment that supported children's well-being:

It'd be having that, kind of, connection with the child, being an, like a support mechanism, should I say, making them feel welcome, making them feel loved, making them comfortable with you so they feel secure and they could say anything or they can...you can help them, we say. We look after them and change them and feed them, and all that kind of...we do the general care...well, I do the general care, that's what I like to see before I do anything else. As long as they look comfortable and happy. *Sam*

The terms "comfortable" and "happy" featured in the meanings and understandings of child well-being discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

The pre-school practitioners expressed the need to educate parents in what was needed to support children's well-being as there was not always agreement over what should be provided. Dawn justified her all weather outdoor play by saying:

Well parents are not very well educated sometimes, that they feel that they're gonna catch a cold from being cold and that's... a cold is an air borne virus and you don't catch a cold from being cold by no means, you catch a cold ...viral...it's viral, you know, and parents say it's too cold to come out, you know, and we have to educate parents in saying to them, you know, it is good for your child's well-being is playing out... *Dawn*

Whilst Dawn might be right about the connection between outdoor play and physical well-being, her later statement that "we advocate that children go out in all weathers" implies that this was the setting's policy. Insisting that children go outside in all weathers could be detrimental to their well-being, particularly if this is against a child's wishes. The EYFS framework states that "providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions)" (DfE, 2014, p.28). The word "access" suggests that the children have a choice in whether or not they play outside and it is acknowledged that some weather conditions are unsafe (DfE, 2014, p.28). So there is some confusion about where children's well-being fits in Dawn's provision of outdoor play.

Similarly, Jill expressed her preference for learning through play rather than formal activities which sometimes conflicts with the views of parents:

They need...there's not always that appreciation that it's a holistic thing, and that going to the par...that they get just as much out of going to the park or, you know, going out for a meal, as they would with sitting down and learning 'to write' [said in a softer tone]. *Jill*

In this extract, Jill seems unhappy with the formal way in which some parents approach literacy and numeracy based on her knowledge of child development. She goes on to say "I think one thing that you don't want the parents doing is sitting the child down at home to, to learn", yet the setting's policy is to send home writing sheets. Jill is concerned that children are put under pressure to write too soon, saying that formal activities should be introduced "once you've gauged that maybe a child's ready to write". Pre-school practitioners demonstrated that children's well-being is of low priority when providing suitable environments for children and sometimes their views appear to contradict the policy of the setting. This could create tensions between setting managers, who are responsible for policy compliance, and the rest of the staff team, reinforcing O'Connor's (2013) view, mentioned above, that organisational pressures from management can sometimes compromise the

work of practitioners. It would appear that, in the same way as the mothers, the well-being of the adults in the setting is as important as the well-being of the children. Maria, a LAEYW, stressed the importance of staff well-being. She felt that personal development, motivation and job satisfaction were significant in helping staff to adopt a positive attitude towards supporting and encouraging children.

While pre-school practitioners appeared vague about any possible link between child well-being and the environments they provided, the mothers were in agreement over where child well-being was positioned at home, placing their child's well-being at the centre of everything they do. Their stories conveyed a sense of freedom in the home where children were able to pursue their interests, express their emotions freely and have time to relax within a safe environment where they felt secure. Play was predominantly child led with adults taking the role of facilitator, providing resources that extended play and followed children's interests. The mothers acknowledged that the time they spent exclusively playing was limited, mainly due to the demands of younger siblings, so they would include learning about shapes, numbers and colours, for example, by incorporating them into daily activities such as counting stairs to bed and observing the shape of pizza at teatime. Claire considered this to be "the basics" and she reflected on the fact that she hadn't realised she was doing it. Imaginative play featured strongly in activities at home, allowing children to explore the adult world of shops and schools as well as their own fantasy worlds.

Play was mentioned by the pre-school practitioners in connection with the demands of the curriculum and unlike the mothers, they did not make any link between play and child well-being. It interests me that the term well-being only appears once in the EYFS framework and that is in the context of child protection, where the "deterioration in children's general well-being" is cited as a possible indication of abuse or neglect (DfE, 2014, p. 17). This introduces to early years practitioners the notion that well-being is purely a safeguarding issue. This might explain the absence of well-being from their experience of everyday practices in the setting, and echoes the negative language around child well-being mentioned in chapters one and two. In their understandings of the factors influencing child well-being, the pre-school practitioners referred to "the way they are treated" and "being allowed to have self-esteem" as well as inadequate food, shelter and clothing, suggesting forms of abuse and neglect. In summarising her understanding of these factors, Jill, says "It's just the approach, isn't it, of family and friends...if there's been any abuse or anything, or any neglect, any, erm, sort of, verbal putting down, then it will affect their well-being in general."

The pre-school practitioners also perceived that their time spent playing with children was being eroded by additional demands of their role, as more time is spent on administrative tasks and pre-schools become increasingly involved in multi-agency working with families. This adds to feelings of being 'trapped' which will be discussed further later in the chapter.

4.5.3 One Size Fits All

Whilst the EYFS framework provides a good guide for teaching and learning, an outcomes based approach fails to take account of individual rates of development that occur in the early years, leading to a focus on closing the attainment gap (DfE, 2014). Child development cannot be ignored when exploring the concept of well-being (Minkinen, 2013; Roberts, 2011) and is central to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The EYFS framework requires that each child's individual needs must be supported (DfE, 2014) yet the mothers experienced a homogenous approach to children's learning and development that they felt was detrimental to children's well-being. Claire expressed her feelings as a mother about this one size fits all approach through an experience with her eldest daughter:

She had to do these special lessons and it made a big, big issue out of something that she just was gonna take a bit longer for, for it to click and, and then I think it gives them a bit of a, sort of, a doubt... 'oh, I'm not good at that'...so it's, I don't know, I just think at that age they all come along at different stages and maybe just let them...be a bit more natural, you know...you know. *Claire*

Children are labelled as problematic for failing to develop skills in the prime areas of the EYFS framework at the 'normal' rate, holding parents to account, as practitioners are required to "discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child" (DfE, 2014, p. 9). Claire associates this approach with reduced levels of child well-being, specifically a lack of confidence and self-belief. Another mother, Saira, spoke of a friend who was particularly worried:

So, she's like 'I'm stressed out.' I said 'Why?' She goes 'Oh the school keeps ringing me and saying that A needs to know how to write her name.' I goes 'Give the girl a break! She's 3 years old! She's she doesn't need to know how to write her name. She needs to know how to play!' 'Leave her alone!'.
Saira

The pressure on parents to encourage children to achieve goals is high, with the implication that if the child fails then the parents have failed too. Saira encourages her friend to play with her children, be “fun mummy” and not just the person who puts them to bed. Claire expressed a similar view:

I think they should just... it's more, I think, about socially getting theirself [sic] and their identity and their independence, and the learning just comes, with that, yeah. *Claire*

The mothers expressed a need to provide children with opportunities for freedom of thought, expression and choice in their activities and voiced concern that pre-school settings were moving further towards formal learning. The mothers had experienced a reduction in child well-being as a result of them being exposed to formal learning at a young age and therefore perceived this approach to be inappropriate. As previously mentioned in chapter one, children being pressured into formal learning too soon is the subject of recent early years discourse (Leach, 2011; Save Childhood Movement, no date).

4.5.4 The Key Person

The key person is the first link that is established between the pre-school and the home. Linda, a LAEYW, described her ideas of its foundations:

I think the principle of the key person is right, particularly for the tiniest children, so, that idea of being in loco parentis and you know, com...absolutely linked to a sense of well-being and attachment, you know, that that child has got a consistent, significant other that they can go and talk to. *Linda*

The key person is not entirely “in loco parentis” as it would not be possible to recreate the same bond that the child has with their mother. However, research has found that having a relationship with a significant person gives the child a sense of security (Elfer et al., 2003). Some settings carry out home visits to make the initial contact with the family and to meet the child in an environment where they feel comfortable. Sam, a pre-school practitioner, stressed the importance of the role of the key person at times of transition, to provide children with the emotional security they need at pre-school.

The pre-school practitioners associated their key person role with “emotional attachment” but were not clear about how this benefited the child, other than it being “good” and providing them with “experience of relationships”. The pre-school practitioners tended to emphasise the key person’s relationship with parents rather than the child, with the initial meetings

during the settling in process acting as a means of collecting information about the child. The key person role was viewed as a practical role rather than an emotional one, again emphasising the focus on the demands of the curriculum and complying with the policies of the setting. The mothers were more child focused, linking the relationship more closely with positive child well-being. They believed that the relationship enabled the child to “feel OK” and helped with “confidence” because the adult provided a secure relationship by knowing the child well and spending more time with them. The mothers used this relationship as a source of reassurance that the setting was aware of the child’s individual needs, that their child was happy and making progress. Claire and Emily discussed health issues at length with their child’s key person as these were significant events that impacted on their child’s physical and emotional well-being. Claire wanted the setting to take her daughter’s needs seriously:

They’ve been really good, as in the food side of things, because obviously, they’ve had to, you know, know. So, it’s knowing that they support everything. So the, we bring her gluten free pasta in and they’ll warm it up for her, you know, and just doing things like, to make it easier for me, cos she has sandwiches, but there’s onl...she won’t always eat the bread, and she won’t always eat, so it’s just, I suppose, carrying through from home that, sort of, type of thing. *Claire*

Claire’s anxiety about the seamless care from home to pre-school was palpable in the interview. This reflects the general view of the mothers that their children should feel as safe and secure at pre-school as they would at home.

The participants were unanimous in their belief that the key person provided support for parents, answering questions, reassuring them, giving advice on matters such as sleeping and feeding, and helping with potty training. However, the pre-school practitioners took different views of their role. Dawn took a holistic approach, suggesting that the key person supported the whole family, not just the child. Sam spoke of the day to day support for both parents and children but was aware of certain times, for example, during transitions, when children needed extra support from the key person. Jill felt that in her role as key person she got to know the parents and children well, but this is increasingly difficult as key workers take on more children and the associated paperwork that is required. It is clear from the data that the pre-school practitioners adopt the approach that they feel is most beneficial to the families they encounter, supporting the EYFS framework requirement of the key person to “help ensure that every child’s learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs” (DfE, 2014, p.10). However, they also convey the challenges of meeting this standard in the

time available. Linda, a LAEYW, observes that the key person is often unable to provide support for families effectively:

I think, you know, that is...obviously the key person is meant to be the first port of call really. I think that maybe if we had a bit of a different model, that we had more time to do things, we could do a lot more with our parents. I think we know so much around early years education that we didn't know years ago and I think, I think we could help support parents with things a lot better than we do. *Linda*

Pre-school practitioners Sam and Jill express concerns for children's well-being when the key person is not available. In my professional experience, pre-schools are often staffed with part-time workers, particularly in the PVI sector where budgets are tight. Matching children's attendance and adult working patterns is sometimes a challenge, resulting in some periods when the key person is not available. This raises the question as to whether two key persons would be beneficial. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stresses the importance of good connections between the two settings so that the child can engage positively with the new environment. He regards "multiply linked" settings as those where the child will function most effectively (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.211). This is where more than one connection is made, for example, the mother and the father from the home and two key people from the setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Recent research in Singapore, where the key person system is relatively new, found that child's emotional well-being was enhanced by having two key people for each child. Children were also more able to function in the setting if they had a relationship with two key adults (Ebbeck, Phoon, Tan-Chong, Tan & Goh, 2015).

4.5.5 Professional Trappedness

Pre-school Practitioner Jill found it particularly difficult to express personal views and despite probing several times, she described the setting's philosophy rather than her own, quickly turning to the language of the EYFS framework. Putting the framework aside, Jill sought to provide "a welcoming, comfortable environment where the children are free to explore" which matched her understanding of child well-being. However, Jill expressed feelings of frustration at not being able to do what she believed supported children's well-being, hampered by paperwork and the expanding role of the pre-school practitioner. She said:

Our time is on the floor with the children. We do have admin time but that's generally for our own record keeping or just admin of the setting, but there's a lot of pressure on that now to become the lead professional, which even though there's...When do you do it? There's no time. *Jill*

The general tone of the interviews with the pre-school practitioners suggested that they were 'professionally trapped', torn between what they believed to be right for children based on their professional knowledge and training, and the demands of the policy framework. There were times when they lowered their voices or whispered, as though they were not allowed to be heard expressing views that challenged policy. Sam said:

It's more the foundations that should be learning...that development, that's the most important, before they move on to, like, the assessment [then whispers] and school readiness. *Sam*

Exploring the concept of 'professional trappedness' is not the principal aim of this study, however, it demonstrates how the environment has shaped the views of the pre-school practitioners and influences their behaviour. The 'trappedness' that I identified in the data suggests that pre-school practitioner knowledge and training have become overshadowed by the strong influence of a framework that ultimately, through inspection, focuses on children's learning outcomes, often at the expense of their well-being.

The discussion will now move on to the second transition in the early years, moving from pre-school to school. At this point of transition, the mesosystem comprises three microsystems – the home, the pre-school and the school. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as a guide, the features of this transition are likely to be similar to the initial transition into pre-school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, now that there are two dyads involved in the transition – the mother and the school and the key person and the school – the child is now "multiply linked" to the mesosystem, which, as suggested above is deemed to be beneficial in enabling the child to function effectively in the new school environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.211).

4.6 The Transition from Pre-school to School

4.6.1 Introduction

The school is another microsystem in which the child comes to participate and is the first environment where children begin to spend longer periods away from home. There is a greater expectation to be independent in managing personal needs, to engage in group activities and to build relationships with adults and their peers. It is also where learning takes place, existing skills are developed, new skills are acquired and where many lasting friendships are made.

4.6.2 Developmental Differences

Personal, social, emotional and physical well-being featured strongly in the views of all participants, principally around how four year olds negotiate this transition. Claire used her experience of child development as a mother to explain:

I think as they get to five, they sort of are a little bit more their own person, a bit more in control, they've sort of, I don't know, just...how can I explain?...just seem to not be babies any more. There seems to be like a...I don't know why, just as they get to five, it sort of changes and they're a bit more self-assured or they know and they understand things a bit better, whereas I think four, they're still bordering sometimes...not all of them, cos you can't... on being toddler... *Claire*

Claire identified some major developmental differences between four and five year olds. Self-assurance and confidence are qualities that feature in the meanings and definitions of children's well-being described by the participants. Claire's observation that children seem more independent and in control at the age of five implies that four year olds have not yet developed the necessary skills to cope with the transition into school. Although children develop at different rates, personal, social and emotional development between the ages of four and five appears to be significant. These observations place child development at the centre of the concept of well-being in the early years, as children are still mastering skills, including those relating to personal, social and emotional development (Minkkinen, 2013; Roberts, 2011). Participants also viewed school as a more structured environment with a stricter routine and rules that a four year old might find challenging, but this is mitigated by an introduction to routines at pre-school or nursery. Dawn, a pre-school practitioner, and Linda, a LAEYW, believe that the ability to cope with this transition improves when children are even older, favouring the Scandinavian education model where children start school at the age of six or seven, which might explain why the Scandinavian countries rank highly in child well-being league tables (Martorano et al., 2014).

4.6.3 Secure Child Well-being

The core dimensions of child well-being identified by the participants, along with communication and language, form the prime areas of learning and development in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014). The prime areas are expected to be secure before children go on to learn about literacy and numeracy (DfE, 2014). The participants agreed that a child's well-being needs to be secure before they can cope with the transition into school. Sam, a pre-school practitioner, summarised this by saying:

Yeah, I'd rather they be comfortable and happy and secure ... behaviour ... emotionally, kind of, socially, before I started teaching them how to read and write [said with a sigh]. I think it's the main...it's the foundations for the learning, in't it, they need to get that all first [long pause]. *Sam*

Participants explored the link between children's well-being and the transition into school, concluding that the process is made easier when well-being levels are high, but experiences varied in the data. Curiosity and social skills were the main reasons for Saira believing that her daughter was ready for school:

Curious, curious. She likes learning.

I don't think it's just about academics, in that sense, no, no. She, she's making friends, able to talk to some other adults, other than the normal people in your life, which is your grandparents, your family, your aunties and uncles. She loves meeting new people... *Saira*

Saira could see that a positive approach to learning and social confidence would equip her daughter in making the transition into school. In contrast, Claire was aware that her daughter did not have the physical, social and language skills to cope with the transition into school:

And if I'd have had the option I would have said 'she's not ready yet' and let her because she just, she just did not seem...how she played with other children, what their language skills... she probably couldn't say what she wanted to say or they weren't...not just size wise, cos they're all different...it was the inter...how they play...you could see the difference in the playground, you could just see. She, you know, at dinner time, was absolutely worn out, she just wanted to go, you know, go home and so, I'm not, I don't know, I don't think when they've just turned four I don't think they're ready for full-time school. *Claire*

The contrast in the experiences of these two mothers demonstrates that the rate of personal, social and emotional development can vary dramatically. Jill, a pre-school practitioner, expressed concern for summer born children who may have turned four only a few weeks before entering school and this was exacerbated by an increase in the number of children entering the pre-school with generally poor levels of development.

4.6.4 School Readiness

The EYFS framework focuses on getting children ready for school yet there is no clear definition of what being school ready means (DfE, 2014). Sam, a pre-school practitioner, wrestled with this idea:

I like it and I think it's great for the children that are ready for...ready to begin school readiness, but I think you shouldn't...I don't think it should be jumped on, I think a lot of children need a lot more before. Cos obviously when they move from here to reception, they're still EYFS, so...what is school readiness? Is it from here to reception? Or is it reception to...[voice fades]

Sam

The fact that Sam, and other participants, are not clear about the meaning of school readiness is evidence that it is problematic. Participants perceived school readiness as preparation for the school reception class which is still within the EYFS framework, whereas the EYFS framework states that it is readying children for Key Stage 1 (DfE, 2014). As a result, school readiness has indeed been “jumped on” as all of the participants felt that they were under pressure to get children ready for school, even when they have low levels of personal, social and emotional development. This is viewed by the participants as detrimental to children’s well-being which is inevitable because this preparation is beginning 12 months too soon. Linda (a LAEYW) explained that pre-school practitioners working with three and four year olds should be concentrating on the underpinning areas that will equip them for the next stage of their education:

I think if you're...if you work on the bits underneath it, like the characteristics [characteristics of effective learning], the prime areas, the good stuff, the dispositions, that underpinning stuff that allows children to function brilliantly whenever, wherever in their life, that's what will create a sense of well-being.

Linda

Linda implies that these underpinning areas are not confined to being ready for school but are the foundations for being ready for life, suggesting that well-being is deep, long lasting and has links with the future well-being of the child.

4.7 The Wider Community

4.7.1 Introduction

So far, my discussion has focused on the innermost systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model but now I will be broadening the discussion to include the influences of the outer system. The outer system, the macrosystem, contains factors that permeate through all of the other systems, for example, poverty, social policy and religion (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Much of the data collected from the LAEYWs overlaps with broader societal issues. In this section I will therefore take the key issues that emerged from the data and discuss their impact on the home, the pre-school and the wider early years community in terms of children's well-being.

4.7.2 Poor, Disadvantaged and Vulnerable

There was a shared feeling among the participants that living in poverty and disadvantage has a negative impact on children's well-being. They felt that children may also be adversely affected by poor parental lifestyle choices, for example, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as long term parental health issues. Children were deemed to be vulnerable in these circumstances as they still depend on significant adults for their basic needs to be met. The London Metropolitan University/National Children's Bureau Project '*Talking about Young Children's Well-being*' found that parent's well-being impacted on their ability to form positive relationships with their children and their ability to parent (Mukherji, 2014). Stressed parents are also likely to pass their stress on to their children (Mukherji, 2014).

Poverty and disadvantage have long featured on the social policy agenda with an emphasis on improving the lives of families (The Prime Minister's Office & The Rt Hon David Cameron, 2016). Poverty and disadvantage are not significant events in the same way that the mothers referred to earlier, but long term difficult circumstances that appear impossible to overcome. Whilst they cannot solve the entrenchment of disadvantage, LAEYWs are instrumental in supporting families with long term problems, for example, mental illness and addiction. Julie described how the home environment in which some of these families are living impacts on children's well-being:

The home surroundings and background is absolutely key. You know, we work with a lot of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. So, there's a lot of worklessness, where parents are at home, but they become, sort of, entrenched in poverty and not going out to work and being under motivated and then that rubs off in the home, you know, with the children. *Julie*

The word "entrenched" suggests that for some this is their daily family life and has been for generations. It is interesting that Julie refers to "worklessness" rather than unemployment, implying that these parents either choose not to work or are unable to work, a reflection of

current political and policy discourses. Julie went on to describe how, in her experience, the “lack of motivation” affects children’s development and their well-being:

Well, the, they’re usually quite well behind in their development, in their milestones. They can be quite withdrawn. Usually their speech and language is well behind. Quite often their PSED skills are non-existent. They might still, you know, start nursery and they’ll be in nappies, and they’ve got dummies in, and they’re trying to talk with their dummies in. They might still be using bottles. They find it very difficult usually to settle in, to nursery or preschool. And then, you know, once they do start nursery or preschool, quite often they can be quite disruptive in their behaviour, and, and find it difficult to get on with other children or follow, you know, instructions from staff. *Julie*

Julie suggests that the lack of motivation from the parents means that the core dimensions, mentioned in the participants’ meanings and understandings of child well-being, are not being supported. The well-being of the mothers living in these circumstances is compromised and therefore they may not be able to do the emotion work that is required to build relationships and provide the family structure that the mothers in the study referred to. This then has an adverse effect on their children’s well-being.

Linda, a LAEYW, talked about a school that provided a morning “nurture space” that was designed to promote the well-being of those children who experience complicated home lives. Although she did not know these children, Linda perceived their homes as harmful environments for children:

I don’t know, but I suspect that there’ll be some, you know, safeguarding type stuff really, substance misuse, yeah. Just I think probably poor parenting, chaotic home, home life, you know, lack of routines. *Linda*

There is an assumption here about what is affecting the well-being of these children for them to need a nurture space. Linda immediately equates the need for a nurture space with the failings of the parents without considering that children might be affected by wider issues such as poverty and disadvantage which could affect any family at any time. Unemployment, displacement and social exclusion are some of the macrosystem level factors that indirectly affect children’s well-being and are often beyond the control of parents.

Linda goes on to say that “as humans we all have a, an intuitive understanding of what it means to be well...well-being. I think we are good at picking up signals when well-being is lacking.” Maria, another LAEYW, gave a broader view of child well-being:

Unless something massive happens in a child's life, or a parent's life, it's probably just gonna tick along, because that's the norm. If something happens where, I don't know, a parent might lose a job, when they're lived in a certain area, or a certain house, that'd have a massive impact, but it's highly unlikely that's...probably, sort of, one in however many... whereas, the norm would be that we've always done this and this is how we do it, so it, sort of continues. *Maria*

This negative focus is echoed in the literature, the media and in social policy, as discussed in chapters one and two. A negative discourse suggests that child well-being is only of concern when it is missing, prompting a focus on those who are poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable. This results in the well-being of children from working and middle class families being ignored.

4.7.3 Employment and the Role of Childcare

The time that adults spend with children was identified by the participants as both a necessity and a challenge. The professionals were quick to judge parents, blaming them for not spending time with their children. Parents were perceived as lacking knowledge and some put pressure on their children to learn letters and numbers rather than engaging in social activities that support well-being. The mothers admitted that the time they could spend with their children was limited, but they allowed co-operative play to be child led and following the child's interests.

All three of the mothers were in paid employment, however, they were not using formal childcare, relying on partners and extended family to look after their children whilst they were not at pre-school. Jill, a pre-school practitioner, expressed concern about children spending long periods in private day nurseries whilst both parents worked and believed that the well-being of these children was affected. She told the story of a little boy who struggled to deal with a day off from pre-school when it snowed:

That...there was the one example of a child who had done a lot of time in nursery from a, an early...early days and then he wouldn't...he spent...it snowed and he spent a day at home and he was never as settled here again after that, cos he wanted that day at home again. He wanted it to snow. He wanted to stay at home, so I think that's well-being isn't it. That's that...that's that...he obviously had that sense that day, that everybody was probably at home and the family were all there and they weren't probably going anywhere, they weren't going shopping or they weren't going doing activities

and they weren't being pushed around, they were just there, and I would imagine they'd had a bit of fun that day and he just craved that time again.

Jill

This story and Jill's memory of the self-confidence and security she felt as a child when she spent time at home with her mother capture one experience of the "feel good factor" that the participants could not pin down when trying to understand children's well-being. Jill appeared to believe that this very special feeling that being at home with family generates, is at the heart of well-being. She thus perceived children who have spent spend long periods in childcare, whilst their parents work, to have fewer opportunities to experience that feeling and that the resultant effects on their well-being were visible:

Yeah, I think they're more needy children in, in a, in a, in a social and emotional way, and they want to, they want to prove that they know things to you. They're used to being quizzed, they're used to being assessed. Some of them won't tell you things when you ask them because they know what you want 'em to say, some of them will tell you because they know that that's how they get a sticker...to write their name and things. But it's not necessarily well-being, it's trying to [pause]...Well, maybe it does give them a sense of well-being, yeah, because they know how to get that satisfaction of knowing, but, but, it can be, I don't know, it can be in a bit of a needy way [pause]. Not all, but some. *Jill*

One of the mothers, Claire, expressed the precarity of family life and how changes in their financial situation might eventually have consequences for their child's well-being:

I suppose financial comes into it as well, you know, if you're financially stable and secure that all...because that means you can do the nice things and they go out for days and all this that goes towards well-being and happiness...

Money does, sort of, come into that as well, because it's, you know...if I couldn't provide the food that she needs because it's so many allergies then it's...there would be problems, and it causes stress, and then the family start arguing, you know, and things like that, so then your, sort of, settled home life then doesn't become as...I suppose that's got a big, sort of, effect on, on well-being. *Claire*

In a family where both parents need to work in order to provide for their children, the loss of an income can quickly have an impact on children's well-being. Claire's tone of voice conveyed a genuine fear that this would upset the feelings of security that the home provided. Likewise, Emily felt that losing an income would be devastating as her and her husband both worked shifts in order to provide for their family. Both these women have the support of extended family, but in the advent of increased childcare funding for working parents (DfE, 2015), more children are likely to be spending increasing amounts of time away from the family which might have a negative impact on their emotional well-being. This illustrates how the state of the nation's employment at macrosystem level penetrates the microsystem of the home.

4.7.3 The Need to Measure

There was a general consensus among the participants that children's health should be monitored from birth to ensure that they are fit and healthy and free from impairments to growth and development. However, there was disagreement across the three groups of participants over the extent to which the learning aspects of children's development were measured and how this impacts on children's well-being.

The mothers were content in the knowledge that their children were developing broadly as expected for their age, but showed little interest in the more formal aspects of assessment, for example, children's knowledge of letters and numbers, but appreciated that this should form part of a learning programme at some stage in the future. However, two of the mothers felt drawn into the notion of measurement once their child began pre-school. Saira found herself comparing her daughter's progress with other parents and for Claire, pre-school was the beginning of her child being compared with others which meant being judged as a parent. This suggests that the mothers feel that children are treated differently outside the home and entering the world of education as young as two exposes the mothers and their children to a highly competitive environment which they find challenging.

In support of the mothers' views, the pre-school practitioners appreciated that some form of monitoring was required but were not in favour of existing forms of assessment. Jill was not convinced that the time spent observing and assessing children was beneficial. She believed that the key workers knew the children well enough to know that they were developing appropriately. This implied that pre-school practitioners are not trusted to make their own judgements. Sam felt that it was important to focus on physical, personal, social and emotional development as well as communication and language before introducing any formal learning as these were the foundations of child development, yet she expressed a

feeling that literacy and numeracy were a priority in her pre-school. Linda, a LAEYW, captured these pre-school practitioner views in her reasons why she disliked testing in early years settings:

Because it drives practice that people have to comply with. It drives...I see a huge amount of fear in practitioners at the moment with the power that Ofsted hold over them. I see a lot of compromise in practitioners in schools, in particular in schools actually, where early years pedagogy about, you know, what's best for the children is, you know, they are unable to pursue their, you know, their, their personal beliefs really, and values because of the system. *Linda*

The concept of 'professional trappedness' has been discussed earlier. However, Linda's thoughts about assessment reveal that an outcome based approach to education policy appears to come at the expense of children's well-being, as what is best for children is being squeezed out of early years practice.

The LAEYW interviews focused on children who were vulnerable, disadvantaged or living in poverty. However, assessment, intervention and monitoring were aimed at the parents in order to "put routines in place", ensure that there is "the right kind of parenting" and "make people understand what is expected". Julie explained how this is done:

We start off by going in to the home, observing the child in their home surroundings, identifying early what the issues are, within the family home, or what any potential issues are. We also look at if there's any other siblings, you know, if they've presented with issues that quite possibly might be an issue for any younger siblings, and then we, sort of, look at all that. Once we've done observations we'll invite them into early years or in to the children's centre. We do, like, observations here, see where the children are at, what's the starting point really and then we plan activities around that.

Julie

The two LAEYWs who work directly with disadvantaged families show dedication and commitment to the families in their care but there is a sense that there are set procedures to follow resulting in a lack of flexibility in their approach. The children appear almost secondary to the process but there is no suggestion that this is intentional.

Linda, another LAEYW, questioned why England continues to assess and monitor children in this way when other models prove to be more effective in supporting children's well-being, citing Scotland and the Scandinavian countries:

I think Scotland's model is better. It's a bit of a half-way house. I haven't been to look at them myself but I've read a little round the Scandinavian models, for example. But I don't think it's black and white, you know, they have much greater taxes over there so that, you know, there can be a universal offer. It's complex really, yeah. *Linda*

Linda's comments refer to the much bigger question as to whether we are prepared to contribute more in taxation to provide better lives for children. I propose that changes in attitudes to child well-being at macrosystem level might have a more positive effect on well-being within each of the microsystems.

4.8 Responding to the Research Questions

Before I reach my overall conclusions and make further recommendations, I will now demonstrate how the data analysis and findings respond positively to the research questions which are :

- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers understand child well-being and the factors that influence it?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers use their understanding of child well-being to provide environments for children that support their well-being?
- How do mothers, pre-school practitioners and local authority early years workers view child well-being in the context of the EYFS framework?

The participants understood child well-being as a holistic, multi-dimensional idea with core dimensions of physical, social, personal and emotional well-being. Happiness was perceived as a visual measure of raised levels of well-being but well-being itself was deemed to be a deeper more enduring state. Their meanings were rendered incomplete by the inability to identify an elusive factor that floated across the core dimensions, referred to by one participant as the "feel good factor". The main influencing factors were identified as having basic needs met; a secure and settled home life free from abuse and neglect; the well-being of adult carers, especially mothers; adult carers ability to handle pressure and significant

adverse events; positive socialisation of the child; and wider societal factors such as employment.

There is a distinct contrast in how the three groups of participants use their meanings and understandings to provide environments for children that support well-being. The mothers were child centred in their approach and acted as facilitators, supporting well-being through everyday routines and play, following children's interests and allowing them the freedom to explore the world. In contrast, child well-being was markedly absent from early years practice. This appeared to be as a result of pre-school practitioners feeling trapped between what they knew was best for children and the demands of the curriculum including organisational tasks. The LAEYWs focused on the ability of adult carers to support their children's well-being. Everyday practices in the home, knowledge of the child and identifying the factors influencing their well-being were particularly significant in providing tailored support for families, particularly those for whom wider societal factors have a major impact on their children's well-being.

Finally, participants expressed views about children's well-being in the context of key areas of the EYFS framework. There was a general consensus that operating a key person system was particularly helpful in supporting transitions between home, pre-school and school. However, whilst the benefits to the child were acknowledged, the emphasis by pre-school practitioners was placed on the valuable support that key people provided for parents and carers. With the exception of the key person system, there was a general experience of pressure surrounding the outcomes based approach of the EYFS framework, particularly with regard to school readiness, assessment and a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. Participants looked to other education models, notably Scotland and Scandinavia where children start school later and learning is less formal, resulting in higher levels of child well-being. I will now continue by reaching conclusions about the study and making further recommendations.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Review of the Study

This study used a phenomenological approach to explore the meanings and understandings of child well-being in the early years through the eyes of 9 adult child carers in the home, in pre-school settings and in the wider early years community. The study examined the possible links between adult understandings of child well-being and the participants' provision of environments suitable for supporting children's well-being. The study also explored how child well-being is viewed by adults in the context of the current EYFS framework (DfE, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the thoughts and feelings of the participants through their experiences of caring for children. A limitation of the study was the absence of interviews with reception class teachers who work with four and five year olds. This would have provided broader coverage of the EYFS framework and allowed a deeper exploration of the transition into school. Analysis of the data suggests that there is a close link between child well-being and the environments children encounter, specifically the influence of everyday practices, relationships and adults' knowledge of children and child development . This study adds to what has already been written about child well-being, reveals new understandings of the concept and introduces original insights into the impact that multiple meanings and understandings have on adult carers' provision of environments that they believe will support children's well-being in the early years.

When viewed through the eyes of adult carers, child well-being in the early years was found to be more limited in its multi-dimensional nature than the wider literature suggests, with a sharper focus on three core dimensions - physical, personal, social and emotional well-being. Understandings of child well-being are shown here to be complex, deep and long lasting compared to the less complicated, volatile and instant feelings of happiness that seem easier to grasp. The existence of multiple meanings confirms that it is unlikely that a single distinct definition of child well-being can be found. The absence of a distinct definition therefore hampers the ability to compare studies around child well-being. However, this study shows that small scale qualitative research can provide a better understanding of adult meanings of child well-being and how this shapes the environments adults provide for supporting children's well-being.

Whilst a mixture of positive and negative language was used by participants throughout the interviews, negative experiences provided a focus for exploring meanings and understandings of child well-being and the factors affecting it. This suggests that thoughts about child well-being are generally absent from everyday life until significant events that

compromise child well-being occur. Despite calls for a more positive approach to child well-being research (Lippman et al., 2011), the study shows that the concept continues to be surrounded by a negative discourse, focusing on what is lacking rather than what is needed to thrive.

Links between child well-being and the environment are well established in the literature through the use of environment related domains and indicators in large scale quantitative research. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) proved to be an effective framework for data analysis, with representatives of the three environments providing a lens through which child well-being can be viewed. The theoretical framework also allowed the significance of transitions between environments to be emphasised as adults spoke of their experiences of children entering pre-school and school for the first time.

5.2 Key Findings

The key findings of the study are :

- Mothers and pre-school practitioners value child well-being very differently;
- The well-being of adult carers is significant to children's well-being;
- Current early years policy is generally believed by mothers, early-years practitioners and LAEYWs to be harmful to children's well-being.

There is a significant contrast in the way mothers and pre-school practitioners value child well-being. The mothers position well-being at the centre of family life and have expectations that others who care for their children will take a similar approach. The mothers viewed play as an essential activity for children in supporting their well-being. They acted as facilitators for activities that allowed children the freedom to explore the world physically, emotionally and socially by following their own interests, using their imaginations and interacting with others.

This contrasts with the pre-school practitioners for whom child well-being is overshadowed by the administrative aspects of their role. Despite having similar understandings of child well-being, the pre-school practitioners felt professionally trapped between what they knew was best for children and their organisational and policy related priorities. Play was only mentioned in terms of what the EYFS framework demanded.

The study has found that the well-being of adults who care for children is also crucial to their ability to provide environments that support child well-being. As previous research has also identified, resilience plays a part in the development of well-being but in very young children

this occurs within relationships with key adults (Roberts, 2011). The mothers carried out emotional work, supporting the well-being of all members of the family, as well as the roles of housewife and mother. However, the mothers' ability to maintain the safe, secure base for family members is threatened by significant events, for example, the serious illness of a child, and relies on the mother's resilience to overcome such adversities, highlighting the importance of her well-being and for that of her child.

The pre-school practitioners appeared less equipped to deal with the time pressures of their multi-faceted role, resulting in policy priorities winning over child well-being. There was a sense that the pre-school practitioners were fearful of losing sight of the EYFS framework, rarely turning to their training as a basis for engaging with children. There is therefore a suggestion that the professional trappedness mentioned earlier is having a detrimental effect on the well-being of the pre-school practitioners.

The views of the participants on child well-being in the context of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014) provided an insight in to the possible location of child well-being in wider society. The study found that participants agreed that current early years policy was generally harmful to children's well-being because it forces children to achieve unrealistic goals too soon in their development, echoing Biddulph's metaphor of the ripped rosebud mentioned in chapter one (Biddulph, 2011). Children's physical, social and emotional well-being between the ages of four and five were deemed to be significant in their ability to access a more formal curriculum, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Some two year olds were seen to be physically distressed by making the transition into pre-school alone and most four year olds were thought to be "not ready" to cope with school. Such is the power of policy that it would appear to be driving practice, squeezing out professional knowledge of child well-being and causing parents to become distressed.

There are concerns about how limited time spent with the family results in pre-schools becoming the source of primary socialisation which the participants believed was detrimental to children's well-being, particularly in the early years. A wider focus on the growth of the economy that puts pressure on families to have both parents out at work results in children spending more time away from their families. Those parents who are unemployed or unable to work therefore become stigmatised rather than supported by the rest of society. These findings prompt me to question whether child well-being is not merely absent from education policy but from society as a whole.

These findings make a significant contribution to knowledge of child well-being in the early years and respond fully to the study aims which are:

- To explore adult experiences and understandings of children’s well-being in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision;
- To use Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of human development to analyse the relationship between adult meanings and understandings of child well-being and the creation of environments for children that support their well-being;
- To examine how well-being is valued by adults who care for children in the early years in the home, in pre-school settings and in local authority early years provision.

5.3 Recommendations

Building on this study, further research is required into the connection between child well-being and the well-being of adult carers in the early years, as younger children are more reliant on their carers to provide environments that support well-being. This might include research into the kind of support that all mothers need to provide a safe and secure base for their families. Professional trappedness felt by pre-school practitioners also needs further investigation as this has implications for early years practice, particularly in the light of findings that current policy is believed to be harmful to children’s well-being.

The view that current early years policy is harmful to children’s well-being points to further research into the differences between early years practice in the UK and those countries that appear at the top of child well-being tables. The study participants view the Scandinavian models of education, where they have a less formal curriculum and children start school later, as more supportive of children’s well-being. The appearance of Denmark, Sweden and Finland at the top of child well-being league tables (Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009) would support this view.

I also recommend the removal of the reception class from schools to make a clearer definition of the Foundation Stage. This would strengthen the understanding of early years as an important period of childhood which needs a different focus than formal schooling. Foundation Stage units with a curriculum focus on physical, personal, social and emotional development and language skills founded in child development theory would lessen the pressure to be school ready at an age when children are not developmentally equipped. Staffing these units with early years practitioners who have a better understanding of children’s rights, attachment and well-being (Manning-Morton, 2014d) would contribute to child well-being commanding a more central position in early years practice.

5.4 Areas of Further Study

The concept of professional trappedness could not be fully explored within the parameters of this study but this is an area that I will be pursuing further in order to build on the new knowledge around the importance of the well-being of practitioners. I aim to use my study to write a practice based journal article to share my findings with early years professionals and invite further debate about the issues raised.

I support Sir Al Aynsley-Green in his campaign for valuing children as citizens in their own right and promoting their well-being. Through the Sir Al Aynsley-Green scholarship I will be furthering research in this area at doctoral level. For my PhD I will be exploring well-being through the eyes of young children, with a view to making comparisons between adult and child perceptions, thereby continuing to add to the identified gap in child well-being research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Study Sample

Pre-school Settings	Setting Description	Participants
Setting A	Pre-school that sets up weekly in a church hall between a council estate and a private housing estate. Children come from predominantly white British and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds.	<p>A white British practitioner with 6 years of experience. Holds an NVQ Level 3 early years qualification.</p> <p>A mother of three children from a low income family including a 2 year old who attends the setting.</p>
Setting B	Permanently set up pre-school in a community centre in a rural village location. Children come from predominantly white British backgrounds.	<p>A white British deputy pre-school manager with 12 years of experience. Holds an NVQ Level 3 early years qualification.</p> <p>A white British mother of three children from an average income family including a 3 ½ year old who attends the setting.</p>
Setting C	A purpose built pre-school in the grounds of a primary school in a leafy green suburb. Children come from diverse backgrounds but predominantly Asian. The catchment includes areas of disadvantage.	<p>A white British deputy pre-school manager with less than 12 months experience. Recently graduated with a BA (Hons) in Early Years including Early Years Teacher Status.</p> <p>A British Pakistani mother of two children from a high income family including a 3 ½ year old who attends the setting.</p>

Appendix 2 – The Interview Schedule

Preparation

- Ensure that both parties are sitting at a table, a short distance apart with the sound recorder positioned in between.
- Have the clock clearly visible to the researcher.
- Make sure that all relevant papers are ready and in order of use.

Welcome & Introduction

- Welcome the participant and thank them for agreeing to take part.
- Introduce the topic by summarising the Participant Information Sheet and check that the participant is well informed.
- Obtain written consent using the Consent Form.
- Explain about the recording device and the clock.
- Make it clear that when talking about children, this means children aged 0 to 5.

Prompt Photos

Share the prompt photographs with the Participant to introduce the topic and to create a relaxed atmosphere

Prepare the Participant for the Start of the Interview **Start Recording**

Interview Questions

Question 1

What does the term 'well-being' mean to you?

Can you give me an example?
Can you explain a bit more about.....?

Question 2

What do you believe are the factors that affect the well-being of children?

Can you explain a bit more about how.....affects well-being?
Can you give me an example?

Question 3

Thinking about what you have said about well-being in the previous questions, how do you use this knowledge to provide an environment at home/at work that helps to support children's learning and development?

How did you do that?
Can you give me an example of.....?

Question 4

What do you expect early years settings to provide for children?

Can you explain in more detail what you mean by?

Can you give me an example of that?

Question 5

What are your thoughts and feelings about some of the policy themes shown here?
(Share the Policy Issues Sheet)

How do you feel about that?

Explain what you mean by.....?

Do you have anything more that you want to add?

Thank you
for
taking part

Collect personal information using a separate sheet

Research Project : ‘How useful is it to conceptualise well-being in the context of early years education and development?’

Invitation to Participate

I am inviting you to take part in my research project which is exploring what is meant and understood by young children’s well-being. Before you decide to take part, it is essential that you fully understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that you don’t understand or if you would like further information. Thank you.

What is the purpose of the project?

In April 2015 I was awarded the Sir Al Aynsley-Green Scholarship. Sir Al Aynsley-Green is a leading consultant paediatrician, specialising in the field of relieving pain and stress in young children. He also held the post of Children’s Commissioner from 2005 to 2010. The Scholarship provides funding from the University of Huddersfield for me to spend the next 4 years researching ‘Children’s Well-being and Creative Learning Experiences’. Sir Al Aynsley-Green has lent his name to the Scholarship and will be following the progress of my research with interest.

Before I can explore the relationship between children’s well-being and creative learning environments, I need to find out more about children’s well-being. Firstly, I will be trying to piece together the history behind the subject and why people, like Sir Al Aynsley-Green, have brought the issue of children’s well-being to everyone’s attention. Then I would like to find out what people who are bringing up and working with children understand about well-being and the factors that influence it. Finally, I want to look at how the meanings and understanding of well-being in different environments help children to grow and learn.

Why have I been chosen?

I would like to speak to mothers, early years practitioners and those who work in the provision of children’s services about their understanding of children’s well-being and how they create enabling environments for children using their knowledge of well-being. I have chosen to speak to people in a variety of roles as their thoughts and experiences will reflect what is happening in different areas of society today.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time, should you decide that you no longer wish to take part.

What do I have to do?

All participants will be invited to take part in a 30-40 minute taped interview about their understanding of children’s well-being, the factors that influence it and how this understanding affects the creation of the spaces where children grow and learn. At the end of the interview, participants will be asked to provide some information about themselves, for example, their age, marital status, income, housing type, role. This will allow me to have a better understanding of each participant’s viewpoint.

What are the advantages of taking part?

The research will provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts and opinions and how these contribute to their role as mothers and/or practitioners. Practitioners might want to use this reflective process to contribute to their own professional development. Participation also widens public knowledge of what is happening in the field of educational research.

Will all my details be kept confidential?

Yes. All the participants in the research will be kept anonymous. In the interview transcriptions, participants will be given pseudonyms e.g. Participant A, B etc. to protect their identity. The research will be conducted in accordance with British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines and with ethical approval from the University.

What will happen to the information collected by the researcher?

The information collected from the interview will provide the data for the study. The data will be used to build up a picture of what well-being looks like in the real world and will contribute to developing an understanding of the term well-being and its influencing factors. It will also provide an insight into how an understanding of well-being shapes children's learning and development environments. The information you provide will be compared with the data collected from other participants to establish similarities and differences. The raw data e.g. tape recording transcriptions, will be kept in a secure location as part of the research project, but the tape recordings of the interviews will be destroyed.

Who can I contact for further information?

The research has been approved by the University of Huddersfield and carried out under the supervision of staff from the School of Education and Professional Development. If you would like to discuss any aspects of my research, you can contact the research supervisor Janet Fink on 01484 478262.

Thank You

I would like to thank you for reading these guidelines. I hope that you now have sufficient information to decide whether or not you wish to participate. However, if you have any further questions I will be happy to answer them.

**Tina Froggett
Post Graduate Researcher
MRes Education
University of Huddersfield**

Contact No : tina.froggett@hud.ac.uk

Appendix 4 – Consent Form

Project Title : ‘How useful is it to conceptualise well-being in the context of early years education and development?’

Name of Researcher : Tina Froggett

Participant Identifier Code :

The above named researcher has briefed me to my satisfaction on the research for which I have volunteered.

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet related to this research, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time and ask for my personal data to be destroyed.

I understand that my interview will be recorded but that the interview transcript will be anonymised.

I understand that my rights to anonymity and confidentiality will be respected.

I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of Participant :

Signature of Participant :

Date :

Name of Researcher :

Signature of Researcher :

Date :

Appendix 5 – Policy Issues Prompt Sheet



Appendix 6 – Interview with Claire

Right, that's recording now. Ok, so the first question is, erm, what does well-being mean to you and how would you describe it?

Erm, I think being happy and safe, erm, feeling at ease I think, you know, just being comfortable, erm, so, not just that someone's got a house and food and drinks, more about probably emotional happiness, that they're, you know, um, they feel confident in the surroundings and with the people, erm, so about trying to, to, sort of, that side of things as well as the practical things as, you know, making sure they've had breakfast and dinner and tea and they've got the clean clothes. **The basic things?** Yeah, yeah, more, probably more, yeah, on an emotional level, that they're happy, they've got friends, that, you know, **mmm**. (pause)

Could you give me an example, erm, a specific example perhaps?

Erm, (pause) oh, let me think...I'm trying to think youngest one **yeah** because I've got to, to think what...(laughs), **Oh, you've got a big age gap then** I've got older children, **yeah**, so I'm thinking under-fives, erm... (looks up - long pause).

So thinking about one of your children, how would you explain well-being by giving me an example?

Err, I would, sort of, ex... (sighs) to this age...erm...so to explain to a 3 year old, well-being?

No to, no, using an example of how one of your children might have...how you might know about the well-being of your child?

Erm, well, I think things like, if you're in an early years setting, like, we do the, erm, the, sort of, parents evening thing, **hmm**, so they let us know how they are doing at school, so you've got an insight from somebody else...because you can think everything's alright, but then actually someone else might say, **yeah**, well it's... they're a little bit, you know, quiet or in comparison to other children maybe, **right**, this is a bit different, so, sort of, that, sort of, ******* a thing. Erm, so, I suppose it's a collection of things, that it's not just your viewpoint, **mmm**, I suppose, it's other people's.

So, it can be, you're saying that it can be, seen in different ways by different people? Yeah?

Different people, yeah. So what you might think **uh hmm**, is, is, is...not normal because I hate that word...erm, (both laugh) I do, I really do! ...Erm, what you might think is 'oh everything's ok' then, you know, someone else might come in and say, erm, 'Look, you know, while they're in another setting, or around other people, erm, we're a little bit concerned about this, or about this.', whereas you might not see that yourself because you don't see them with other children, **yeah**, or, **yeah**, you know.

At home, she's got older brothers and sisters, so, she might be absolutely fine with older people but then put her in with other children, that I might not necessarily see, she may struggle so I suppose it's different viewpoints from different people, different areas, **yeah**, different settings, erm...it's quite difficult to answer that question...I don't know, it's ...(stopped)

Right, ok, well let's, sort of, go a little bit beyond that then, yeah, and say, thinking about well-being and what you understand by well-being, uh hah, what are the factors that affect a child's well-being?

Erm, family, their family life, erm, if they've got a, you know, settled, settled family life and things...I mean, we're lucky, not I suppose, everybody, everybody is. We have a really big extended family and we're all close, and things like that, so erm, as far as we're concerned, probably we are quite, that side's all fine. Erm, that, I suppose financial comes into it as well, **yeah**, erm, you know, if you're financially stable and secure that all...because that means you can do the nice things and they go out for days and all this that goes towards well-being and happiness **mmm**, that you can do, that you can, you know, afford to go shopping and have the which, you know, so, the food and... My youngest daughter's got quite a lot of food allergies **oh**, so we have a, erm, everything is miles more expensive **mmm**, than anything else, erm, so we've got all that to contend with, so, **yeah**, erm, so being financially, sort of, able to provide that goes toward well-being I suppose. **Yeah**. Erm...

Do you mean well-being from a health point of view?

Yeah, just, sort of, the, yeah, that that is...that...that money does, sort of, come into that as well, **mmm, yeah**, because it's, you know...if I couldn't provide the food that she needs because it's so many allergies then it's...there would be problems, and it causes stress, **yeah**, and then the family start arguing, you know, **yeah**, and things like that, so then your, sort of, settled home life then doesn't become as...I suppose that's got a big, erm, sort of, effect on, on well-being, **yeah**. Erm, what else do I think?...Health, we have a lot to do with doctors and dieticians, **you've just...you've just mentioned**, yeah. Erm, health visitors weren't so great, so we...but we've, you know, found where dieticians were brilliant, so that was a, you know...We've got a good relationship at the doctors, you know, we see the same person, so that's, sort of, a big worry, sort of, taken off us, **yeah**...that you know you've got somewhere to go...so that's all towards, erm...Not great at nursery, sometimes crying, and things like that, **mmm**, but they, again, have been brilliant, **mmm**. We've got now a, a routine, erm...(long pause).

So, so, in what way would you say your medical people have contributed to her well-being?

Erm, well, I was clueless because never had any issues with my oldest children. It was from...She was six week old, so, **right, ok**, she was allergic to milk, protein, the...it was trial and error...moved on to erm, soya, was allergic to that, erm, so then

they moved on to prescription formula and then, when we started weaning, it was gluten and wheat and pea protein. **Goodness me.** Erm, so all the dairy replacements which is soya, she can't have either, cos she's allergic to that! (laughs) So, erm it was just...I was absolutely clueless, erm, as in...just, just, it was daunting, cos everything I seem...when a baby you feed, don't you?...**yeah, yeah,** everything I was doing was making her **poorly,** worse, yeah, **yeah.** So they were...advice, supportive, any questions?...didn't make you feel like it was, like you were the only person that it had happened to, you know, sort of, put things in perspective, give you tips, so it was really, sort of, nice to have that...and the doctors, sort of, you know, saying 'Don't worry, **mmm,** this can happen.' and, you know, um...and then seeing an improvement slowly, and things like that was but...I mean, the dietician was probably the key person **yeah,** who, sort of, said 'Everything you've ever done with your other children, throw it out of the window, **window,** because I'm gonna tell you stuff that you would never dream of doing **mmm,** with your other two but we're gonn...' - because she didn't put weight - 'we're gonna get her to eat.'. So it was, sort of, trusting somebody, going against your own instincts, you know. I'm thinking, well, you can't just let them eat all day, you know, **mmm,** they have mealtimes, **mmm,** and it's, you know...we have breakfast and then a snack and then lunch and we do it like that, **mmm,**...and she was just saying 'Forget all of it.' So, it were totally against my own...what I have done with me other children...what I see as **yeah,** a healthy diet was being thrown out of the window, and it was...right, we're going to do it. So, it was trusting somebody else with what they're telling you to do, with feeding your own child, **mmm,** you know, it's a big thing. **So that person was a really key factor for you wasn't it, yeah, in making her better.** Yeah, which, you know, it did work and...everything she was saying actually... thinking ah yeah, that does work and, you know, it was just someone changing your mind set of how, you know...because she was a terrible eater, she used to spit chew and spit out and not swallow anything and...because she sort of said that, 'In her mind, even from being a baby, she will associate food with pain.'. So, as she got to being a toddler, **mmm,** putting things in her mouth from being a baby which...we can't understand that they have memory...but she said 'It is that what happens.'. Erm, so it was just little bits, things - oh yeah, that makes sense, **yeah,** you know, and starting to put in daily life - actually that's why she does that, or what...so that were, she was a really big, big part in, in us, you know, the early bit of **mmm**...even up 'til she was probably two, **yeah.** Two was when she, sort of, stepped back a bit and said, 'Right, you've got the tools now. You see how you go.' **You get on with it.** and well, yeah, erm...**Well, that's wonderful that you had somebody there to...that's it...to deal with that, isn't it.** That's it. **Mmm.**

Well, you've sort of touched a little bit on my next question. Uhmm. Thinking about what you've said about well-being, yeah, and the factors that affect it, yeah. Erm, how do you use that knowledge, uhmm, to provide an environment at home that helps to support your children's learning and development?

Yeah...erm...

What sort of things would you do or put in place?

Erm, well, you do the basics as in, if you're playing, it's... We play shops, so you would count and you, you know, organise things. And she's just got a sweet shop for Christmas and we've had to take all the sweets that came out of it and put the ones she (laughs) she can have (laughs). Um, and she plays with her older brother and sister in doing stuff like that erm...and she reads books, like on a night, you read books, **yeah**, and things so that, sort of, just comes into, sort of, daily life in natural routine is. Erm, she knows passwords for phones, (laughs) she know...but that's having an older brother and sister...she's amazing. **Gosh!** But now she'll say...I had to tell Mrs T, I said, 'If she asks you 'what's your password?' she means 'How do you spell your name?' (both laugh). 'So, Mrs T...' I said, 'she's not trying to hack the, the computer system!', (both laugh) I said, 'She means...' And that, that is them two, cos she'll play games with them two so, **yeah**...erm, they have like a tablet thing...so they'll put games on for her and she does it, which I suppose is just nowadays, and that's yeah. **Well, it's the new way of doing things isn't it.** Well, that's it. At schools, everything... you know, it is all just, sort of, taking over, but, yeah **mmm**, ...so she, but that's just I suppose... She counts her stairs as she's going up, counts the stairs, she'll, you know...and I think it's just sort of, probably don't notice that you do it as such...because it's just in, **yeah**, at this age especially, in just play. It's, you know, um, she mixes eggs, and she'll, you know, and counts that, but I suppose, yeah, you don't even...I wouldn't say as such we do anything structured, as in, **mmm**, erm, this hour is for doing this, or this hour...not at this age, erm, **no**. The older two have homework. They come home from school and do their homework, **yeah**, but I think at this age its more...just as you're, if you looked into it closely, oh actually, yeah we do do that then, or that then **mmm**,...within playing. But I don't think...

And what's your specific role in, in that play?

Erm, well, (laughs and rolls eyes) she'll tell me who I am, (laughs) so I'm either the shopkeeper or I'm the dad or, it depends who is...who, or who you're, erm, so somebody will be, like...She has, she's the boss with her brother and sister, so one of them will have to be the nursery teacher. She'll say who you are, (laughs) so you just be that person until she's decided she's had enough, she wants to be that person so...She puts everything in carrier bags, everything, it's always in carrier bags when she's playing. She's hundreds of carrier bags (laughs). I don't know what that's about, but...erm, so yeah, we jus...it's just, you know, I'm whoever I'm told to be (laughs) in the game! (both laugh). **As long as you act it out in the right way yes! and don't get told off I suppose!** (laughs). Oh Yes! She will tell you if you're doing it wrong! (both laugh). **Oh lovely!** Yeah! **I love hearing things like that!** (both laugh).

Ok, um, so you've mentioned a little bit about the early years setting already. What do you expect from an early years setting? Erm. What do you expect them to provide?

To prov...obviously, sort of, the educational side that maybe at home you can only do to a point, so, to go to that next level a little bit as in...they can, sort of, they've got the equipment, or they've got, so, even still, still in play, but they've probably got more equipment, **mmm**, ...so, be able to, sort of, start assessing I suppose, if there's anything that they need to, you know, just maybe, be able to ex...cos, they do their notes...and with, like I say, when you meet for, like, the parents evening they can say they can do this, and this is what we're working on next, because even though I've got two older kids, you do forget. Should they be really being able to start to do that at this age, or should they?... because you don't, and all kids are different **mmm**...but I suppose if there's anything alarming, that they would be able to, sort of, point you out, **yeah**, and say that, maybe we need to be just looking at that, or that, because, like I said, if you think everything's alright...and there's nothing wrong with that actually...in comparison, there might be something, you know, that stands out to somebody else. Erm, that they'd probably push them a little bit out of their comfort zone maybe... because at home we're quite soft aren't we?, and we don't, and, erm...when they did the Christmas show, she cried hysterical when we were all sat in the audience. She did not want to do it at all, and I had to sit on the stage at the, behind her, to make her sit there, and, I mean, eventually she did join in, but she'd done the dress rehearsal with parents watching absolutely fine, but I wasn't here. So just pushing them to do the bits, cos at home, I wou...you know you say 'it doesn't matter, you don't have to do that' **mmm**, whereas, I suppose, at school, it's just, **mmm**, you know, pushing them to try things that they wouldn't try, or erm, do things, erm. They've been really good, as in the food side of things, **yeah**, because obviously, **yeah, yeah**, they've had to, you know, know. So, it's knowing that they support everything. So the, erm, we bring her gluten free pasta in and they'll warm it up for her, you know, and just doing things like, to make it easier for me, cos she has sandwiches, but there's onl...she won't always eat the bread, **oh right**, and she won't always eat, so it's just, I suppose, carrying through from home that, sort of, type of thing. They've been absolutely brilliant, you know, **mmm**, erm, she cries on a morning so they peel her off me (uses hands to demonstrate), **(laughs)** you know, and we do all the...(laughs) My oldest daughter did the same, so I'm hoping it eventually goes away but um, yeah, just to sort of try and...She might have interests that I don't know she's got interests, **yeah**, you know, **yeah**, because I...might be something I've never done myself so...I wouldn't do at home, and it maybe, oh she likes doing this, **mmm**, or , and that. So it's different experiences that probably, maybe just aren't, because I've never done it before, whether we've not tried, so just I suppose that. Try and...(pause).

So what prompted me, what prompted you, sorry, to send her to a pre-school in the first place? What...

Erm, I think it's important that they don't just start school at five and go from the home environment to school, erm, **right**. I've not done it, she did go to a private nursery when she was two, erm, due to my work, but I work evenings now and weekends, so when she comes here it's not for work, **right**, I send her for her **yeah**. Erm, like I say, because I've got quite a big extended family, she does spend a lot of time within the family where she's comfortable, **mmm**, and I think to go from that to reception class, fully to school full-time, is too big of a jump. I think they need that transition of other adults being involved that aren't family, you know, and other children, and...She doesn't like it boisterous, if boys are rolling her, she does not like it, **mmm**, but she needs to see that, because when she goes to school, **yeah**, that's tough, because she's got to go to school. So I think just, sort of, exposing her to stuff that she, you know, doesn't, you know. Come it from being the youngest from quite a lot older, she doesn't, sort of, see the play fighting side of things, and the, you know...**yeah**, we go to play gyms and things but again, she just does her own thing, **mmm**, she doesn't have to be contained in a classroom, **yeah, yes**, and she's got to find that there will be children she doesn't particularly like, **mmm**, or whatever, so I think that pre-school's quite a good way of that transition into, you know... sometimes you have to join in an activity that you don't maybe not want to do, but you've got to do it, because there's rules and **mmm**, you know, it's, I think that it is imp...really important. My other two went to school nursery, erm, and I think it is, it's just getting them in that different environment with **yeah**, other adults, other peop...and they've got to be a bit indep...I think it's their independence **yeah**, it gets them to think for theirself. If they want to go to the toilet, they've got to, you know, ask somebody and it's it's, I mean, she's come on absolutely loads since she started here **Has she?** Yeah, just in a **that's nice isn't it**, yeah, yeah, in her speaking, in her, you know, everything. She really has come on because at home, not through any fault but, if they've got a word for something and you know what they mean, or they're pointing to something and you know, you give 'em it without...whereas when they're somewhere else, they've got to say 'I want...Could I have that please? or could I...' **mmm**, so, I think that it's...that that's really important. It's just making them that little bit more independent and ready for school **mmm, yeah**, erm, but we'll see...we may still have tears for...(laughs) (both laugh) **I think it's quite normal isn't it these days**. Year 4 my eldest stopped crying (laughs).

Erm, right, erm, I'm going...I've got a little prompt sheet here yep, that's got some erm, some words on it yep, and these words are taken from erm, from the curriculum, yep, the Foundation Stage curriculum, yep, that we follow in Early Years, yep. Erm, I'm not, I'm not testing your knowledge of the policy necessarily (laughs) erm, (both laugh), good! Not at all actually! Good! (both laugh) I just want to know how you feel about some of these words. Yep, yep. Ok, and they're...and some of these themes so just pick, pick one, and and err, and tell me what it means to you, how you feel about it.

Erm, I think the first one that stands out is assessment **right**, because I don't 100% agree with assessments. **Ok**. I think that children do develop, I think it's nice to know at what stage, d'you know, little bit as in, like that, but I think that assessing them and saying like SATS, I completely disagree with **mmm**, because I just think that children do come on and they have so many different talents and erm, my husband's dyslexic. He's a fabulous plumber, gas engineer, you put him, it took him 6 years to do his exams because putting it on paper, he could **mmm**, you know, he did eventually **mmm**, erm, my oldest daughter struggled and at infants school I once went and the, the teacher was just, well, she just sat and told me everything she couldn't do **right**, that in English she probably wouldn't get to that level she need to be for the SATS, she probably wouldn't get to that level **mmm**, and I said but she's a fabulous draw...you know, drawing **mmm**, she's brilliant at, at making things, she's brilliant at dance, but none of that came into it because the SATS was the English and the Maths and the **mmm**, ...so assessment to me, I just think that does not show children's talents when they're not necessarily just what they say **yeah**, and...

So how did that make you feel, that experience at the school?

I was extremely annoyed **mmm**. I went to the head teacher. I was upset for her, **yeah**, she didn't know because she wasn't there **mmm**. I was upset for her and I just thought if this, at the beginning of her school career **mmm**, is how, that I think that that's rea...you know, really unfair because that's not showing the children's en...if they've got strengths in other areas that may not be that, then that's never gonna show **mmm**, because I just think it's, at that age, **yeah**, I just think that that's... of course I understand that they've got to read and write, **yeah**, that is not what I'm saying, but I think that, that ...what they test and how they...**no**, I just think is not always...

Well, there's two tests in the Early Years curriculum. There's one at, yep, there's the Two Year Check, yep, which you may yep, or may not yep, yep, have experienced, and then there's the baseline assessment yep, at the end of yep, reception yep, before they go into yep, yep, the National Curriculum yep. Erm, how do you feel about that? Those specific tests? What about the Two Year Check?

Erm, I think to just see as a pointer, maybe just to see whereabouts they are. I think there's too much emphasis on trying to push the ones that are very good, **mmm**, up there, **mmm**, and the ones that somehow struggle a bit...I don't know...and then the ones in between that'll manage, just seem to just, **mmm**, get left to manage cos they'll pass anyway, and I just think that they all should have, you know. I don't know, I just have a, erm, I think it was probably that parent's evening, that, that has completely, sort of, changed **changed your view**, my attitude on on how they assess and she just, all she wanted to talk about was, that she would only scrape through on this **mmm**, and I just thought 'Are you gonna sit and tell me the things she can do?' **mmm**, or...so probably that has scarred or, or had a big influence on how I feel, but I just think children are children and it...that we all sort of learned...Unless there's any

issues, they will learn to read, they will learn to write, **yeah**. It will all come at different times **times**. I would say it be Year 7 before my daughter...maths sort of clicked with her a bit **yeah**...erm, and all the way through she struggled. She had to do these special lessons and it made a big, big issue out of something that she just was gonna take a bit longer for, **yeah**, for it to click and, and then I think it gives them a bit of a, sort of, a doubt...'oh, I'm not good at that'...so it's, **mmm**, I don't know, I just think at that age they all come along at different stages and maybe just let them...be a bit more natural, you know, **yeah**...you know.

Ok, well pick another one then.

Erm, school readiness. Erm, (smirks) (**laughs**) I...my oldest daughter, which obviously I won't talk about, was an August baby so she, and they'd stopped the January intake, so she went and she was four two weeks before she started school, **Wow!** And she was a very young four, erm, and she socially was not ready for school. Erm, that's why I think she cried 'til she was 8. (**sharp intake of breath**) Year 4 when she stopped crying. **Really?** Cos I just think that it absolutely daunted her from, even though she'd been to the nursery and then she'd gone to school, erm, she was absolutely worn out. She'd gone from having a sleep in the afternoons still, to school and it was just, there she was in school, had to do, and she was so quiet and so reserved and real...at home she wasn't, but got into the school environment **mmm**, and it was like, a different child, erm, and I think it was age, purely just down to age. I think she just was not socially **mmm**, she was... all children turning five two week after, and at that age a year socially makes a massive difference and she just was not ready **mmm**. And if I'd have had the option I would have said 'she's not ready yet' **mmm**, and let her because she just, she just did not seem...how she played with other children, what their language skills... she probably couldn't say what she wanted to say or they weren't...not just size wise, cos they're all different...it was the inter...how they play...you could see the difference in the playground, you could just see. She, you know, at dinner time, was absolutely worn out, she just wanted to go, you know, go home and so, I'm not, I don't know, I don't think when they've just turned four I don't think they're ready for full-time school. **No.**

What sort of age do you think they might be ready at, for full-time school?

Erm, I think...I mean, I'm an August baby myself, so I'm August, so I was always the youngest in the year, so I'm...but I was always alright at school, the work wise I was fine, **mmm**. She struggled a little bit **mmm**, and I think that was that. But, erm, I think as they get to five, they sort of are a little bit more their own person **mmm**, a bit more in control, they've sort of, I don't know, just...how can I explain?...just seem to not be babies any more, **yeah**. There seems to be like a...I don't know why, just as they get to five, it sort of changes and they're a bit more self-assured or they know and they understand things a bit better, erm, **mmm**, whereas I think four, they're still bordering sometimes...not all of them **no**, cos you can't... on being toddler, you know, **yes, yeah**, it just, it just depends on...and we probably did baby her a bit, she was oldest

and we still did...you know, you know. She were first grandchild on both sides it were probably as much us, but then ... (in a whispered voice) why should they grow up fast? **Yeah**. You know, why should you be trying to make them grow up fast because they've got to be at school full-time **yeah**, (returns to normal tone of voice) and I just think it's...goes against everything (**laughs**) - you want them to be children, then you've got to make 'em grow up cos they've got to be at school **yeah**, and picking their own dinner and...

How does that make you feel as a parent? Erm... Looking at your child going through something like that?

Yeah, it was hard, I mean, having to walk out and them saying 'The more attention you give it she will continue.', which I knew was right, so I was going in, walking away, then they'd ring me, well, they used to let her ring me from reception and tell me that she were all right, that's how they used to do it, and she'd be fine after a while, erm, but then I'd pick her up and she'd be like, you know, **mmm**, I could see she were just so tired and worn out and...she's not gonna enjoy it because it...**mmm**, she's tired and fed up and um, it's awful cos you've got no choice **no**. There's no choice, you have no choice it's, they are... Go to school!...and that's it **mmm**, you have no, sort of choice in...do you think that, it's, like, the first time ever having children that there's a choice that's out of your hands, cos everything up to that point, you decide for them, **yeah**. You know, you decide if they go to nursery, you decide what they eat, what they wear, **mmm**, what the...where you take them, where you go on holiday, everything and then it comes to school and that's the first time everything's out of your control then, **mmm**, **mmm**. You can't be there when you want to, you can't, you know, do anything about it, you can't sort of say 'well, my child's not ready for school yet, so I'm gonna wait.', cos you've got no...

Well they've actually changed it now, haven't they, Have they? for summer birthdays. Oh, I don't know. **Yeah, there's been some...** You see it's been so long **yeah**, since my older ones, you see. **There's been, there has been some changes I know, erm, I'm not sure how it's going to work, yeah, of what...I know you can defer yeah, now, so...** and then, then you'll have all the issues of 'should I do that, give in', then they're gonna end up in a school year where they're all older (**laughs**) **I know, you can't...** so it brings a whole other set of issues (**laughs**). **It's difficult, isn't it?** It is, yeah, you don't know what to do for the best.

What about one of the other ones?

Erm, key person I think's nice because I think that they've, erm, like, A's got one and she really likes...the only problem we have is, if that key person goes home for lunch, or isn't here...these last two days...it makes it a lot worse, as in the crying, **mmm**, because that's who she feels...not that...everybody, she, she loves everybody in, **mmm**, in, you know, but I think she associates that person with 'it's all alright' and then they're not there it's **mmm**, you know, it's a little bit...that's, err,

she's cried, you know, all week...we didn't...because of that, **yeah**, erm, so I do think it's nice because that person, sort of, paying that little bit more attention to your child so, noticing if anything out of the ordinary **yeah**, or anything like that, **yeah**, cos you can not obviously **no**, keep an eye on a massive group of children but so, I think it is important because if there's anything out of the ordinary or not what, what usually happens then they're obviously gonna be the ones that would probably notice before, **yeah**, anybody else so it does...and I like a say, come in with food and whatever...and I can go to that person and I'm not having to explain all the time to different people, **yeah**, so I do think it's, it's a good idea but then it's got it's downfalls, like I say, **yeah**, that person's not here and then we have tears **mmm**, and things **mmm**, but, erm, I suppose they can't get attached too much to one person because every year it's gonna **change** change through school **through school, yeah**, so, it's got **it's part of that learning process isn't it?**, it's probably got, yeah, its benefits and it's disadvantages, **mmm**. At this age I think it's important for them **yeah**, but, like I say, probably a little bit too, too much sometimes cos she clings to that person **mmm**, and then when they're not here it's...but I suppose that in itself is a lesson **yeah**, because it's not, you don't, it's, especially school, you have one teacher then you'll go to your next teacher and then you, throughout your **mmm**, school you'll come across ones you don't particularly like and so it's, I suppose all experience for them at a young age it's **mmm**...

That kind of links with this one then (points to 'Working in Partnership with Parents'), yep, yep, **doesn't it, a little bit**. Yeah, it does, erm, yeah cos I think it is important because, they're at school so much more, you know, during the week, than at home, because they have their tea, they have their bath, there isn't much time before bedtime **yeah**, so I suppose it comes to a point they seem, they spend a lot of time at school, so they're as important as us at home, so I think it's important you work together, so, like I say, I can come in with, about the food **mmm**, about things like that, and be able to speak to them, and then equally they can tell me if there's anything.

And you've mentioned parent's evenings, yep, yep, haven't you?

So that's sort of, erm, a good point. Like I say, I did say to Mrs T 'I am not interested in what you're saying she should be...' at this age sure, she should be doing this, I said, 'I'm not...just tell me how's she's doing' **yeah**, because as long as she's happy and she's playing and she's interacting and she's doing all them things, the rest of it at three, I'm not bothered, **no**, I'm not bothered, **no** what she can coun..she can count to 20 or...she can...and she can write her name...but I'm not...that to me at the minute is not important, **yeah**, and I want to know that she's coming in and she's playing and she's herself and erm, because I just don't think that when they're young that it should be such a big, **no**, issue.

So then, that comes down to here then (points to 'Learning & Development') really so how do you feel about learning and development at this age?

At this age I think there's too much emphasis as they um...(someone opens and closes the door to the room) erm, too much emphasis on erm, academic side, not just in early years erm, in reception, in...I think that, as much as they try to incorporate it into play and things like that, I just think there is far too much paperwork on if they are at a certain level, on things **mmm**, what they should be for that age because I just do not know how you can judge children on the same chart **mmm**, when... oh they are just...you might have one child that's come from being at home with their mum all the time, never been in a nursery, comes into reception class and tries totally, you know, to, to join in with a child who's maybe been at private nursery since 6 week old **mmm**, and has done their name for four year on a piece of paper because if they don't, they won't know it's their drawing and I just think that comparing the two at such a young age when they could come from so different, you know, backgrounds...that I just think it's...and puts pressure on the children **mmm**, and I don't think they need...I think they should just... it's more, I think, about socially getting theirself and their identity and their independence, and the learning just comes **comes later**, with that, yeah, **yeah**.

Ok, have we done all of them then? Yeah. Yes, I think. Right, well that's the last question. Is there anything else you just want to add no...or anything that you can think that you've missed. I don't think so...I hope...have I answered them alright! You've been fine! Don't worry about it. Thank you very much anyway. No it's fine.

*** is substituted for words that are unclear on the recording

Appendix 7 – Interview with Saira

Ok, so that's recording now. So, my first question is, what does the term well-being mean to you?

Child's welfare, **yep**, erm, their mental, physical well-being, mmm...do you want me to elaborate? **Yes, please! (laughs)** erm, basically...**or perhaps explain those things a little bit more...** basically, err, when I mean...I want a happy child. I'll be talking in my terms about M, **yeh**, erm, and Z, and I, I wanna happy child, err... Mental...I mean, I, I did have a bit of problem when I had Z, erm, my child, cos she was the only one for the first three years, err, we had a lot of problems, issues with her. She was very jealous, **mmm**, and, err, she didn't understand the concept of having another sister, **yeh**, erm. She was very violent towards me, actually, **mmm**, erm, she couldn't understand why Mummy couldn't pick her up...cos I had a c-section, **yeh**. So, me and M, I think...I, I was very close to her in that sense of her well-being, cos I was very concerned about her behaviour change, **yes**. So, her behaviour changed, her attitude changed towards me, she went towards her Daddy more, erm, she wouldn't want to talk to me at certain times...because she (Z) was a baby I was feeding her...she just didn't understand the concept of why Mummy's looking after the little baby, **mmm**. And she couldn't understand why...the baby's here now, why is she not going back? (laughs, both laugh)...that she was here to stay. So, as, I mean, the well-being of my child...I was very concerned at that stage, erm. Other than that, basically, since she's (M) been born, she's been a healthy child, getting the right, err, erm, food, the right environment, and happy environment, having a happy child, **mmm**. Secure, **mmm**, having a secure environment, erm...

Do you mean physically secure? Physically, **yep**. Or do you mean secure in a diff...in a different way?

Mentally and physically, **mmm**, because she needs to know that this is her home, it was, **yeh**, safe for her, erm, without fearing of going in to the next room and having Mummy by her side, **mmm**, she's able to run around freely, play freely here. That was very important, erm, for me, to know that my child is really secure in their environment, erm and I think I've, I've done a good job with her. She's very secure in her own self, very confident little girl, she is, **mmm**. Hopefully, Z should be the same! **Mmm**. (laughs and turns to her child) Baby! So that's what I mean by her welfare and her well-being, erm. Having the right food, making sure my baby's healthy, my girl's healthy, erm, doing what most mothers do, I think, avoiding sugars, and, you know, basically, having a good diet for the child. **Uhhmm. Ok**.

So, thinking about your understanding of well-being, what would you say the factors are that affect a child's well-being? You've already referred to something that affected your child, what other things might affect their well-being?

I think people they associate with, **yeh**. That's a very big factor because they do get influenced – they're children, aren't they? Erm, I wanted...I'm not, basically, biased

about people who do certain things in their own environment, as long as my child is secure. I've...I think...cos she's my first born...I'm gonna share something very difficult here (laughs) **mmm, go on then**, because it's a weakness within myself but it's something that I've understood and I've done it very different with my second child...I was over possessive with her, I was very protective of her, didn't want to harm her. I think, because she was the first, erm, I was not happy sharing, erm, I would want to feed her, change her, not pass her off to anyone. I mean, I was possessive to the end of...when my husband...I would hand her over, not a problem...but when it take...when it came to taking care of her, I'd do it. I think it's mentally thinking that no one could take care of her as better than me, **mmm**, erm, but that I think was due to, as well, me being ill, my post natal, **yeah**, erm, having a very secure attachment with my girl, err, because some people, I think, become distant, I became very attached to her, erm, everything was...revolved around her. I forgot about myself, you know. I think that was very wrong as well. Forgetting yourself in the process...**mmm**, you are a mother but you're yourself as well. You're an individual, **mmm**, and I don't seem to have got that concept, at that time, of my life. I was very, very involved in M, **mmm**. My life revolved around her. I didn't go out, didn't socialise, nothing, didn't hand her over for half an hour just to give myself a break, **mmm**. I thought, 'no, it's not tiring for me'...cos I would be exhausted, **mmm**, waking up at night and...but I wouldn't let it down. I just kept on going, erm. So I think with M, I'm a bit more relaxed...with Z sorry...more relaxed, erm, there's at times when I've handed her over to Dad and got a good night's sleep, **mmm**, you know, just gone up to bed and let him put her to sleep, left her over at her Grandma's for a few hours, **mmm**, just so I could do some housework, erm, have a bit of peace myself, with M in school, and her (Z) there. Just be myself, **mmm**, erm...

So how would you say that's affected the well-being of both children?

Z at this stage, at 7 months, is a lot more relaxed. She's able to go to a lot of other people. She's, err, she doesn't cry when seeing strangers. She's at that stage where you know, she wants Mummy in the room for just security, cos of that's of her age, she's 7 months, erm. M wasn't. If anyone walked, if, you know, if someone held her, she'd cry, cos she was so used to with me, **mmm**. I don't think I did a good thing for her there, **mmm**, because, I mean, I didn't do it intentionally, **no**, it's just, you know, I realise it's...and I realise this now, because I've had my second child and I realise where I went wrong, **yeah**, with M, and at that point I thought I was doing the best for her, but I realise no, she's (Z) at that...I mean, I don't want every stranger to come and pick her (Z) up, **no**...but she's, she's (Z) confident, she's secure in the environment, **yes**, M wasn't, **no**. I'd take her somewhere, she'd want Mummy, she'd want...she was clingy...she was clingy to me, **yeah**, erm, and, err, you know, that was a difference. That's a big difference, **mmm**. The environment of security was that M was a lot more clingy to me, she'd want Mummy to feed her, she'd want Mummy to change her, but it's because she didn't know anything else, **anything else, yeah**, and she was so used to Mummy. But with Z, a lot difference because when I go over to

my parents, she actually hasn't...she sleeps with my Mum, **mmm**, in...her travel cot is in my Mum's bedroom, erm, I get to sleep in my own room and my err, err, eldest is with my sister in her bed. So actually on the weekend I'm basically baby free! (both laugh). But with M I didn't have that, **no**, because I wouldn't allow it, **yes**, and I think that's a difference in within me, **yeah**, and the child is much, much more confident, **mmm**. She's able to play, she knows Mummy's gonna come back, **yes**, so, you know, erm, it makes a hell of a lot of difference.

So you would say that your behaviour as a parent would influence a child's well-being?

Absolutely!! Because a child looks on their mother, **mmm**, and if the mother introduces all this stuff, it makes a child what they are, **yes**, and far as say, that it makes them, it moulds them into what they are, **yeah**.

So anything else that you think might influence a child's well-being, other than the parents and the family home?

It depends. Behaviour? Erm, with M we had a lot of family problems, **mmm**, erm. I think M's seen a lot of shouting, **right**, in her...erm, I had professional help, **yeah**. I was, like I said, I was going through post natal, **yeah**. Me and my husband, erm, we had a lot of issues and thankfully, M's not, not actually...she was at that age when she wasn't able to understand, **yeah**, but she's, she's come across loud noises, **mmm**, and obviously that, I think that might have been another implication. She was very clingy to Mummy, erm, because she, she'd witnessed like, loud noises, banging, **mmm**, **mmm**, and stuff like that, or shouting, rowing. Z's not seen any of that, **no**, Z's not seen anything of that, **mmm**, erm. We were a lot more secure as a family, **mmm**, erm. She's...she is a Daddy's little girl. I think they both are daddy's little girls. But...I mean, they spend minimum time with him because by the time he comes home, **yeah**, erm, she's (Z) in bed. He spends a lot of time with her (M), their 2, 3 hours, and then...what happens in the morning, he wakes up at half six just so he can spend couple of hours before she (M) goes to school and he goes to work, **mmm**. So they have their bonding time every morning, they have breakfast together, they get ready together, **mmm**, brush their teeth together. So that's, like, something they do routine wise together, erm. That's my husband who's created his own attachment with his girl, **mmm**, erm, and with her (M), he knows when he comes back she's gonna spend time with him, **mmm**, erm. So he's set his own times when to spend time with the girl, **yep**, and the majority of the time they're with me, **mmm**...the majority of the time. That's why I've taken them out to places like, erm, parks, so she just can ride her bike, erm. She's going taekwondo's soon, just so she can spend time with her Daddy, err, one, err, hour, erm. We're thinking of taking her to rock climbing. There's these activities where she likes to do, err, climbing on walls, **mmm**, you know, just so she can go out and socialise, **yeah**, erm. Take her to the neighbours, get her introduced to everyone. She goes for bike rides in, in the

neighbourhood with her...some other parents that I know, **mmm**, who take their daughters...

You've also got a nice little cul-de-sac here, haven't you, where...

Yeah, yeah, she's very, very lucky. I've got really good neighbours Tina, **mmm**. I can leave her outside and they'll have...they'll keep an eye out for her, don't worry, **yeah, yeah**, and I can just go in and out, **yeah**, and do my work, **yeah**, and it's such a sense of security that I know my baby's gonna be ok, **mmm**, and if there's any problem they just give me a shout, **yeah**, is it. I've got an elderly couple next door and they'll just keep an eye out on her, **yeah**, and she's very friendly, she talks to everyone, **mmm**, so she's confident, **yeah**, and she's a chatterbox (**laughs gently**). She's, she's loving that challenge. She's got everyone...she's rang everyone down for the Chatterbox Challenge, erm, 'Get your purses ready, I'm gonna come for sponsoring.' (**laughs**) And my Dad's like, 'Oh God!' (both laugh). She was, like, attacking her Grandad the other day, yesterday, she's, like, 'You need to give me money!'. (both laugh). He's, like, 'What for?' 'I need it for school!'. **That's lovely!** So, yeah, **mmm**, you know, it's been a, it's been a ride, **mmm**, but I've seen a difference between M's upbringing, the way I've been, **mmm**, and how I've been with Z and it's reflected on my children, **mmm, mmm**. I, I see the difference, err, that's why I think parents...the way the parents act is a big influence on the baby's well-being, **yeah**.

Ok, so you've, sort of, touched a little bit on the next question already. So, you obviously have an understanding about what you want for your children and their well-being, uhmm, so, what do you, what do you do at home to support their learning and the way they develop?

Oh, erm, if you met M you'd know! (**laughs**) You have seen her, she's quite a little madam! She's, she loves to talk, **mmm**, she loves to interact, **uhmmm**, erm. I have, she...can I show you some of the things that we do...**yes of course you can!** Yeah? Er, she would have shown you herself. She would have been dead proud. (**laughs gently**). Oh, where's her Mickey Mouse bag...just one moment...(chats to herself away from the microphone whilst searching for something). She has been very fond of reading books, erm. She does what she does in school. You know how they have the book high in the air and she reads, and she, like, sits me and her Dad down (**laughs**) and her sister and she reads to us and she makes stories up, so, you know, and we actually, we actually encourage her, you know, and ask her 'ooh, what's this?' and that, erm. These I bought her... (gets some pre-writing books out of a bag) and she does them when she wants to. You know the wipe books? **Yes**. And you'll see, she's done all sorts in them. She gets a star if she's done good work. Now, I'll show you, erm, she basically scribbles sometimes. She'll write if she wants to, erm, basically just do what she wants and it's like her...her favourite thing is writing. If you see my sofas, you'll see writing all over them (**laughs, both laugh**). She, she likes to play around with books and read. That's her favourite thing. She'll, basically, (opens another book). I think this is another one she was doing yesterday. She was...she's

starting to get better with herself...**Wow! Good writing that, isn't it?** Yeah, she's, she's actually doing a lot better. And she'll sit with me and she'll say 'Mummy, can I do it with you watching me?' and then I'll encourage her, **yeah**, 'Oh that's brilliant!' and 'What word is that?', and she's actually recognising the 'h' and the 'l'. **Yeah!** She's writing her name. (coughs). Excuse me. So she's, you know, **mmm**, she's actually doing really well. Here's something...she knows all her squares and the circle, or if we're eating something, we'll encourage her, 'What shape is this?' **mmm**. She loves playing games, like that, **yeah**, erm. Pastimes, she like any other children. She'll want to watch TV. She likes her cartoons. She's on You Tube and she sometimes likes to move and do stuff. I'll have to show you a video. Do you...is it ok if I show you a video of her? **Yeah, yeah**. Just for your research, you'll see what she's like as a character.

P2 shows me a video of her daughter M telling her Dad how to apply mascara. She demonstrates using a real mascara brush and then says 'and then you're perfect' which makes him laugh. She then shows him how to replace the wand back into the bottle.

So, you'll see, basically, she loves dressing like princesses. She's been inviting, erm, U and everyone, erm, to a birthday party. I says 'What birthday party?' (**laughs**) (M) 'We're having Frozen cakes and Batman cakes and you're sat all dressed like princesses and you're coming to my house on Monday.' (**laughs**) I went, 'Excuse me!'. (**laughs**). I'll have no idea! (both laugh). So, she's very confident, **yeah**, and err, she loves, you know...**but you allow her to do that, that's the point isn't it. You're...** I encourage good behaviour, **yeah**, err. We have got to the tantrum phase and err, **mmm**, we did have a naughty step but that's not working anymore, **mmm**. So what I do is, err, if she's getting very out of hand, I just go and put her on her bed, **mmm**, let her calm down. When she's ready to apologise...she has her crying moments...she'll cry sometimes up to half an hour...and I think as a parent, she's being strong, **mmm**, basically...crocodile tears they are, **mmm**, and she'll cry, cry, cry and then I says 'When you're ready to apologise, you tell me and I'll come and see to you.' But sometimes it's taken up to half an hour and she's, like 'I'm ready to say sorry!' I'll be like 'Why are you saying sorry for? Do you understand?' **mmm**, She does, **yes**, she understands. She's at that age where she knows everything she's doing and she knows how to push Mummy's buttons, erm, and sometimes I have to...you know when you've had a long day, **yes**, you tend to snap, **yes**, erm, I've done that on one or two occasions and I've realised now, I shouldn't do that because they are children, at the end of the day. **But she's just testing your boundaries, though, isn't she?** Absolutely. **She's just...**and you have to...**finding her way...**but you have to tell her that 'No, **mmm**, no means no.' **mmm**. She sometimes starts saying 'I want chocolate.' before, erm, dinner, **mmm**. No, **mmm**, not happening. Or if she says 'I don't want to eat this. I want this.' It'll be, like, 'Ok, you're not getting any dinner. **Mmm**. If you don't eat this, no dinner then you're going to bed hungry.' **yes**, and I have had criticism of that, from the elders, **mmm**, saying that 'That's being nice...not

nice.' Basically, **mmm**, I think that it's their own belief that 'If she doesn't want that, give her something else!' I'll be like, 'Yeah but if I make her something else, she won't want that either.', **yeah**, and I'm not wasting my time and if she's gonna eat what she's given and, you know, sometimes I'm...they're like 'Oh, she's being cruel.', but, **yeah**, I don't care what anything. I know how to deal with my child, **yes**. I know how to deal with that. I know how...I know how she is, **mmm**, erm. I know that if she needs to be told no, **mmm**, it means no, **yeah**. Sometimes she's...**So she's learning boundaries, isn't she?** Absolutely, **yeah**, I mean, sometimes my husband, he gets a bit soft hearted. He can't discipline for anything, **mmm**. But I'll say to him, 'No, she's crying, let her cry.' Sometimes a good cry let's that...**yeah, it gets it all out...**it gets it out of the system doesn't it, **mmm**, and, err, then they get back to normal like nothing's happened. They'll forget about it, and he's like 'No, she's crying, she's...this, she's...that.' I'm like, yeah, ok. **But what you're teaching her is, you're teaching her how to deal with her emotions though, aren't you?** Absolutely, like I say... **if you...if you don't allow a child...if a child never understands about crying or about not getting your own way, then they're not developing their emotions, are they?** No, no. **So I think what you're doing is actually, you're supporting her emotional development by doing that, aren't you?** Do you think so? **I think so, yeah.** I was just told I'm being cruel! (laughs) **No, No! That's fine.** Like, ok. Sometimes, you know, it does really...cos, I'm, like, I have got another child to look after, I've got things to do, **mmm**. She needs to get herself in order, erm, **mmm**. This morning she woke up, brushed her teeth with her Daddy and then came in and she put her own tights on, put her own dress on, **mmm, mmm**, erm, put her own shoes on, and she's, like, 'Mummy...what...is that ok?' and I'm, like, 'Oh, brilliant, you're such a good girl.' Encouragement. **Yeah**. She loves encouragement. She loves being told she's a good girl. She loves for getting stars and getting, erm, little sweeties, **mmm**, for being good girl, **mmm**, erm. Brushing her teeth the right way, I mean, we had it in CPS, **mmm**, they've been encouraging children, **yes**. They've had the tooth brush thing, **yes**, going...it's been really good, **yeah?** It's been fantastic. **Good.**

Right, ok, so, so why send them to pre-school then?

To mix in. To get a life of my own! (laughs, both laugh). Get some breathing time.

So what do you expect a pre-school to do?

Well, do you know, I already said to you, (coughs), excuse me, that...M was very clingy to me, obvious...as we...I don't...we had the conversation, **mmm**. When she turned two, erm, I thought school, **mmm**, she's gonna be starting soon, and erm, I thought, how is she going to...for me, **mmm**, to send her...to be able to stay a couple of hours without her...I think that was more worrying, **yeah**, than her being there! (laughs). But I didn't want...this is where the well-being thing comes in...her going into a phase where...I'm thinking... 'My Mum's just dumped me here.' **Yeah**. She needs to be able to enjoy where's she's going because that's going to be more effective for her learning, **mmm**, and she'll be a more happy child, **mmm**. So, when

she turned two, erm, I thought, ok, gotta start looking for pre-schools...she needs to go because I need to start preparing her and she potty trained...she was...she's a keen learner...she potty trained by she was two years old...and I thought well, if she's potty trained, that's good. She's very keen to learn, she likes new, **mmm**, ideas, **mmm**, and she's very, very nosey (laughs, both laugh). She's very nosey. So, I went and spoke to ML (at the pre-school). I liked CPS and the one thing really that got to me about CPS was that they give them one to one attention and there wasn't a lot of children. Because I went to B, now, this isn't a criticism, **mmm**, this is my own choice, **mmm**, as a parent, (coughs), excuse me...(then said in a quieter voice) they've got kids running everywhere, (back to usual voice level) they've got teachers, they've got supervisors, they've good, good organisation, **mmm**, but it's just very big, **mmm**. They had children from the age of 7 months in a different department, **yeah**. So, I don't...I just...**So it was like a nursery was it?** Yeah, **yeah**, B, **mmm**. I don't know, I just, I didn't...and plus, my sister-in-law's child went there. He went for a year and he picked up quite a bit of bad habits, but I know that's, **mmm**, normal with other children, **mmm**, they're mixing with, **yes, yes**, and I, I just didn't real like it. Then I thought about F, you know, **yes**, the one that's on top, **yes**, of, erm, **well it's in the same nursery group isn't it**, yeah, they're run by the same people and I was like...that's where I found out...cos I'm not from here, so I had to struggle to find out where they are, **yes**. Then I came across CPS and I went in, cos I was coming back, and I wanted to send her to FS anyway, cos I've heard good reports about that. Then I saw CPS and I thought, hmm, let's go and have a look, and I liked it. I liked U, **mmm**, cos U was the first person I met, **mmm**, and when I spoke to U she reassured me about ...'She'll be fine, but you need to separate yourself, **mmm**, from her, **mmm**, otherwise...she'll cry...', **yeah**,' **A lot of them...a lot of them do. It's that, it's that separation** I think I, I think I spoke to you as well, didn't you, **Yes. Yeah, you will have done, yeah**. You came in, you came in and I had a whole day, remember, with you guys, **mmm**, and I really liked it. So, she went in...I think it was the first time...I think when I first left her, you were, like, right, 'Mummy's got to go. (laughs gently) You're gonna be alright.' But she was fine, **mmm**, she was fine, **yeah**, and for me to see that my daughter was fine was reassuring for me, **mmm**, and I thought, yeah, she's good, and she loved it, **mmm**. The other thing is what I notice is, when she started, her communication, her language just lifted off, **mmm**. She went from shy person, a child who was just saying minimum words, **yeah**, so someone who has become a chatterbox, and that is because she's in school, **yeah**. She's so confident, then, because she was the only one, she's the only one, she actually mixed in with children. She made friends...she's got cousins but cousins are cousins, **yeah**, she needed to socialise with other children. I remember talking to U and she goes...'She's not actually...' she was very close with U, **mmm**, ...she wasn't talking to children...and it was something that was worrying, even 8 months down the line, **yes**, but she goes 'No, she's changed.' **Yeah**, 'She's actually coming out of her shell.' **Sometimes it's when those older ones go, yeah, and then they suddenly become the older ones. It helps with their confidence a little bit.** I think, yeah, **yeah**, because in September, what's happened is she's become a little boss (both laugh) and she's

like 'I'm ruling this nursery.' kind of thing, (laughs), isn't it, and she's so happy. She loves going to school, **mmm**. I love having a child who loves to go to school, **yes**, because there's no nagging in the morning, **mmm**, they eat their breakfast heartily, she looking forward to having lunch with their friends, spending time with her friends. She talks about her friends. I know H, **mmm**, I know N, **mmm**, I know K. K does this, K does that, (**laughs gently**), you know, so, you know, she's got all these stories about her friends and I love talking to her when she comes back from school and there's that 'What did you do in school today, baby?' and she'll say 'I did some colouring with...' this person and 'I did...' this and 'I did...' that, **mmm**, and teacher U said 'That's naughty.' and, erm, you know. She'll tell me that 'I had a...I read a story book.' and I'll ask her what the story was about. For me, that's a child's well-being, **yeah**, because it shows she's a happy, content child, **yeah**, who's very secure in her environment, **yes**. You hear all these horrible stories nowadays, **yeah**, and you want your...you don't want you child to be, **no**, a victim of that, **no**, or you hear this child's very isolated, **yes, yes**, and I think that's what's more dangerous because if they're isolated, they're not opening up, **mmm**, and all those kind of things brewing up, **mmm**, in them, **mmm**. I think, for a parent, I'm very lucky that my child is content in herself, **yeah**, and very, very happy in her environment, **mmm**, and CPS gives them a secure environment, **mmm, mmm**, and she's happy with her teachers...C, **mmm**. We've had new teachers in, **mmm**, and she loves each and every single one, **yeah...C, yeah**. She's able to talk about them, talk to them, **yeah**, about them, **yeah**, so it's just...she's got her attachment off U and on to other people, **yeah**, and that shows her...the way she's talking, **mmm**, the way she's acting, **mmm**, erm. She, she's like...and they've got the...Tapestry, **mmm...brilliant, mmm**, I love it, (**laughs**) you know, just going on there and seeing what your daughter's doing, **yeah...you** know, your baby's doing and looking at all the different activities she's doing. I've seen her making blocks and a necklace for U, **mmm**, so I bought her blocks, **yes**, and I goes 'You can do it at home!', you know, beads, **yes, yes** where she can make bracelets, **yes**, and stuff, and she was loving it. She was basically, loving it. (Baby was starting to crawl and fell face down on the floor, apparently asleep) 'What are you doing there? Are you happy?' **I think she nearly fell asleep then! Oh dear!**

Right, last one then. I've got some, erm, some words, some topics, and I was just wanting to know how you felt about these particular topics. So, if I give you that and then you just choose one and tell me what you think about it.

Erm, (reads title on card) policy issues. Parents Working in Partnership with Practitioners, **Yep**. In what context? **If you think about...about children? Yeah, erm, so working...like you've mentioned the staff, yeah, at the nursery. So it's that relationship between you and the staff, working together to support children's learning.**

It's very important, **yeah**, because what you've...you've got an objective view, you've got subjective view, **mmm**, you're able to see both sides of the view with them, **mmm**, but the parents has to be willing to listen, **uhmmm**. I've come across some

people who think they do...they think they know the best of the child...they do, **yeah**, they do, **yeah, yeah**, but you've got to understand that there's people who are qualified and give qualified...their expertise, **mmm**, opinions, **mmm**, erm, and you're able to...as a parent, I think you should be able to accept them, **right**. Do you understand what I'm saying? **Yeah, yeah**. So, for example, like, erm, I'll give you an example of U telling me about, you know, erm, some children cry. You know that, because you deal with it every day. For me, I'm a new mummy and you're thinking, oh, she's no one new...we, we've seen a hundred of yours. **Yes! (laughs)**. On a daily basis, we've seen hundreds of you and I'm like, yeah, but this is...you know, if I was to be rigid, I'd say, yeah, but this is my child, yes I know...but you've got the expertise, **mmm**. I'm someone who's just coming into this game, it's like a cat and mouse game basically, **yeah**, because I'm, like, protecting her, but you're, like, yes, we know but this is the actual way, **mmm**, and for example, ML giving me the advice of taking her milk away, **yes**. She'll cry three, four days...she'll be fine...and guess what Tina, that's what happened, **yes**. We were strong three, four days, **mmm**, but after four, five, thr...the fourth day, she slept through the night without any milk, **mmm**, but that was because of Tina's expertise of advice, **yeah**, not, sorry, Tina's...**ML's**, **ML's**, **yeah**, that I was able to follow. I didn't take it as a criticism, **mmm**, and I think my weakness was, as I explained before, **mmm**, as a parent, my weakness was I gave her milk, **mmm**, I curbed her appetite but I thought...what I thought was doing good, was actually not good for the baby, **yeah**, but then that's where professionals come in **But, but that's about sharing isn't it, because what...sharing what you know about your child and what you believe exactly, and sharing from the other perspective**, exactly, **yeah**. And I think it works two ways, **yeah**, you have to, you have to be able to talk to professional people and not see it as a criticism, **yeah**...actually see it as a learning curve **yeah, yeah, yeah**, because I think cer...certain people would be proud to ex...you, know, say, we did this...erm, you know, it might be wrong but it's my way, **yeah**, my child, **yeah**, you know, that kind of, **yeah**, erm, proudness. **I can appreciate that**, yeah. So, you know, erm, I think that that would be a downfall of the betterment of the child, **mmm**, or the well-being of the child, because sometimes you may not know the best, **mmm**. There is more better qualified people who can tell, you hang on...so you're able as a parent...you should be able to take that, **yeah**, without seeing it as a criticism, **yeah**. You do what you want but the information's available for you there, **yep, yeah**, so you know basically, so, that's that.

Ok, choose another one then.

Assessment, **mmm**. Is that about children's assessment? **Yeah, assessing children**. Absolutely, you need to know where they are, **yep**. You need to know what their weaknesses are, **uhmmm**. You need to know what is your child lacking and concentrate and make it better, **yeah**, how can you improve it, for example, like I said, speech, **mmm**. M was a shy person, clingy, **mmm**, she needed to go pre-school, **mmm**. She went before *******, she was 2 ½ when she went, **mmm**, but now

she's 3 ½ and that year has made such a vast difference in her life that she's a confident little girl, **mmm**, compared to a shy little girl. She's act...she's so confident you can take her and she'll talk to every single person, **mmm**, you know, and she'll go to the doctor and tell them what's wrong with her, **mmm**, she wouldn't do that before, she'd hide behind me, **mmm**, **mmm**. So, that's a very big...you have to assess the child to know what level of...

But how...how would you assess a child though? What's, what's the best way to assess a child? Because there's lots of different ways of doing that.

Depends what you are assessing, **mmm**. Behaviour, **uhmmm**, erm, habits, **uhmmm**, erm, capabilities, erm...

But how...but how would you...because in, in erm...The early years goes into school, goes right to the end of reception, ok, the same curriculum that we follow, and in school they do what's called a baseline assessment, so they're...it's quite a formal thing where they're, they're putting information in front of a child and testing their knowledge. Whereas in a... in the pre-school you've got like the two year check, where you're talking to parents about how they're doing and that's quite informal and it is based on observation. So how would you feel about the impact of assessment on a child, for example, from the child's perspective?

I...you know, I don't know but I've been happy the way M's, been assessed, **mmm**. I always talk from my own point of view because that's the only experience, **yes**, I've got Tina, **yeah**, **no**, **that's fair enough**, so I don't know if that's...is that ok? **Fair enough**, **yeah**. The assessment I see is basically, I've gone and spoke to the teachers myself, **yeah**, I've actually made...I've gone and...my main reason of joining the school was to know what my child...what, what involves, erm, in upbringing a child. The...we did the Prevent training, **yeah**, **yeah**, **yeah**, we did the health and safety training, **yeah**, you know, basically that is to update my own knowledge, **mmm**, so as a parent, I know, assessing my own child against a capability. And you have the assessment file...you know, **mmm**, you're given the files...I had a read through that, read through that and making an...making an observation d'you know, myself, **mmm**. Talking to her teachers, talking to ML, **yeah** – ML, you know, I'm a bit worried about this, **mmm**. Now, there was one thing I was worried about and I was told to chill! (laughs, both laugh). Basically, she wasn't, you know, like I said, she wasn't mixing. She was mixing very well with her cousins, and then...this was last year...and ML goes 'Give it a break! She'll be fine! Let her develop.' **Mmm**. But I was, as a parent, worried, **mmm**, that she's doing ok, **mmm**, **mmm**, if she's not, **mmm**...and talking to other parents.

But that, the form of assessment that happens in the pre-school is, is what I would call a summative assessment. They're not sitting them down and testing them. It's observation. They're observing and so the child's not really affected by that?

No, but if you're talking about the formal one, which is the SAT's...I think they do the SATS, don't they, **yes, that's later on in...yeah**, yeah, I don't think it really achieves anything, **no**, cos at that age...we, we didn't do that when we were little, **no**...I think we were just more concerned about the child's well-being, in the sense that, **yes**, they, they're doing everything they should at that age, erm, *******you know. Basically, the normal they are...they know their own personality in the sense that they know what they want, **mmm**, how they want it, **mmm**, and I think our children are very clever, **yes**. I think children generally are very clever. They know what they want, how they want it, **mmm**, when they want it, and they can be manipulative at times, because they know how to, basically, get what they want. It's using them to become more positive. **So perhaps adults underestimate children in a way**. Absolutely, you do, **mmm**. I know my husband does (laughs). He underestimates my elder little one...eldest...because she knows how to manipulate him to do a certain thing. I'll tell you what happened once, right, erm, I was in the kitchen, and she goes 'I want a Frozen sofa.' I said 'No.' - she'd seen it on the TV - I said 'No you can't because you've got a Mini Mouse chair. You use that.' 'I'm ringing my Dad,' So, she rang her Dad, and he thought she said Frozen socks, so she used it to her advantage. Because he was busy at work, he goes 'Yeah, baby, you can get it.' She goes 'Ha! Daddy said I can get it.' And I goes 'Excuse me?', and she goes, 'Yeah.' So, I rang my husband and I said 'Don't tell...you know, you told her she can have a Frozen sofa.' He goes 'Sofa? I thought she said socks.' Typical men! I says 'Well, you, what you needs to do...I'm not gonna tell her. You need to ring her. You need to ring her back. Talk to her and tell her she's not allowed a sofa.' She goes 'Mummy, that wasn't nice.' Because she knew, she knew how to manipulate my husband into getting it. Or, the other day she goes 'I want a chocolate.' I says 'No.' She goes 'You pig! I want a chocolate.' She gets really cheeky! And I started laughing. I goes 'You can do all the name calling you want. You can cry all you want. When Mummy says no, it means no.' 'Mummy, you're a pig! You're being a piggy with me now.' And she knew to press my buttons and get angry or she'll get me fed up and I'll let guil...I'll just give in. So I think we underestimate children, **yes**. That is a 3 year old playing with me, (laughs) **mmm**, you know, it just shows how clever and intelligent they are! **Yes! Yes!** And knowing that they will be able to do that. You know when I said 'No bottles.' She goes 'I hate ML.', because she knew ML said to me not to give her the bottle! It's so it makes you think how intelligent they are, **yes!** They know exactly. Yesterday she goes to me 'What made you and Daddy have Z?' and I said 'But don't you love her sister?' She goes 'I love her, but why her?' Now why you are to answer that? So, it just shows a level of atten...**yeah**, you know, intelligence that, **yeah**. She knows what she wants. She knows what she's talking about, **mmm**. So the assessment has to be the way they talk, **yes**, the way they are...observation, absolutely bang on, **mmm**, because in preschool, that's what they do, **mmm**. U...erm, they've got those Hudls...they're absolutely brilliant, **mmm**, because they take the pictures, they assess them, **yeah**, they observe them, knowing what they're doing. In FS, they don't even do that, **mmm**. At FS, they don't even do that, **mmm**. In FS, when I went to the open day...I went to see what school she's going to...they've got

different groups. They've got one which are weak children, one which are average and one which are above average. I don't think that's nice, **no**. I don't think that's nice, **mmm**. They're in two groups, some people who are going into it, some who are already there. And I said to my husband, that automatically puts you in sectors and if you're in sectors from that young age, you're not able to understand it. You become very competitive and you become...some people who is not doing well...that can actually have an adverse effect on the child, **mmm**, that might say 'I'm not as clever as my friend. She's in a different group.' **Yes**. I don't think it's healthy, **no**, and...

And how do you think that might affect the well-being of those children?

Mentally, not good, because they could become more competitive. They could become more depressed about it, **mmm**. They can play up as *******...as alternative – oh, forget this, I'll just go and do something naughty, **mmm**, – it, it, there's a lot of effects on it, **mmm**, ******* disadvantage of it. I mean, when we were in high school we had the sets, **mmm**, you know...one, two, three group, **mmm**...that in a way, is ok. I'm in set three – I need to do good, so get a move on - but that's a positive thing, because it makes the child do better. **But that's at an age where you understand a bit more about...**you're able to comprehend it, **yeah**, you're able to understand it. That's where SAT came in – I need to do good in my SATs so I can get into good groups – but at that age, I think Ofsted have done it wrong, **mmm**, **mmm**, because I've just become intro...I've *******...I've just been introduced to this concept now because of, you know, getting involved in it myself, and I was saying to my husband when we went, I goes...because he actually asked the head teacher...he goes 'So these two sectors you have, is this about the child, of how well they are in the academics?' She said 'Yeah.' She said 'Yeah.' And I said to my husband 'That's not good.' **mmm**, because that makes the child think, oh, I'm better than you or that might think, I'm not that good. It can make the child big headed! (laughs), **mmm**, and knowing my girl, she'll be, like...she's very competitive...she's got a very competitive streak. **Well, competition can be good in some ways**. As long as it's challenged in a good way, **yes**. And like I said, she's got a bit of a tantrum temper, **mmm**. What do I want to do that, I think, yeah, you know, go taekwondo, **mmm**. Show how to release that, how to be patient, you know, that's a good thing to learn about her well-being, **mmm**, you know. Her personality that's coming out, I want it to be challenged in a good way, **mmm**, not so having a bad effect on it, **mmm**. Now, you know, when she goes over to my in-laws, my brother-in-law's son, he's turned 3. He's at that age where, if you say something to him, he starts bawling and because he's living in grandparents, they don't say right and wrong to him, **mmm**, **mmm**. He's getting spoilt as a result, **mmm**, and when she goes there, it rubs off, **mmm**, and then it gets...she gets influenced by it and then she tries the same with me and then I say 'I'm not having it. I'm not having it.' I don't like her playing with scarves, **mmm**. He does. He wraps his scarf around his head and tries to be Batman or whatever it is, **mmm**. I don't play scarves. That's a very big issue because I remember there was a play...a child in P who got, erm, **strangled**, strangled. It's not a play thing, **mmm**. You've got 101 things

to play with, **yeah**. Play with them, **yeah**. Why with a scarf? And if she tried doing what he did, I says 'You know Mummy doesn't like you going to play with a scarf'. She put it down. She goes 'No, Mummy's not going to like it.' She knows, **mmm**. She knows her boundaries, **mmm**. Or, for example, coins. That's another thing, **coins?**. There, they like to give him coins to put in a money box, fair enough. I don't like her playing with coins. **It's not a toy though, is it, it's not...** No, I don't like playing with coins because, she might understand it's dangerous to put it...she doesn't (points to baby), **no, no**. I don't want them hanging about, **mmm**. I've got toys, I've got hundreds of toys Tina, but I don't...it's baby proof, **mmm**. I don't have coins, I don't have scarves running around. I have my blinds all put away, **mmm**. I don't have sharp edges, **mmm**...she's not allowed to go there otherwise, **mmm**. My house may look drab with this (points to fire guard) but it's safe for my child, **yeah**. I don't care what anyone else thinks, **no, no**. That's why. That's my child's well-being for me, **mmm**, knowing that they...I can go in the kitchen and she's on the floor...she's absolutely safe, **safe, yeah, yeah**. So, you know, it makes a bit of a diff...observation is a very big thing, **it is, it is, yeah, yeah**. I've kind of come off the tangent then, but the school...I was quite shocked to know, **mmm**, that it's in groups and sectors. **For a reception class, that's quite shocking, yeah, yeah**. It's reception class! **because it should still be play, yeah, it shouldn't be as structured as that really**. You should encourage activities. You should have a routine. I mean, preschool has a routine, **mmm**. They have set activities, **yes**, everything may seem like playing away, **mmm**, but you have your set activities. You have story time, **yes**, you have play time, you have singing song times, you know, you've got all sorts going on, but it's within no sectors. Everyone's doing what they want, **mmm**, how they want it, in their own time. That's what reception...they're only babies. **But that's the problem of having a reception class in a school. If you had all of the early years away from school, so right up until five, yeah, and then they started school, you wouldn't have that problem. Reception class is very much a grey area, yeah. It's not preschool and it's not school. Yeah, yeah, I understand. And I think that's where the pressures come. The head teacher is under pressure to keep it 'school like', yeah, but the early years workers in that class, want to keep it into play, yes, yeah, because that's where their training is. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I can understand that tension really**. I mean, the good thing they did at FS is that they've just not got two rooms. They made it...**I know, it's a bit open plan now**. It's open planned, yeah, **mmm**, and ok, so the children mix within each other, so, basically, they've got it for bulk really, haven't they, **mmm**. But the concept, kind of, got to me, because, you know, I don't want my daughter thinking I'm not clever as anyone else, **mmm**, you know, 'Oh, Mummy, she knows all this.' **Mmm**. My friend does that, **mmm**, you know, one of my friends, her daughter is one month older than M, right. She goes to ...W in B, **yes, yes**, erm, and she goes, 'They've wrote to me and they said,' - they private, they're charging a hell of a lot of fee – and they said 'She needs to be able to write her name.' and then she goes 'I'm stressed out.' She's got two other little ones, one, I think she's got one 1 ½ and then a little 5 month old one, and she's full-time mummy and she's got a 5 month old and a 1 ½, you know, and then a little 3 year old. So, she's like 'I'm

stressed out.' I said 'Why?' She goes 'Oh the school keeps ringing me and saying that A needs to know how to write her name.' I goes 'Give the girl a break! She's 3 years old! She's she doesn't need to know how to write her name. She needs to know how to play!' **mmm**, 'Leave her alone!' She goes 'No, they telling me.' I goes 'If you're paying so much to them, what are they doing?' What are they doing? **Yeah**. She goes, 'Oh, they doing it as well but, you know, I need to sit down and learn with her.' I goes 'Have you sat down and done a story with her?' She goes 'No.' I goes 'That's what you need to do.' **Well that comes before writing! (laughs)** Yeah! I goes 'Have you actually put...have you just put a cloth down and let them paint with you?' She goes 'No.' I goes 'I do that with mine.' She goes...I goes 'Do that! That's what you need to do, **mmm**. Be fun mummy! **mmm**, Don't be a mummy that just feeds them and puts them to bed, **mmm**. You need to be able to ...' I go 'Have you had a time when it's just been you and A? You've had a little 1 ½ and you've got a 5 month old, she might feel isolated.' **Mmm**. 'Have had just a Mummy and A day?' She goes 'No, what's one of them?' **(laughs)** I was like, 'Are you serious?' I love...maybe I'm being a bit more, you know, protective about M because there's a day when I just go shopping with her. Just me and M day. Just so she knows that Mummy's there for her. We go out, we go eat popcorn. She likes her sweet corn pot. She'll go on shopping with me. She'll go and choose a nail varnish. You do girlie things with her, **mmm**. So, Daddy doesn't need to be there. Just me and her. And then she has the same with Daddy. So, she knows she's not ignored because Z's here, **mmm**. I goes 'Have you done that?' She goes 'No. She just gets, erm, beat up by the 1 ½ year old. She's a bit vicious, isn't she.' She's feisty, she made M cry. But, you know, you need to know that kind of stuff and I think that's very important, **yes, yeah**, for the child well-being because if it's stuck in her head that mummy doesn't care, **mmm**, from a young age, it's just gonna grow, **yes, yeah**.

Do you want to pick another one off that sheet then?

Oh yes, sure. We've done assessment...learning and development...do you think we've just covered that as well? **Err, yes, you have really**. Cos assessment comes in to learning and development, **yeah**, doesn't it basically, **yeah, and you've talked about what you think they should be learning**. Yes. **Try another one then**. Err, key person? **Yep**. Is that U? (both laugh gently) U...I went to the parent's evening and U goes 'ML's giving her to C. Tell her stay with me! I love her, she's my super girl.' **(laughs)** Erm, and I'm like...I don't mind! (both laugh). She loves U anyway and erm, basically...I'll tell you something funny actually, about children. (baby knocks the table that the recorder is on and cries) Oh, it's ok baby. **She just banged her head on the table I think**. It's ok baby, very strong baby. She said to me 'Mummy, why is U brown?' **Really?** Yeah, and erm...I said to her 'What do you mean?' and she goes 'Her skin is brown.' I said 'What colour's your skin?' She said 'White.' I go – my Dad's fairly dark – I said 'What colour's Da?' And she goes – she calls my Dad 'Dad' and I go, she goes 'He's brown.' I goes 'It's just skin. **Mmm** It doesn't mean anything.' I goes 'Is ML white?' She goes 'Yeah, she is.' I goes 'Is C white?' Little C.

She goes 'Yeah.' I says 'So, what's U?' She goes 'She's brown.' I goes 'It doesn't matter.' I goes 'You know H? He's got dark skin hasn't he?' She goes 'Yeah.' I says 'It's just skin colour.' And she goes 'Ok. But why?' I goes 'Because it is. **Mmmm**. It's just different people with different skin colours. Do you have different colours?' She said 'Yeah.' I said 'It's just different skin.' How am I to explain to her that people come from different places?! (laughs) **Well, different countries you could explain.** Exactly. **And that they come from a hot country rather than a cold country not so hot country.** Erm, but she, kind of, wanted to know, she's you know, she's **she's curious, yeah**. Curious George I call her. **Mmm, mmm**. She, basically, wants to know all these different things. **But that's good to have an inquisitive nature I think.** I think it's nosey girls! (laughs). There's all these nosey girls!

So what does a key person do for you as a parent then?

U's been brilliant, **mmm**. She's been M's key person. She's been brilliant. She's supported me through all the time when I've thought, is she settling?, **yeah**. I used to come and ask her 'Is she settling in?' and she's like, 'She's doing fine. She's talking to me. She's telling me about all these stories.', you know, and just that reassurance, **mmm**. Very important, **yeah**, just to know that my child's ok, **yeah**, she's doing well, she's settling in well. So, a key person, very important, **yeah**, for your child's well-being, **good**. Knowing that she's ok and able to know that my child trusts her, **mmm**, to talk to her, **mmm**, is able to explain to her what I did or, you know. She said 'I'm gonna tell teacher U I've been a good girl. I brushed my teeth and got my clothes on all by myself.' So she's becoming a confident person, **yeah**, so in order to confide in her, **mmm**, so, key person's very important, **uhmmm**.

School readiness – I don't understand. What do you mean? **That's interesting**. Is she ready for school? (laughs).

Yeah, getting ready for school, erm. The curriculum actually says that at preschool we should be getting them ready for school, yeah. That's what it says we should be doing.

And I think you are, **yeah**. I think the parents, though, need to support that. I know a certain parent, I won't ...I won't actually name them. What happened was, erm, started on full day school and...I think it depends on the parent to encourage that child to do well..., **mmm**, and what happened was, he goes...she goes, 'Oh, because of the'...you know, he start to wet himself because he started full day school...**mmm**, and I didn't understand, you know, maybe but 'Oh, I'm not going to send him anymore.', and I was there and I overheard a conversation and I kind of walked out, but I thought, well, wouldn't you want, as a parent, to encourage her, encourage that child 'No, it's ok.' send them again, **mmm**, you know, reassure them, find out what's the actual problem rather than make the problem go away altogether.

Do you mean going to full-time school? Preschool. Oh, preschool. Right, ok. Yeah. He started a full day in preschool and said, started wetting himself, and I think it's

because he started a full day in school, **mmm**, so I want to stop him, **mmm**. But I think, maybe me, as a parent I'd be letting... I wouldn't do that, but then she knows better for her own child, **mmm, mmm**, so you don't know exactly, **mmm**, what the circumstances are, **no**. But this is the reason I've got M in 3 days full day. I'd have 5 days, **mmm**, but it's my husband, he won't let me (both laugh). He goes 'Let her be a baby.' But, I want her to be used to routine. **Yeah, because that, that, that 5 days is going to be quite different, isn't it, for her.** Absolutely, **yeah**. And she loves school. Why shouldn't I send her school? **Mmm**. She loves it. The other thing is that she's in a routine, she's happier, she's content. She comes home, she has a meal, she has her stuff. She likes to relax for a few hours and then she's in bed at half 6. She's sleeping. Sleeps 12 hours. She doesn't get a nap during the day but she sleeps throughout the night, **mmm**, and she's a happy baby. She wakes up in the morning, ready for school. She'll sing on the toilet! (both laugh), you know, she'll sing 'Let it go!' (both laugh) I'm like, seriously! , you know (laughs). So, you know, I've seen the difference in...you know when it was holidays, she said 'Mummy, why are we not going school? I wanna go school.', you know, because her Daddy used to get ready for work, **yeah**, and she's like, 'I wanna go school.' And I'm like, I should send her to some sort of part time school or something in the morning for a playschool or something! (laughs) But, you know, she loved it, **yeah**. She wakes up every morning, 'Am I going to school today? Am I having my lunch box today?'

So do you think she will be ready for school when she comes to full-time?

Absolutely, absolutely. It's because of preschool, **mmm**, she's ready, **mmm**, because preschool's made it such an enjoyable thing for her. It's been a positive thing for school for her, **yeah**.

And what's, what do you think it is about her that makes her ready for school?

Routine, school, the teachers, everything.

What about her in herself, as a person, that makes her ready for school?

Curious, **yeah**, curious. She likes learning, **mmm**. That's one of the reason on Tuesday I have such a handful day, cos she's half day. I was saying to ML, I'm begging her 'Get me into her next afternoon.' She's like 'I've not got any!'. (both laugh). I'm like 'Quickly get that planning thing done! (laughs) So we can get it done, get more children in.' It's because when she's at home, she's not got activities to do because I'm...I'm, **mmm**, have my hand tied, **mmm**, with her, (points to baby). Unless I've got something planned, I'll take her out. If I haven't got anything planned, she gets bored, **mmm**. When she gets bored she plays, **yeah**, plays out. She's like, you know, messing around with this, doing this, and she, you know, she's becoming a handful. Once she has activities to do, which is in, like, school, because she's used to it, **mmm**, she's got things to do, keeps her occupied, she's a happier baby, **yeah**, and she's...that's what makes me think that she's ready for school full-time because

she's ready to spend a whole day there, **yeah**. I mean, she comes back half time, she's like 'Are you here already?'

So, do you think getting ready for school is about being able to read and write? Is it about numbers? Or is it about something else? Is it about...?

I don't think it's just about academics, **no**, in that sense, no, **no**, no. She, she's making friends, **yeah**, erm, able to talk to some other adults, **yeah**, other than the normal people in your life, **mmm**, which is your grandparents, your family, **mmm**, your aunties and uncles. She loves meeting new people, so if she goes in there...and it's called routine, I think, **yeah**, you know, she, she just go in there and knowing I'm going to go there, sing a song, read a story time. She looks forward to it. What activities are we going to do there? **Mmm**. We're going to play outside, play on the bikes. 'Did you play on the bike today?' 'No. I played on hopscotch.' That's a new, **mmm**, new thing, erm. She's wrote all on my dining carpet. I was blaming U, I goes 'You lot letting her do that on your turf, yeah, she's got writing on my carpet! (laughs). She drew her Daddy with spikey hair.' (laughs) and ML was laughing, she goes 'They're all learning!'. I said 'Her Dad's cross...he was fuming!' (laughs) I need to get a rug to cover it up. It won't come off! (both laugh). She had lipstick all over! **Oh no!** Erm, when she went to her Christmas party, she loved it, **yeah**. She got her hair curled. She went and got...went to erm, erm, Matalan with me and chose her own dress because she knew there was a party coming up. She's so excited about this challenge, **mmm**. She's been ringing everyone 'Are you going to get your purses out? Are you going to sponsor me?' and that's school for her, **mmm**. This is something that she does. It's only hers. It's not something Mummy's told her to do, **mmm**, or Daddy told her to do, because she's gone school, she's got this new thing going on. **It's her thing**. And it's her thing, **mmm**. It's her own independent thing, **yeah**, and she loves that and she loves it, **mmm**, that it's, you know. She'll talk to her 3 year old cousin that 'Oh, you know, I was in school and I did this and I did that.', you know, giving him all sorts of information about what her thing is, **mmm**, and at school and, you know, and I think that's to do with being ready with school, for school, as well, **yeah**. I think K, her friend's got a Frozen bedroom. I'm making a Frozen bedroom for her. So, she's like 'Oh, she's sleeping with her Mummy as well?' I said, 'No, she's sleeping in her room and you're going to sleep as well.' And she's. 'I go, Ok.' So, she's basically, a lot about school, that's all her life is at the moment, **mmm, mmm**. She's got her sister, she loves that, but she's not at that stage where she can play with her, **mmm**, at the moment. She wakes up in the morning...they have their own time where they have a cuddle and she's, like 'oh, my little bubba.', you know, she plays with her, but then she's up and ready for school, **for school, cos that's what she wants to do**. That's what she wants to do, **yeah, yeah**, and then her friends, **mmm**, so, if there's...quite nice, you know, to know that she's got a life of her own (laughs) **yeah, well that's, that's what it's all about, isn't it**. Yeah, so, nearer it, **good**, we should be ready for school, hopefully.

I think we're finished now on there haven't we. Have, yeah. So that's it, but is there anything else you want to add or...mention?

I don't know, have I missed anything? Have I done anything? No, no its...I've tried to give you as much as information as I can.

But it's just about your thoughts and feelings. There's no right or wrong answer. Yeah. It's...I'm just collecting people's views and then comparing them, so...

I thought, basically, you'd...another thing which well-being came through...on more of a serious note...is this stuff that we think that's going on with his extremism going on, mmm, erm. One of the things which I mentioned to you was Prevent, mmm, knowing about which child is in an extreme environment, which is it...you know, mmm, learning and assessing that and the teachers...that's quite a bit of a responsibility on the teachers, mmm, knowing which child is going through what thoughts, what kind of background they're coming from, yeah, you know. And one of the things that I think is very important...for my own view, from my own view...is associating with the parent, communication with the parent, knowing the parents thoughts, yeah. I think, you know, CPS know me very well. I think the staff members, U or ML would know me very, very well, to know what kind of a person I come through, yeah, you know, what, kind of, her views are, you know, what's instilled into the child, mmm. Not many parents are up front, yeah, and not as coming up with their thoughts as easier as I would do and I think that's because of the background of...the barriers of language, right, ok, barriers of language, you know. Some who can't speak English really well but just go to drop their child off, I think those are the people we need to concentrate on knowing.

Do you think those people might feel quite isolated by that though? Could do, could do. And that's why they're not engaging because they actually feel quite, fri...like they don't speak the language, that can be quite scary can't it? It could be. It could be. Mmm. But what they need to und...they need to be reassured that that's not the case, yes, yes, that's not the case, yeah. It's them thinking that, not the other person, mmm, yeah. It's about reaching out, isn't it, to those people. Yeah. I know in D or B is becoming the highlighted case of where there's extremism. It puts pressure on us actually, because I want her to learn about Islam as well, mmm, mmm, but I don't want it to be seen as an extremism thing, mmm. I want her to know what our religion is about and it's a beautiful thing, not what they've made it out to be. But for a child to understand at that age is very difficult, mmm, and to be honest, I don't think she's at that age when she can understand religion. She knows nothing about religion, mmm, mmm, you know, so far, mmm. She's 3 years old, near 3 ½, she knows nothing about religion. I haven't taught her anything because she's not at that age to understand. She doesn't know who God is, mmm, she just knows God what a creator... 'What's a creator?' She'd just ask 500 questions as to what a creator is! (laughs), I don't think she's at that age, and that person's age to start, when they understand what that concept is between when they're six, mmm, mmm, when

they're able to understand a little bit about what God is, **mmm**, not at that age, **no**. They shouldn't be learning religion, **mmm**, because religion is not the, the, the, that a toddler could understand. I you tell me that, erm, if someone was to tell me from a young...my own background, if they're telling me that 'Oh, my 2, 3 year old is reciting the Qu 'Oran.', I'd be like, there's something going on with you (laughs). I'd be worried, **mmm**. You know, ok they can say the, certain recitations, that's really good, but do they understand it? **Mmm, no**. No. They're just repeating what you're telling them. That's not good for the well-being of the child, **mmm, mmm**. I'm going to relate it back to well-being, **yes**, because it's not, **no yeah**. You're confusing that child, **mmm**. You're teaching them...they're going through Asian language, they're going through English...they just haven't about grasped English that you're teaching them your own language. Mine doesn't speak a language, **mmm**. She speaks English, **mmm, mmm**, because me and her father speak English. 90% of the time they speak English. My parents speak English with her, **mmm**. My brothers and sisters speak English with her. All her aunties and uncles speak English with her because she's responded it. If they speak to her in Asian language, in Urdu, she replies in English, **mmm**, she replies back in English. (watching baby try to crawl) She's pumping, pumping action (**laughs**). It's going to be the same with her. They don't understand what Urdu is, **no**. They don't understand what religion is, **no, no**. So, to able...it's scary to know that in preschool, you're actually trying to call...err, understanding the concept of having which child is in an extreme environment. It's scary! **Mmm, yeah, yeah**. It's really scary! **It is**. It is scary. It's very, very scary to know a little 3, 4 year old being in an environment where you're supposed to do jihad and stuff – what are you supposed to tell them?! **Mmm**. Rubbish! **Mmm, mmm**. And that is scary. **It is. Very scary**. It is really scary. **State of the world though, isn't it**. I don't want my child next to another child who's talking about extremism. **Mmm**. Can you imagine what's going through my child's head and she's thinking, 'Mmm, what's going on here?'. It's absolutely scary and I think talking to parents, parents and telling them 'Look, this is a very big issue. It's a very big issue and only the society within ourselves can handle that, who can deal with it. **Mmm**. The government are doing what they want. The government are doing all they can to secure our protection for our children but it's not going to work until the community themselves do it, **mmm, yeah**.

Ok, we've done nearly an hour, Oh! **so I think that's plenty**. Sorry, have I taken too much of your time? **No it's fine!**

Thank you very much. You're welcome. It's been good.

Appendix 8 – Interview with Emily

Ok, so the first question is, what does the term well-being mean to you?

Erm, just making sure that the well-being of your child is...they're happy and warm and fed and well looked after, **yep**. Have everything that they need, **yep**.

What sort of things, in terms of what they need?

Well, obviously, clothes and food and...everything they need to survive, so like what...so they...(laughs nervously) so they've got...they're warm, they've got clothes, they've got toys, **yeah**, anything that makes them happy really, **yeah**.

And how would you describe 'happy'?

It depends what day you ask me! (both laugh). **I can fully understand that with a 5 month old!** Yeah! (both laugh).

What does 'happy' mean?

That's a bit of a hard question. I don't know how to describe it. Happy with everyday things so they...they've got their toys...(sighs). I wouldn't know how to explain it to be honest. It's...it's a bit of a hard question to answer. (long pause). **I think things like that are difficult.** Yeah! **I think people understand...**and I'd know if I look at them I know they're happy, but then to explain how they're happy, like, they've got...they play with their toys, they've got their...they watch their T...the stuff they like on TV and obviously they're smiling and their laughing and their not upset, **yeah, yeah**, or they tell me, **yeah**, yeah.

So what sort of things would they say?

'I like doing that', 'I've enjoyed doing this', **yeah**, 'can we do it again', **yeah**, and they're not crying obviously, **yeah**, and don't want to not do stuff or go places.

So you get like a f...a feeling, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I can understand that.

Ok, so let's call well-being 'happy' then, yep, if erm, if you can think of things that would influence that so what factors would make them unhappy?

Situations, environments, other people, **uhmm**.

What sort of situations, can you give me an example?

Erm, well, A doesn't like the hospital or nurses, simply because she used to...last July she had a...she had to have...she was in hospital for a month. She had to have a, a cyst taken off her brain, **ooh (with concern)**. So every time the...and they took bloods every day, so every time anyone dressed as a nurse or in that colour, came anywhere near her, before they'd even said what they were gonna do, she got upset

and cried and wouldn't, **yeah**...like clung to me and stuff, so she wouldn't...like, so they represent, like, hurting her, **right, yes, ok**.

Anything else as, apart...you've said situations, environments and people. In what way, situations? So, obviously that hospital, yeah, so that, yeah, situation. So what sort of things might affect their...their well-being other than...I mean that's very specific, yeah that's very specific, yes, to her isn't it, because she's been through that experience, but just generally, what makes children unhappy?

Could be places, I suppose, like, **yeah**, I know that some kids don't like coming to playgroup, **yes**, so they cry when they...A went through a stage of it...so they cried when they, they came to the door, she wouldn't go in and I had to leave her and she was crying and, **mmm, mmm**. I suppose people, if they've upset them once, they don't know...I know they...they say they don't remember stuff but I think they do (laughs gently) (**laughs gently**), **yeah**. **Ok**. I've got, erm, a nephew, and for some reason she doesn't...he's nearly 20, so she doesn't see him all that often...but when he comes into the room, she doesn't like him. She'll run to...I don't know why, he's never done anything to her as far as I know. Maybe he's scared her a little bit and made her jump, but she'll run to me and she won't move and she'll say 'I don't like him' (laughs) (**laughs**). I'm not sure she knows what 'I don't like' means, but...as in a person...**is he really tall or...?** Yeah, he's really tall, **oh, that might be it then**, he's got quite bright ginger hair to be honest (laughs), so that might be it! I don't know, **yeah, how strange (laughs gently)**. **Ok**.

So, thinking about what well-being means to you, and some of the things that might influence that, how do you use that to provide a home environment for your children, that supports learning and development?

Well, obviously...obviously we're still talking about the situation with the hospital, like, she has to have follow up MRIs every so often, **yeah**, at the minute, because it was so soon, there's a chance that the cyst could grow back, **right**, so she...every six months or so she has to go to the doctors or the hospital, **yeah**, for a follow up MRI. So I'll talk to her about it for a couple of days and I'll say 'We're gonna go to the hospital and there's some toys to play with', **yeah**, and 'the doctor's just gonna look at your head' and so now she knows the doctor's fixed her head...cos she had, erm, fluid on the brain as well for a while, **yeah**, so that was making her feel poorly and she was throwing up all the time, **mmm, mmm**, so now I say 'just remember the doctor fixed your head' and so I just try and explain things to her, **yeah**, or I tell her...because before her operation she was really shy and if we went anywhere she wouldn't...she'd sit on my knee. Like, we're going to a party tomorrow, for her, for her cousin's birthday, **yeah**, but she's...usually, before her operation, she'd sit on my knee and she wouldn't move. Now, she's up and she runs around, so it's different environments so...**yeah**. It's so, for the last couple of days I've been saying 'We're going to E's party and we're gonna do this, and we're gonna dress as a princess and we're gonna do this' so I just try and explain it to her so she is aware that the

situation's gonna change, **yeah, yeah**. So she knows there's nothing to worry about, **yeah, so it's having that, yeah, relationship, yeah, really, isn't it, trust, yeah, I suppose, isn't it.**

And what about at home, what sort of environment...what sort of things do you do with A that helps her to learn and develop and grow?

Drawing, colouring, **yeah**. I always, like...at the minute we're trying to get colours, **mmm**, so, we'll go over and over the colours and...she doesn't always get them...and we'll call...we'll make it a joke, so we'll call her a 'silly sausage' if she gets it wrong, **mmm**, so she thinks it funny, **yeah**, so...**so you're doing that in a fun way**. Yeah, makes...make things...things fun, **yeah**.

What does she like to do at home?

Everything she's not mean to do! (both laugh). **That's very typical of a two year old, yeah, isn't it**. She's got so many toys, sometimes she just, she gets bored of playing with one and she'll have to go on to the next one. Like, she's got a doll's house which she likes playing with and she's got some little 'My Little Ponies' which she plays in in her house, **mmm**, and then she'll go play with something else and then she'll play with something she's not meant to! (both laugh). She's very inquisitive! (laughs) **Well that's good though, isn't it, to be inquisitive, yes, at that age.**

And, erm, and what do you do in...in all that? How do you fit in to all that?

It depends what the baby's doing. Sometimes she'll...**Yes, cos you've got a younger one, haven't you**. She's very good at playing on her own, **mmm**. She'll get her stuff out and she'll play on her own. If the baby's quite happy, or asleep, we'll get on the floor, we will play together and we'll say that we'll...imaginative toys, **yeah**...so with the ponies, I'll have one and she'll have the other and we'll play together, **yep**, or jigsaws, she likes doing jigsaws, **yeah**...(pause). **Ok**.

What about outside the home? Is there anything that you...that you do outside? Like clubs and things, do you mean? Yeah, something...anything like that.

Not really, because it's...it's hard to do because we've got such a big age gap between them, **mmm**, like, D's 7 and A's, **mmm**, only 2, it's not something we...We'll go to, like, play gyms and stuff and, **yeah**, but we have to try and find one that's suitable for the age gap, **yeah**, or we'll go to the park and D will take his scooter and A will take her bike and a football and we'll have a kick around, **yeah**, and stuff like that, **yeah**, but my husband works...cos he works in retail, he's got such funny hours, **yeah**, so we have to try and find a day off together, **yeah**. Obviously I'm on maternity leave at the minute, but when I got back to work I'm gonna have to work when he's off so it's a bit...**oh dear**, yeah, **juggling everything**, yeah (both laugh). **It's hard, isn't it, when you're a mum, to do all that**. Yes (laughs).

Ok, so the next question then is, erm, is about pre-school. You've talked about what you provide at home, yeah, and what she likes to do, erm, what do you expect the pre-school to give to A...really in what they provide?

Just pretty much the same really. Just make sure she's safe and she's got everything she needs, yeah, erm. Obviously, there's all the other children to play with and they go outside and just to make sure if she's fallen over, to give her, like, the same comfort that I'd give her at home, yeah, yeah.

So what made you think about going to pre-school then?

Erm, D came when he was younger, oh, right, ok. My sister, my sister's got older children, so they came, yeah, when they were little, so obviously it's kind of, like, run through the family to be honest, yeah. My oth...my niece comes as well, and my nephew. They're all...they all come to the same one, oh, right, it's a family affair! (laughs) Yeah! It's kind of, like, 'why don't you take 'em to here and why don't you take 'em to here', so yes, so it was kind of, just...cos they came...my nieces and nephews have come, mine have come as well, mmm.

So, thinking about your eldest one then, erm, when you were, perhaps a mum for the first time, what, what would you have expected then perhaps? Erm, when you didn't know...?

Yeah, but it...pretty much the same really. As long as they're taken care of, yeah, and they like coming, yeah, then...we'd been to a couple of, like, taster sessions anyway, mmm, and I knew it was just like going...going to nursery and I've got lots of nieces and nephews, like. My youngest is my mum's fifteenth grandchild (laughs) so, so...and they range, like, the oldest is 20, and then my youngest at 5 months is the young...obviously the youngest, so I've been to and forth from places, like, yeah. If they would ask me to, like, pick up one of the nieces and nephews, I've been, so I sort of got a gist of what it was, mmm, and I've been to a, like, a couple of events at the nursery for proper school, not pre-school, mmm, mmm, erm, so I kinda...it's kinda the same thing, so I knew what to expect really, yeah, yeah, so...excellent.

Right, I'm going to give you a little sheet now with some words on it...little stars! Erm, what I've done is I've taken some erm...some things that are talked about in early years err...they're part of the early years curriculum that the pre-school follows. Yep. Erm, I'm just interested in what parents think, erm...about some of these things. It may be things you haven't heard of, yeah, it may be things that you've heard talked about, erm, but I'm just interested to know what you know about them and what you think, generally. So, if you can just pick one at a time.

Like, school readiness, yeah, I know that...that means it helps them get ready for school, yeah. My son was a lot...(pause), he went to...he went to nursery in January rather than September so he had 18 months. He feels a lot more...he felt a lot more ready to go to nursery, ahh, than, than A does, but I think that's because if she'd a

gone in January, she d...she wouldn't...cos they...A's July and D's October, **so she's a sum...**so he was a little bit older so she's gonna be a lot... **...so, she's a summer baby then,** she doesn't seem ready to go to school, whereas D did, **yeah.** So I think this situation...because he didn't have anyone to play with at home much, unless we went out to places...he was ready, he needed to go to school, **mmm,** whereas A has got siblings at home, so she's got people to play with. Do you see wh...do you understand what I mean? **Yeah, yes I do.** A seems a lot younger than D did, I don't know...**at the same...**at the same stage, yeah, **yeah.** She seems a lot more needier, **mmm,** to have Mum and Dad around than D ever did. **That could be a lot of things though, couldn't it,** yeah. **That could be that she's a second child,** yeah, **it could be that she's a girl,** yeah, **there's all sorts of reasons, isn't there,** yeah, **why that might have...be the case.**

So how do you feel about getting them ready for school at this age?

I think it's good, **mmm.** If I was to take A to school I think it would be a bit...straight into school would have been a bit overpowering for her, **yeah,** and she cried a couple of weeks when we first brought her here and she wouldn't...she didn't want to stay. Now, she asks me every day...she doesn't come every day...**no,** but she asks me every day if she can come to school...cos she calls it school...and now she knows, D goes to school, so now she wants to go to school every day. So I think it'd been a bit more...if I'd have put her straight into nursery and said 'there you go, go play', I think it'd been a bit more harder for her. Now she's aware that she's got to, **yeah,** move on to the next stage.

Excellent, do you want to pick another one?

Erm, key person **uhmm.** I know that A's key person is who it is, **yeah.** Erm, if I've got any problems with A whilst she's at school...I can speak to other people if her key worker's not here, **yeah,** but her key worker is a spe...is the best person to go to, **yeah,** if she's got any problems, **yeah,** and they'll be...they'll talk to all the other staff. I think it's a really good idea to be honest, **yeah.**

And what do you think the key person does for A specifically?

Well, I...they do all the (pause) assessments, that's another one, **yeah, yeah.** So, they assess and look at what A's doing and pop it on the erm...the new thing, I can't remember what it's called, where you upload it onto...**Tapestry,** yeah, Tapestry. So they put all her stuff on to there, erm, so obviously they spend more time with A and watch A, **mmm,** more than any of the others so they can see what, what they're doing, **yeah, yeah.** She's got a really good sh...she's got a really good relationship with her key worker as well, she always, **yeah,** yeah, she always asks where she is and if I say 'who are you going to school today to see?' she'll always say her key worker, **yeah, yeah, that's nice.**

What about another one then?

Erm, well we'll go, might as well go to assessment, **assessment then, yeah**, yeah, so...(pause). They're all really assessing them which I think is really good, **mmm**, for, like their development, **mmm**, as to what they need to do, so they're following the curriculum...**yeah**, I couldn't get my words out then! (both laugh). So they'll always...they'll always update the Tapestry and put on...which is always nice to see, cos when I say 'who does she play with?' they all say 'well, she plays on her own a lot to be honest' but then they put the pictures on to Tapestry you can see that she's actually playing with other people, **yes**, cos when they say 'oh she plays on her own' it made me a little bit...oh, **mmm**, does that mean she hasn't got any friends? Does that mean...**but two year olds often do that first**, yeah, yeah, yeah, **and then when they move towards 3, they start to be**, yeah, **a bit more...they play alongside other children but not necessarily with them**. I think it's because my nephew's nearly...he's 3 ½ and he always says 'I played with so and so today'...cos he comes here as well, **yeah**, then goes over to nursery. He always says 'I've played with so and so today and I played with so and so' and then I'll say to A 'who have you played with?' and she always says 'B' which is her key person, **yeah**, (laughs). And when she's been in the afternoon, she'll say 'S' or 'C'. Obviously, **the adults!** which are the helpers, **yeah**, yeah! So it always made me a bit wary that she wasn't...**but at two, that's, that's actually right**, yeah, **because**, yeah, **she's not mature enough yet to have those relationships**, yeah, **with other children**. I mean, she's happy enough so it wasn't, **she will do**, it wasn't 'oh well, she hasn't got any friends', it's more of 'what does she actually do?' **yes, yeah**. So, but I've seen her at home, so that's make me think 'well, she actually plays'. She'll get on the floor and she'll play and she'll pretend to be two different people, **mmm**. She'll have her dolly and her pony or whatever, **yeah**, and they'll play together. So I know she actually plays, **yeah**, and she's not sad when she comes, **no**, or comes home so...**yeah**.

What about...have you had the two year check?

Erm, with the health visitor or here? No I've done it here, I did it with her key worker, **yeah**, yeah so she was saying how...what she's excelling in and what she's really good in, **mmm**, and then what they were gonna do for the next term, **yep**, and things like that but it was a while ago.

Was that useful to you?

Yes it was, yeah, cos when I got home I could say, right, well, we obviously...she needs to do this, **mmm**, and we can...we can do some of that at home, **yeah, yeah**, **well that's what it's meant to do**, yeah, yeah.

What about when they get to the end of reception they have erm...it's called a baseline test now...err, it's a lot more formal, they're actually asked questions, erm...how would you feel about a child having to do that?

Well, it's just like another development check isn't it, **yeah**. So, I wouldn't really be bothered to be honest, **no, no, ok**.

What have we got left on there then?

Learning and development.

What sort of things do you think they should be doing in 0 to 5's?

Erm, all the way up to 5? So, what they should know? Or, yeah, what they should be learning about?

Well, basic numbers and colours and...not so much maths, but maybe one and one is two and, **mmm**, yeah. I mean, my son's always been really good with numbers. I don't know where he gets it from (laughs) (both laugh). So, when, when he used to come to playgroup in the morning they used to have a board that used to say how many children was in and they'd always say 'how many children are at school today?' and he'd automatically know. So that to me...they're asking him, they're teaching him, **yeah**, so, yeah. I've never...I've not really...I don't really know what A's good at while she's at school, **mmm**. I mean, I know they put the stuff on Tapestry...**may be a bit young for that yet**...but they don't say 'well, she's good at this' or 'she's good at that'. But she always remembers, she always remembers, like, what they've sung, **yeah**, and what they've done, **yes**, so...

So, what sort of things do you think A's learning then at the moment...at two, because obviously that's a bit different to, yeah, being five, yeah?

She's remembering, like, she'll come home and she'll sing the songs, **yes**, so she's remembering things or she remembers what she's done during the day, **mmm**, which is...she used to always say 'can't remember', **mmm**, or 'I don't know'. So now she's remembering what she's learnt, **yeah**. Or not what she's learnt, cos they don't really teach do they, well...I suppose they do in the way that they do things but, **yes, yeah, ok**.

What else have we got? The parents. That one there. So, this is about, erm, the practitioners and the parents working together and that relationship that they have?

So, the people that work at playgroup you mean? **Yeah**, yeah. I've, I've always had a good relationship with the peop...with the 'teachers' (makes inverted commas with hands), **yeah**, they always...if I've got a problem, I'll always go up and speak to them and they always do their best to work it out. Like, A's going through a stage of...she's dirtying...she's potty trained...**yeah**, but she's dirtying in her pants, **yeah**. So, I've just said to 'em 'Don't ask her if she needs the toilet, just take her.' **Take her, mmm**. And they...since then...she's done it a couple of times but they've always taken her to the toilet, **mmm**, rather than asking her, cos I do it at home 'do you need the toilet?' 'No' so now I just say 'you need to go to the toilet', **mmm**. So, I've never, ever really had a problem with them, to be honest. They've always worked with me to sort out, like, **that's good**, the toilet or if, if I've got any problems, they've always...When I, when A first started, obviously I had to tell them all about the problems she'd had with her head and stuff, **yeah**. I think it was B that sat down with

me and we sat there for about half an hour and B kept asking me questions rather than me saying this, this and this. She was...so she could get it round what was wrong, **yes**, she was asking which was, which was always good, **yeah, ok**.

Would you feel that you could, you could go to...you have a sufficient relationship that you could go to them with anything?

Yeah, yeah, anything, yeah. **Ok**.

Is that all of them now?

Yes, **yes, yep, ok**.

Right, well that's the last question. Is there anything else that you want to add or that you've thought of that you didn't mention when we were talking about...

No, I don't think so. **No. Ok, thank you very much**. No worries.

Appendix 9 – Interview with Dawn

Right, ok, my first question is then 'What does the term well-being mean to you?'

Err, the term well-being to me means erm...looking at the, the inside of somebody, you know, erm...you know...are...are people happy on the inside, that's the term well-being that means to me, you know. It's showing whether children are happy, you can tell children are happy by erm, non-verbal communications and things like that erm...and that...by looking at children's happiness and things like that. You can tell whether a child's hap...well-being.

What sort of non-verbal communications would you think are telling you that?

Erm...erm, smiling, erm...that sometimes without, children's eyes they don't physically sparkle, but you can tell with the children whether they're happy, you know, the erm...whether they're...erm...how they're interacting with other children, are they interacting with other, with erm...with erm, adults who are within the setting...erm...if a child is unhappy then obviously, you know that their well-being...there is something going on with their well-being.

So, what do you think is happiness?

Happiness is possibly... (long pause)...apart from just being a word, it's very difficult to define happiness. It's more...erm...I think you erm, rather than...I think you show happiness...I think you show happiness rather than actually...err, you can actually, I think that's probably how you can define happiness by, by looking at somebody and observing whether they're happy or sad and what kind of emotions they're feeling and things like that.

OK. Err, so what are the factors that influence children's well-being?

The factors that influence children's well-being are, erm...for a start...erm, are a child's basic needs being met. Erm...are a child, is a child, erm, for example, erm...erm...having the adequate, adequate food – that that can determine the well-being, whether, you know, obviously as I say, earlier on, I explained about the well-being on the inside, erm...adequate food, are they erm...are they emotion...are they emotionally secure – that is a major factor in a child's well-being.

Erm...err...emotional behaviours...erm...is a massive aspect in children that you can't always, you know, people forget, can potentially forget about emotional well-being and concentrate on what they can actually see on the outside, and not what's going on on the inside...erm...

Can you give me an example of emotional behaviours?

Emotional behaviour is perhaps erm...you know you've got to, you've got to erm, respond to children's erm needs...you've got to um interact with children...err, you know, if a child, for example is feeling sad, it's up to a practitioner to erm, to ask the

correct questions on, you know, wh..., what are you feeling sad for? How can we help you? you know, things like that and it's up to a practitioner to erm, support a child's emotional well-being. Erm, also a child, a child socially, that can, that can be a factor on the well-being socially, you know, you know, are they interacting with other, other children. It can be a major factor if a child's feeling unhappy with their peers, and, you know, are they having differences with their peers, and, you know, and that can be a factor on the childr... a child well-being.

Ok, erm, so you mentioned basic needs, can you expand on that a little bit?

Yeah, erm, are they, are they, erm, being adequate, adequately fed, have they got the correct, you know, are they erm, being sheltered, yeah, you know, and things like that. Erm, are they, are they dressed appropriately, cos if they're not dressed, you know, appropriately, well-being can, you know, not necess...not so much on young children but, you know, if they aren't dressed like the other children, and it can have a major factor on the well-being, if they're dressed, if for example, they're unkempt, and things like that, mmm, you know, children, as you well know, can be cruel (laughs nervously) Yeah (laughs) and erm...you know...and, are they, are they um...nutritionally, have they got a balanced diet, and things like that. Err...are they getting enough sleep can be a major factor on the child's emo...err, well-being, you know if a child isn't getting enough sleep, or hasn't got an adequate place to sleep, yeah, for example if they share a bedroom with lots and lots of siblings, and things like that, mmm you know, are they getting the adequate, you know, 10,12 hours sleep that a pre-school child needs. Yeah, yeah, ok.

Anything else about siblings that might be relevant?

Erm...(long pause) sometimes children, you know, don't always get on with their own siblings perhaps and err...you know...there could be sibling rivalry that can erm...yeah, and that can have an impact on a child's erm, emotional and social well-being, uh hmm, you know. They could also perhaps have erm...extended...nowadays its quite normal to have extended siblings, you know, and be part of an extended...you mean as a result of a divorce or a separation...yeah, yeah - or not necessarily a divorce nowadays, it's, you know, a mother and father can have extended siblings, I think that's quite in our...from previous relationships do you mean? Well, yeah or yeah, it can be quite normal for children to have erm, multiple siblings that they're not always aware (laughs) yeah (laughs), not always aware of! Is that going down too difficult? (laughs nervously) you, know. I know what you mean by that. Yes so if you've got like reconstituted families, yeah, where they are not necessarily of the same parents. Yeah, and they don't always... you know, there is examples where, some, some siblings, you know they've got 20 siblings by...(stops) So we are talking about reconstit...is that's what it's called? Reconstituted families? Yep. Extended, extended, extended! (laughs). Yeah. Ok, right.

So thinking about what you've said about well-being, how would you use your knowledge about well-being to support children's learning and development in practice in your, in the setting?

Yep, I think as a practitioner, you should always be there to, you know, it's important to listen to children. It's one of the main aspects is, you know, I think some people are, you know, are not always very good at listening to children and, you know, you've got to be very mindful of what children are trying to say cos with pre-school children it can be very difficult cos, you know...just going off on a tangent a little bit...sometimes their language skills, it can be difficult to define what children are saying so you have to listen very very clearly, you know, and not, and not decide what you think they're going to say, you...you've got to ...you know, be very mindful of that. (pause) **Mmm**. I think, I think it's err, also as a practitioner, it's important to have, erm, good resources for children to erm, to be able to, erm, you know, erm...(pause) to be able to erm...display the, display their feelings and things like that. **Yeah**. You know, err, perhaps like, you know, empathy dolls, and, you know, things like that, erm. A very, another good thing is play dough, that's very good at err, for a child's erm, well-being as well because it, you know (pause).

What does it, what does play dough allow them to do?

Play dough allows, you know it, play dough is a stress reliever and it allows them to erm...and, you know, in our setting we've got a little boy who, he finds it a comfort, playdough, because he transports the play dough, a piece of play dough, everywhere that he goes, and that is...it's his comfort factor. He doesn't need a blanket, he needs a piece of play dough.

I think a lot of things can, you know, going outdoors, for example, it it's highly important for a child's well-being, no matter what kind of weather we are experiencing, you know. Parents seem to think that it's too cold for children to go outside and that is not the case. Children sh... as long as they've got appropriate clothing on – which is part of a child's well-being – then it's important as practitioners, that we erm, we advocate that children go out in all weathers and parents have got to appreciate that, you know, that they don't always like children going out – they need to be warm – no they don't need to be warm, they need to, need to go out in the fresh air, no matter what. **Hmmm**.

Why do you think parents might think that?

Well parents are not very well educated sometimes, that they feel that they're gonna catch a cold from being cold and that's...a cold is an air borne virus and you don't catch a cold from being cold by no means, you catch a cold ...viral...it's viral, you know, and parents say it's too cold to come out, you know, and we have to educate parents in saying to them, you know, it is good for your child's well-being is playing out, in all aspects, it's not just...it's not just being out in all weathers, it's the social aspect, it's erm, it's, you know, looking at the environment, is good for the child's

well-being as well and talking about the environment and talking about what we see in the environment.

How might that benefit their well-being do you think?

It...erm...that they are able to erm, interact with, erm, interact with adults and peers and, you know, they are also able to erm, go home and discuss what they have erm, seen with the parents as well, and they can actually feed back to the parents that, you know, this is what we do when we play out and, you know, no matter what weathers we go out in and we can explore our surroundings which is, you know, I think its beneficial to anybody no matter what age to get outdoors **mmm**, cos I think you...it's a good aspect for anybody's well-being. **Yeah, fresh air!** Yep. **Ok.**

Ok, what do you expect early years settings to provide for children?

As an holistic ...**in a holistic way yeah.** Yep. Err I expect, I expect err, practitioners above all to be erm, caring, erm, empathise... I think as a practitioner I expect, erm, as a practitioner my personal opinion is you should be there to support not just the child, the family as a whole, they come as a package, that is erm, that is first and foremost, you know. I always say to my parents, that, you know, if you say, sorry for bothering you, they come as a, you come as a package group to me. **Mmm.** Erm, I think you should be there, yet again, I go back to you need to have really good listening skills, erm, you need to be able to erm, communicate with parents erm... in a way where they understand you cos, you know, you've got to be mindful that some, you know, you can't always use erm, technical terms with parents, you've got to be mindful that some parents don't always understand, **yeah**, if you use great tech...technical words with them you've, you know, erm...Throughout the setting we, we should provide erm...a good base...a good structure to our setting as far as a basic, basic provision, and then we, and then we should enhance that with erm, what children want. It's good to enhance, you know, go on, go on the children's interests (long pause). **Ok.**

What about providing for their well-being, in the setting?

Providing for well-being, it's important that you...you erm, that a child is erm, refreshed erm...all the time i.e. some milk and water. Milk's good for obviously, it's got calcium in, it's good. Some children, you've got to be mindful that children, some children, don't drink milk so we prov... I think you should provide water as well. Err... as far as err, snack times, you've got to be mindful that children don't always eat breakfast and it's an important erm, it's an important meal of the day, so it's important that you provide a good healthy breakfast, erm with lots of fruit, and or vegetables (long pause).

Ok, what about the erm, what about the learning part of pre-school? What does that give children?

Learning, the learning, you know, children as we know that, you know, they are very good at learning themselves and they learn through play however, we've got to provide the correct resources for children to allow children to do this. Erm, I think it's all good, also good the mixture of the free play and balancing it with the erm, adult led, adult initiated play because then it prompts children and gives them ideas on, you know, that they can then, on the back of that they can further their learning and development. Yeah. Ok.

Right, I've got a sheet here now and it's got some key words from the EYFS. Uh hum. So what...not necessarily talking about your knowledge of the EYFS, it's not about that, right, ok, it's about how you feel about these particular terms. Yeah, uh hum. If you want me to quote...I have got the original...no it's fine ...if you want me to quote exactly what it says. Uh hum. So we'll start with learning and development. In terms of children aged 0 to 5, right, ok, how do you feel about learning and development?

Erm, learning and development I think it's very very good. I think children sh...my personal opinion is children should learn and develop through the, through themselves. I think as far as parents, parents can be quite pushy on the learning and development aspect, you know, they expect, you, a 2 year old, a child, to know their colours and it, you know, and I have to point out that, you know, it's not all about that, it's about the, you're missing the social, emotional, you know, the communication, you know, you're missing all them great aspects of the child's learning and development and concentrating on numeracy, literacy, colours etcetera. I think it's invaluable that you point to parents out that, you know, children do learn and develop through their own free play. Yeah. (long pause) Ok.

(Picks up the prompt sheet) What about school readiness?

(responds immediately and sharply) I don't like that word. (smiles)

That's interesting, why don't you like it?

Define it to me. I don't, you know, school readiness, I think it's very...I don't like it at all.

The EYFS actually says 'It promotes...the EYFS...promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's school readiness.'

I don't like the word school readiness.

What is it about it that you don't like?

I think it's very vague. Yeah? I think erm, children...(frowns). What does it mean to you – school readiness? Well, you can just spin it on its head and say that they, they expect children to be ready for school...at 4 years old! And how do you feel about that? I don't like it. I think children, my personal opinion is, children go to school far

too early in this country. (laughs) Way too early. **Uh hum**. I don't, I don't like it all. Our children are being made to sit in a semi-structured classroom at 4 years old - I don't like it. **So what do you think they should be doing?** I think they should erm, approach the Scandinavian approach and go to school at 6/7. Where they lea...you know, they learn life skills at nursery age and they learn how to lay a table for example, they explore the world around them and they learn through that kind of play rather than sitting to doing their ABC's and learning to write their name and things like that and learning phonics. I don't like it (laughs)! Sorry. **Some people don't like it and other people do!** (both laugh)

What's the next one on the sheet? Just pick one.

Parents Working in Partnership with Practitioners – I think that's a fabulous statement, **mmm**, it's part of the erm, statutory guidance of the EYFS. **Mmm**. Erm, I think it's an absolute fabulous statement. I think parents and practitioners should work together, because we're equally, you know, well, we're responsible equally, well, them more so, but we're responsible for this particular child **uh hum** in question and I think it's an important statement, and I like that statement (laughs).

What about the next one? The middle one – Assessment.

Assessment. I think assessment should be abolished at erm, **(laughs at tone of voice and expression)** pre-school age (amusing expression of disgust – both laugh). Because I don't think you should be assessing children at this, such a young age. **Yeah**. I think it's err, I don't like the, I don't like the erm, I don't like the statutory guidance at all. I think it's vague, I think it's horrendous (laughs).

So, we are talking about the 2 year check, and the other one which is at the end of reception, isn't it. Yep, the erm, the early learning, **yeah, the one that, is it...**, the early learning goals, **the profile one, isn't it.** **So would you get rid of both of those? Do you see that neither of those have value?**

I think a 2 year check - as far as the child's health and well-being - is ok. That's fine. I like that 2 year check. I think that as far as health visitors and health professionals – I like that idea. Erm, as far as erm, early years practitioners doing a 2 year check... I don't like it. **No**. I think...er, er, you're assessing babies. **Yeah**. I don't like it at all. I'm sorry! (laughs)

So, you don't like the, is it the learning aspect that you don't like?

Yeah, I think, as far as health and well-being, **yeah**, obviously we need to keep an eye on children, you know, it's an important aspect, just to erm, make sure a child is growing, erm, and developing at an appropriate age **hmm**, health wise, **yeah**, but as far as, erm, learning and dev...learning aspect, I don't think there should be one. **No**. **Because the 2 year check is just about the prime areas isn't it?** Yeah, it is about the prime areas, but I don't, I don't think we should be assessing 2 year old children. **Beyond that?** I think they should be older. **Yeah, yeah. Oh, right, the check**

should come later? Yeah, I don't like, I don't like the 2, any 2 year check as far as, as far as assessing children even in the prime areas of learning. **Right.** I think it's very vague, you've got to do it within...I think we've got a 6 weeks time slot of doing it. It's not enough. **No.** It's not enough time, you know, that's what the ideal thing is, is when they come into your setting at 2 year old, you've got a 6 weeks time slot to assess this child in the prime areas of learning. I think it's too soon. **Too soon, hmm.** You know because a lot of the time, you know, going back to years ago, perhaps - I know we're moving forward - we wouldn't have erm, we wouldn't have erm, we wouldn't have even contemplated anything like that. **No.** In fact a child wouldn't have been assessed, they didn't go to nursery while they were 4 years old did they so, **no,** unless they went to the private sector, **yeah,** you know.

Ok, what about the last one, the key person.

I like the key person aspect, I think it's good for a child to have erm...to have an emotional attachment with err, one specific member of staff. Erm, I think Elinor Goldschmied founded the key person. **I believe she did.** Erm...and I think it's important that, not just for a child's well-being, it's for a parent's well-being as well, that they can actually come to a member of staff and have that, have a continual, **yeah,** erm, relationship with one member of staff although, you know, we're all responsible for each and every child within the setting. It is important that there's one particular staff, that a parent could come to and a child could come to if need be.

It says in the EYFS that they should help, erm, engage parents in the child's development at home. What do you think about that?

(long pause)

So you would be supporting the parents in guiding the child's development in the home.

(short pause) I think we support the children in, in your early years setting and erm, it's very difficult to, to do that in a child's environment when they're at home, to be honest, that is erm, that is down to the parent. We will liaise together when the child is in the setting and we can work together. It's all about working in partnership together, and we can work together, but as far as the development in the home, then...it's a bit vague that (laughs). **Well, it's open to interpretation, isn't it, so...** Yep, yep.

Ok. Have you got anything else you want to comment on, that we've touched on? Anything you want to add?

I think it, you know, it's a very important aspect, is a child's emot...a child's well-being. It can be, it can be err, forgotten sometimes, erm, people just concentrate on the child's physical. I think that the important thing is that people concentrate on the physical well-being and you know, they always look at what's going on on the outside and not necessarily what's going on on the inside of a child, and that, you

know, as practitioners, we have to be mindful that, you know, just because a child looks well on the outside, are they well on the inside?

Yeah, well, thank you very much, that's really good.

Appendix 10 - Interview with Jill

Ok, so my first question is, erm, what does the term well-being mean to you?

Erm, I guess it means giving children that, sort of, feel good factor so that when they come in to our setting, erm, they know that they're...they're happy to come in, they get that reassurance from the parents, but they are happy to...to come and settle and play with their peers and...and occupy themselves and find...if they need some help, come and ask us...they're not scared to come and, sort of, ask for a bit of reassurance or a cuddle or erm...just that support to give them the confidence to explore really, within here **mmm**. (pause)

What about and then, well-being itself? How would you, how would you describe that as a, d'you mean a...as a notion? As a notion, erm...(pause)

But it's something that just gives you confidence in yourself, doesn't it, it builds your self-esteem and, erm...makes you, sort of, feel secure in yourself. And that feeling of...I can always remember that, that feeling at home where you...I can remember my mum being there, but I didn't have to be with her, I didn't have to be doing anything with her but I can still know that feeling of her being in the house. **Right**. And it, sort of, gives you that security that **yeah**, you're fine, doesn't it, and that you, you know, you can, you can play, you can do whatever, but you can go and find somebody if you want it and yeah. The sun's shining and you can go out and...I...all that, sort of, feel good factor I guess. **I like that – 'feel good factor'**. Mmm.

So, what would you say were...thinking about what you've defined as well-being...what would you say were the factors that affect children's well-being? And I'm talking more about the 0-5 erm, age group.

(long pause) I think a lot of their environmental factors at home can affect it. Whether they've got a good, erm, secure family, erm, where they're allowed to, sort of, have some self-esteem...there's...and a, a secure base, erm. What their experience of any early years education has been already, sometimes that can affect it. They might come with pre-conceptions if they've been somewhere else where they're not that happy. **Mmm**. Erm...(long pause). What the environment of the pre-school setting is like, that it's welcoming and friendly and they feel comfortable with the adults, that the other children around them are secure and happy, cos once you get one...We had it on Monday, once one cried then you get about five crying (laughs then both laugh), don't you – they don't want their mum to leave, so it's, it's, sort of, working in a system as to how we settle the children in. Erm...and sometimes parents own experience of school or education. I know we perhaps have some parents whose, who perhaps haven't had a good experience of education and their a bit apprehensive of bringing **mmm**, their children in here as well. And really parents attitudes to learning. You can have some parents who are very clued up on wanting their children to know their ABC and their numbers but don't really appreciate that the social interactions are just as important as that, if not more important. **Yeah**.

What about the factors away from pre-school?

Erm (pause), home life, parents, who's in the family, siblings, **uhmm**, erm. We've got a lot of children with different, sort of, step families now or different, erm...you know, visiting dad at weekend or **yeah**, mum at weekend and not quite understanding. They've got sets of rules in different places. We've had children who've attended full day care that then come in, and I think sometimes, the well-being of those children, whilst they might be very well versed in what we want them to know, don't always have that erm...don't always have the same well-being because they're not as secure in...they've spent a longer time away from home. **Right**. And I think that affects their security sometimes. I think you can tell a full day nursery child against someone who's had a lot of time with, say, grandma or...

I wonder why that is?

I think it's that home feeling, that, it that, yeah, I don't know. **The security of...** it's the number of hours really, that they're spending in early years care sometimes, isn't it.

Well, I think research shows that there is a point at which it becomes detrimental.

Yeah, is it about 15 hours that...there's no proof that over 15 hours there's any er... **any gain**, gain in it, yeah. **Well, not only gain** yeah, **but that there are areas**, yeah, yeah, **that, that start to suffer**, yeah, yeah. **Erm, I think it's the EPPE Study that showed that**. Right, right. Yeah, and I've heard...it came up in one of our network meetings once I think, **hmm**, but, erm, yeah. It's just the approach, isn't it, of family and friends...if there's been any abuse or anything, or any neglect, any, erm, sort of, verbal putting down **mmm**, then it will affect their well-being in general. I don't think it necessarily has anything to do with money. I think that you can have, erm, children from very wealthy backgrounds but that have not had the attention from parents and family, and I think attention is...I think that's the thing when they are in the full day care, they're not getting the same attention from parents, **yeah**, and they seek it out. **Yeah**. They can get...

Do they show...do you think those children show specific behaviours?

Yeah, I think they're more needy children in, **that's interesting**, in a, in a, in a social and emotional way, **yeah**, and they want to, they want to prove that they know things to you. **(laughs gently)** They're used to being quizzed, they're used to being assessed, **yeah**. Some of them won't tell you things when you ask them because they know what you want 'em to say **(laughs)** some of them will tell you because they know that that's how they get a sticker...to write their name and things. But it's not necessarily well-being, it's trying to (pause)...**or is it?** Well, maybe it does give them a sense of well-being, yeah, **mmm**, because they know how to get that satisfaction of knowing, but, **yeah**, but, it can be, I don't know, it can be in a bit of a needy way (pause). Not all, but some. **Mmm, that's an interesting observation, that. I know that some people do believe that but I, I've never been certain of evidence.** No, I couldn't

say it's definite but there's just certain children that, I think you, there's a difference in some of it, with the full day care children. **Mmm. And it...** Because we quite often see them, they've quite often been in day care from when they're young and then they'll come here for a couple of days a week or something, just to, **yeah**, get them ready for school. **Yeah**. But um...

And that is about...is that about well-being, or is that, or is there something else going on there, I wonder?

Yeah, maybe. **Hmm**. That...there was the one example of a child who had done a lot of time in nursery from a, an early...early days and then he wouldn't...he spent...it snowed and he spent a day at home and he was never as settled here again after that, cos he wanted that day at home again, **yeah**. He wanted it to snow. He wanted to stay at home, so I think that's well-being isn't it, **yeah**. That's that...that's that...he obviously had that sense that day, that everybody was probably at home and the family were all there and they weren't probably going anywhere, they weren't going shopping or they weren't going doing activities **mmm**, and they weren't being pushed around, they were just there, and I would imagine they'd had a bit of fun that day **(laughs)** and he just craved that time again. **They know, don't they!** **Hmmm. It's strange.** **Mmm.**

Ok, so thinking about well-being and what you understand by that term and the factors that influence it, how do you use your knowledge of child well-being to provide an environment in the setting that helps to support their learning and development?

Erm, we always try to make sure that the children are familiar with us and the setting before they are left, **yep**, here, erm, stay and play's an example because they'll come and play, maybe with their mum for a while for a few weeks or a few months beforehand. **So they come with a familiar adult?** And then, they come with a...they've got to stay with a familiar adult, at stay and play they've got to come with a familiar adult, erm. They become used to the environment and so it's not such a big thing when, erm, when mum or dad does go. Erm...and we've got the key person system so we make sure that, erm, a particular adult is assigned to that child, although, to be fair it...we work as group anyway. So, the children usually become...they sometimes choose their key person, don't they, or they sometimes become, erm, familiar with, with us all anyway, depending on the child. Erm, although we have had some children that...they've just come in, they'll visit for 10 minutes and then they'll... they can...the parents'll say 'Oh, they'll want me to leave, they'll want me to leave.' **(laughs)** And erm...**they're all different aren't they.** Yeah, and they...and then they settle equally well so, erm, I think you've just got to take it at the pace of the child. **Yeah.**

What about you personally in providing an environment for children?

We try and provide...we've got a cosy book corner...we try and provide a cor...a book corner with the resources and cushions and, erm, soft toys in that is more comforting, erm. We tend to work at a higher than the mandatory, erm, staff ratio, **yeah**, so we've usually got a spare person...well, well in theory we've got a spare person at hand...if we need to give that extra reassurance to a particular child when they come in, **yeah**, erm, because that's important, if you have got a child who's upset you can spend quite a length of time with them and we'll use diversion techniques and try and get them interested in the activities that are going on around the setting, erm. We've got our rules amongst the children that, erm, you know, about kindness and putting resources away and not throwing anything and not...and being kind to everybody and not hurting anybody, **mmm**, cos it can be a bit daunting when a child first comes in and there's a mass of children, sort of, around, erm...

And do the children contribute to those rules in any way?

Yeah, the children know...soon they know, sort of, boundaries and we try and do activities where it's so that the children can learn each other's names and, **yeah**, erm. We have in...we have in the past had a, sort of, um, buddying sort of system, although we just tend to do it as it evolves really now, if a particular child takes somebody under their wing.

So, how do you...how do you think that has an impact on their well-being, the environment you provide? What, what are your intentions when you're providing that kind of environment?

Our intentions are to make them feel comfortable in the environment, erm. To be confident enough to ask for things if they want them **uhmmm**. To quickly be able to learn the routines at the snack...going for a snack and going for a drink, or ask...showing them where the toilets are, asking them if they need some help and sort of, just quickly to be able to gain confidence and enjoy being within our group. **Yep**.

Ok, erm, so what do you exp...you've touched on it a little bit...erm, what do you expect early years settings to provide, so taking a little bit away from where you work now, what is the expectation of an early years setting for children?

What by parents or by...everybody really?

From your point of view, what do you expect early years settings to provide I think it...specifically for the children?

It should provide a welcoming, comfortable environment where the children are free to explore, erm, on their own as well as with, erm, an adult, erm, and to provide some one to one resources that support those children, erm, if they need that support, erm. And activities both structured and unstructured to help them achieve

the, the early learning goals. And one thing we've done as a setting in recent years, we've become more and more involved in things like single assessments and CAFs, and what was a CAF, and more support with the family. **Right.** Erm,

Can you give an example of, of one such situation?

Yeah, we had a child that came in who, whose well-being actually didn't seem that good. He was a little bit aggressive towards the adults in the setting as well as...well, more to the adults than the children really, erm, wasn't settling quite as well, got a lot of sickness, erm, bugs and illnesses and was not ...so his att...that affected his attendance. So then we've worked with the health visitor and the, and the school as well, and erm, the local authority to, sort of, work around the family, **mmm.** And then you find that maybe the parents haven't had such a good experience of school or they've got health issues as well. **Yeah.** Erm, but we have been able to work with them and that child now comes in a lot happier and we've got over that aggressive, sort of, streak. **(laughs gently) It's a nice feeling isn't it when you get that, yeah, that result.** Yeah. **Mmm.** Yeah. **Ok.** So really, as well as just your learning environment now, early years are...centres are becoming more family orientated aren't they, we're getting more involved with the family **yeah,** rather than just the child in the setting.

And how does that make you feel as a practitioner?

Pressured. **Mmmm.** I'm not a s...we're not tr...we're not...we're not trained as, erm, counsellors or social workers but if you start to get involved in some of those single assessments now, erm, some of the work that's needed there can be quite, **mmm,** at a, sort of, higher professional...or a different professional level as to what we're...whilst I'm quite happy working with the child, **mmm,** to go out and start working with the whole family is a totally different, **yeah,** thing.

Is that, is that difficult when you are very much based around the setting?

Yeah, it is in terms of staffing, erm. Our time is on the floor with the children. We do have admin time but that's generally for our own record keeping **mmm,** or just admin of the setting, **mmm,** erm, but there's a lot of pressure on that now to become the lead professional, which even though there's...When do you do it? There's no time. **Yeah, yeah.**

But, what impact does that kind of work have on a child's well-being though? How valuable is that work?

It is valuable, I appreciate it's invaluable, yeah. **Mmm.**

Ok, right I've got a little sheet here that's got some, some terms, it's a few themes taken from the EYFS. I'm not looking at people's knowledge of the EYFS, that's not the purpose of the exercise. I do have, erm, an original of the EYFS if we want to

look at what that means in terms of policy but what I'm looking for is what people's thoughts and opinions are about these particular issues. Ok. Ok, so you just pick one to start with and just tell me how you feel about it.

Erm, I don't know, Learning & Development, do you want to...? Yeah, well you can do it round as they come if you like. Yeah, ok. So, learning and development in terms of 0-5's, how do you feel about learning & development specifically?

What do you mean? In terms of well-being or...? Erm, learning and development generally. What they should be learning, how they should be developing and how a curriculum such as the EYFS can support that.

Erm, what, on whether it should be in place or...? Anything. Any attitude towards it. What springs to mind when you think of learning and development in the early years?

Assessment (tentative laugh, then both laugh). That's interesting! Yeah. No, I think it...obviously it's important and the early years are the most critical time of learning, erm. (Pause). There's an awful lot of paperwork now isn't there that goes with our, our job...we've just been discussing it earlier on...mmm, erm, and whether...by monitoring it and, and tagging it as much as we do now...the children actually get any more out of that, I'm not 100% convinced. Mmm. Cos I think if you asked any of our staff they would tell you where a child is, ok not on specific comments on the EYFS, but I think they would have a very good overview of that child, without having to spend hours documenting it at home. yeah, yeah.

Well that...what you've just said sort of links in yeah, with Assessment links in to the Assessment, yeah, then doesn't it? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So how do you specifically feel about assessment and, obviously in the EYFS, we're talking about specifically the Two Year Check, yeah, and then the baseline assessment for, er, National Curriculum at the end of reception.

I think what's good now is that we're...we are allowed to read in...to feed in to the assessment for school, hmmm, and that is part of the, sort of, curriculum now, so at least our...the work that we've done here is respected, right, or at least is sent on to school, yeah, I don't know how much they use it, but is, but is, it's appreciated that we do do a proper assessment, yeah, of the children now and that when, that, the, to get the children ready for school, that that actually goes into school.

Do you have children that you need to do the Two Year Check with?

Yeah, we've got two year olds, yeah, yeah, yeah, erm...And how do you feel about that? (long pause). I think...fine really, it's only just, just working in those prime areas it's just quite, yeah, you know, you can quite quickly assess, yeah, where a two year old is up to, yeah, erm, on those anyway. We've not...what we are finding more difficult is getting the two year old checks from the health visitors or from parents, oh, right, cos it's not integrated yet so, yeah, erm, we don't always see the, the one from

the...that the health visitor's done. I think that's...and that keeps changing all the time anyway. I think that's fairly universal, yeah, I don't...yeah, I think, yeah, until it's integrated formally, no, no, I don't think you will always necessarily get that, no, that sharing no.

Erm, what about School Readiness?

(long pause). Well, the ethos of our setting is rea...because we started as, erm, literally a, sort of, pre-school year, the year before school, like a rising fives, mmm, then we've always worked quite, erm, heavily in that, sort of, school readiness area anyway. Right. We do, sort of, the register and more group sessions perhaps than, than erm, than you would in just a, a regular pre-school hmmm.

How do you feel about school readiness in the context of, of well-being, this age group?

Erm, (long pause). There's been a lot written, isn't there, about how, you know, children aren't as ready for school in terms of toilet training and behaviours and, uhmmm, and perhaps a bit of well-being and we are f...I think we are finding that we do...we're getting more children in erm, that maybe aren't nappy trained as early, erm...but in general the children that move on from, from us are, are ready for school, mmm, erm, depending on their age. I've got a little boy now who's got an August birthday and I've been thinking this morning that maybe, mmm, I'll speak to mum, yeah, and say that if he was born two weeks later, yeah and I...he would still have...he wouldn't be going to school this year. Yeah, there is some change...I think there's... is a lot of pressure on parents to...they want them to go when they should, don't they. But there is that option, isn't there, now. There is now and I think they can go straight into reception, can't they, yeah, rather, rather than having to go into Year 1. I'm not sure exactly how it...I'm not sure how it's working. I might find out from the school first, yeah, but, yeah, but I know the August birthdays are an issue. But I think if we can, if we can here, achieve that...that well-being in that child is such that when they go into school it's not a, it's not such a big, mmm, erm, a big thing, it's just a transition really, that they're quite happy to make, cos we, we do take them down to school. We go down on school visits and erm, get them used to the school environment as much as they can, mmm, with their key person.

And do you support that? Yeah. Personally? Yes, I think it's...Do you feel that's a good thing? Yes I think it's really good, yeah. Yeah, ok.

What have we got left on there? Erm...What about Working in Partnership with Parents?

I think it's vital that we work in partnership with, with parents, yeah, erm, cos the parents, at the end of the day, are the first educators and they're the ones that can give us more information about the child than, yeah, than we can. That's one of the things we're looking forward to when we adapt the Tapestry thing, that parents can

actually put comments in, **mmm**, erm, it will probably be an easier way for them to contribute towards our, erm, record keeping, **yeah**, erm, (pause). **You've mention...** You've got to have an open relationship with the parents and, you know, especially when you're working with children such as the ones that are maybe want, need to go on single assessment, **yeah**, or if they've got someone with a speech and language issue because you need to know what the parents are doing at home as well, **yeah**.

In the EYFS it actually says that, erm, practitioners should support parents with learning at home, yeah. How do you feel about the extent well we...to which that can happen?

It probably varies here depending on the child that they...we always send erm, a planning sheet out at the beginning of the half term anyway which tells them what the, we're going to do that term **ok**, and erm, and there's a bit on there about how, what parents can do with their children at home. Erm, I have had children, particularly with, erm, speech and language children where we might give them a bit more information on how to, sort of, encourage speech at home, **yeah**. Erm, and then it depends, doesn't it, once you, once you've gauged that maybe a child's ready to write, or we might give them, erm, some, sort of, letter forming sheet or, erm. But I think one thing that you don't want the parents doing is sitting the child down at home to, to learn. They need...there's not always that appreciation that it's a holistic thing, **yeah**, and that going to the par...that they get just as much out of going to the park or **mmm**, erm, you know, going out for a meal, **yeah**, as they would with sitting down and learning 'to write' (said in a softer tone) (**laughs gently**) (**laughs gently**).

Is that everything? Have we covered all of them now? Key Person. **Oh, Key Person, yeah.**

Erm...(pause). **How do you feel about that system?** Yeah, it works. We've always had a key person system and you do tend to get to know the parents a bit better through having a key person, as well as the children. We were just saying, erm, because now we've, sort of, expanded a bit and we've got more children, what is difficult is when you've got all the learning assessment for 10 plus children now, that you, **mmm**, whilst you do know the...you know the children on the floor, to keep up to date with that bit is becoming harder, **The learning and development** but we are... **side of it?** Yeah, but we are taking somebody...well, we have got somebody else now who is coming through to do a bit more of our... to be another key person. **So how many children have you got now?** We've got 40 children on register and we've got three... well, we've got three and two halves key person really cos J...**How many does that give you each?** Erm, abou...**roughly**, well, roughly ten each at the moment, **right**, and I think in the past we've had about six or seven. **Cos a lot of groups will automatically have ten, won't they.** I know, yeah, yeah, so, yeah.

So is it making it harder then to...did you say it was making it harder to keep up with the paperwork?

I think it's just to...keeping up with the paperwork side of it which, hopefully with the Tapestry it'll be easier, *mmm*. But your key person has got to be, you know, is your, is pivotal for that child to, sort of, enhance their relationships at pre-school and get to know them, *mmm*. I'm called Memmit by one of them at the minute! *(laughs)* (both laugh) 'Memmit, ok Memmit!' *Oh that's really sweet though isn't it!* (both laugh) *Oh, I like that!*

Right, I think we've covered all those areas, *yeah*. Is that everything? *Is there anything else you want to add or expand on or that you might have left out...about well-being?*

I don't know. Are there any areas that you want me to...cover that you think that's not there. *No no, it's entirely your...at your...* Erm, no, I just...I mean just reiterate really that we just feel that if the child isn't, doesn't feel happy and settled and content and good about themselves here, then we're not going to go anywhere *no*, in anything else. *So it's like, like building a tower isn't it?* Yeah. *Yeah*. That's, that's got to be the bottom of the tower hasn't it, your first brick really, *yeah*, and then you can learn from there. *Yeah*.

Right, I think that's everything. Thank you very much.

Appendix 11 – Interview with Sam

Ok, so the first question is, er, what does the term well-being mean to you?

Mmm (in a questioning way), (pause) It'd be like, erm, (pause), kind of, the...can't say the word can I...the person...I think it could be quite personal to a child, it's...well to anybody, it's their well-being's, kind of how they are. How, how, they're treated (long pause)...how secure they are, kind of, emotionally and physically, erm, like the support they've got...to make them who they are. It's more...it's nothing to do with, kind of, learning, it's more just the foundation of making them, yeah, making sure their well, healthy, yeah...(long pause).

Can you give me an example of...well-being within a child? How it...what it would look like?

Mmm (in a questioning way), erm...it'd...I just think the child would...don't know if I can say it...look clean and look as if they've...to say they're well...if they look clean and look fed and...I can't say it...look well! (both laugh), erm. Just look happy (yeah) and secure, that kind of ***, think of the foundation to it all.

So you think it's about how they look, rather than how they behave?

Oh no (said coyly) (both laugh). It'd be like their happiness as well, if there was no, kind of...I think it'd show in their behaviour as well, as in...if there was a lot of...negative behaviour maybe, yeah, I think they'd...their well-being's not how it should be, mmm, they're not being supported how it should be, yeah.

What do you mean by 'supported'?

Oh it's, just like supported from home and from anybody that's in their care (mmm), that'd feed a lot into their well-being, yeah (long pause) ok.

So thinking about how you conceptualise well-being in your head, what would be the factors that influence well-being...the well-being of a child? What sort of things would influence it?

Erm, the family background, erm...(long pause)...the kind of family beliefs would be a big one, erm. What's available to them, so, I suppose it would be...erm...(long pause)...and just kind of their home life...like, things, what's available to them, kind of, food and water, yep, and security and comfort (long pause).

When you say family background, what...what do you mean by background? Can you describe something, if they've got, kind of, like...more specific?

I think I mean more like where they are as a family, as in their...what's prov...no, not...what's provided from them...from the family, yeah, or from wherever they've come from obviously, cos they might not be...yeah, so, it'd lead on to the other ones...if they've got a safe house and a...yeah, everything they need.

So you're thinking more of sort of, material things?

And love and all that kind of thing, yeah...and emotional support and, **yeah**, (long pause)...**ok**.

Anything wider than the family?

(long pause)...erm...sort of, their opportunities, **yep**, erm, especially if they were coming to a...obviously if they were in early years, if they go to a nursery, or a pre-school, **ok, yeah**, or school, erm, and then any support they've got out of home as well. I think that'd feed into it if they've got...I know I say family...but if they've got, kind of, extended family or friends, **yeah**, or...all those kind of things.

And how might friends, for example, influence well-being?

Erm...it'd be another kind of...it'd be another kind of love, kind of, I don't know, **yeah**, making them feel...not the family support, but knowing that it's not just you and your family, you've got a bigger support network, **mmm**, (pause). That social aspect as well, I suppose, **yeah**. (long pause).

So, how would, erm...you said social aspect...how would that manifest itself in well-being? What would that...what would that give a child in terms of well-being?

If they hadn't...I don't, I don't...I think if they don't have the social, kind of, skills or the social opportunities then it could obviously bring on some behaviours or make them unhappy, **mmm**, or not give them...they get a lot out, I suppose they got a lot from being social and going to places and knowing people, **yeah**. It makes them feel secure.

Ok, so thinking about well-being in the previous two questions, so that's understanding what well-being is and the factors that influence it, how does that contribute to what you provide for children as a practitioner, in terms of environment?

It, personally, it'd be having that, kind of, connection with the child, being an, um, like a support mechanism, should I say, making them feel welcome, making them feel loved, making them comfortable with you so they feel secure and they could say anything or they can...you can help them, we say. We look after them and change them and feed them, and all that kind of, **yeah**...we do the general care...well, I do the general care, that's what I like to see before I do anything else, **yeah**. As long as they look comfortable and happy.

So that would be something you would focus on before you would move on to something else for example.

Yeah, I'd rather they be comfortable and happy and secure...behaviour, **yeah**...emotionally, kind of, socially before I started teaching them, **yeah**, how to read and write (said with a sigh). I think it's the main...it's the foundations for the learning, in't it, **yeah**, they need to get that all first (long pause). **Ok**.

What about, erm...the physical environment? How might that affect a child's well-being, in terms of what you might provide?

It'd obviously have to be accessible, **yeah**. I obviously know that personally (gives an amused smile), (**laughs gently**) erm...not, erm...and inviting...it can't...and it's got to be safe, the main thing...you can't put them in danger, **uhmm**.

Do you think, erm...do you think your personal situation has an influence over, err...any aspect of what you provide? Erm...In terms of your perception? does it change your perception, do you think?

I think it does in just practical ways, **yeah**, obviously I'm at their...at their level! (**laughs**) (**laughs**). Well, not...not quite, but you'll see the act...the kind of, the access... of how accessible things are for them and I know personally myself how daunting it is if something's high up, **yeah**, or something's not rea...not in reach then, **mmm**, I know from their opinion that...and big things and strangers walking in. I can imagine they'll be like 'uhh, who's that they're talk...' (in a hushed voice) (**laughs**), **yeah**.

So it's almost like looking at it...literally yeah! **With their eyes in a strange kind of way.**

They always say you should crawl through a setting, don't they, so you see from their level! **Mmm. Ok. Right.**

So, again, a personal opinion, what do you expect an early years setting to provide for children?

Erm, a secure...the main one would be a secure environment, with no, obviously, no dangers.

So, you mean secure in a physical sense?

Firstly, yeah, (**laughs**), (**both laugh**) yeah, erm...and then I'd say, kind of, emotionally. That would be one of the big things, **yeah**.

How would you support that? Erm...**As a setting...as a whole setting, not necessarily you personally, but how would a setting support...**

Key person, **yeah**. That would be a big one. Erm, how we introduce them with the, like, transitioning in. I think that's a big support...**ah, settling in yeah?** Yeah, erm...and relationship with parents...that's a big one, erm, **uhmm**,...and then obviously, just caring for them and seeing how they...helping them, making them feel comfortable here with their peers, **uhmm**, (long pause). **Ok.**

Right, I've got some themes. I'm going to give you a sheet with lots of different themes on it. They're all taken from the EYFS. I've also got a copy of the EYFS in case we want to clarify exactly what the EYFS says. **Uhmm. I'm not...I'm not testing**

knowledge, I want...again, I want to know how you personally feel about some of those issues that are set within the context of the curriculum, and I'm focusing really on the learning and development side of it rather than the erm, welfare side. Ok. Ok. So just pick one and tell me immediately what thoughts and views you have about the particular subject.

Erm, I'd say school readiness, **yep**, had almost been...out of the five...that'd be my...it wouldn't be my priority for a child coming into a setting, unless I knew they were, kind of, secure well-being wise, **mmm**. I know it's welfare as well, **mmm**, erm. I'd say the two most im...well no, three most important would be the learning and development, the partnership and the key person, **ok**, and I'd want to have them secure before I moved on to the school readiness.

Ok, so tell me about school readiness. How do you feel about school readiness?

I like it and I think it's great for the children that are ready for...ready to begin school readiness, but I think erm, you shouldn't...I don't think it should be jumped on, I think a lot of children need a lot more before. Cos obviously when they move from here to reception, they're still EYFS, **yeah**, so...what is school readiness? Is it from here to reception? Or is it reception to...(voice fades)

What do you think school readiness is?

I think it's start...personally, out of...not out of the EYFS...the learning and support with the EYFS and then I think the school readiness is...I think they need to be emotionally secure to go to school. It's not just if they can write their name, it's if they feel confident to go to such a...**mmm**, in this situation...(looks out of window at the school) such a big building, **yeah**...with new people, **mmm**, especially the ones what have been here since they're two, it's...it's quite...erm...(long pause).

Ok, so, sort of, slightly linked in...in with that then erm...learning and development, what, what, what should we be...what should learning and development mean in the, sort of, 0 to 5 age group? Erm...what should that be about?

I think the development's a big...in more of the sense of...erm, sort of, like the prime areas that kind of development I think that's quite important. That their emotion...phys...erm, personal...then obviously, they can communicate and their physical development and then obviously, the learning...it's more...it's more the foundations that should be learning...that development, that's the most important, **mmm**, before they move on to, like, the assessment (then whispers...) and school readiness, **yeah, ok**.

The EYFS actually says that you should focus on the prime areas but then move on to a more structured learning and development programme, yeah, erm...to get them ready for Key Stage 1, yeah, erm...do you agree with that...would you agree with that?

I think prime areas definitely first, yeah, **yeah**, and I don't think you shouldn't really move on to your specifics until...obviously, you can introduce things but not...it wouldn't be...it shouldn't be a big deal until they're...you shouldn't ignore them, **yeah**, but obviously you don't totally focus on them, **yeah**.

What about partnership with parents. How would you interpret that?

I think that's really important. I think you get a lot from your parents, **uhmm**, both to help you but to help them. As a parent I think's quite important...really important, erm, especially for them to help the child and if you've got that relationship, then you're all working together aren't you, **yeah**.

Is that an equal relationship do you think? Between parent and child? No between parent and practitioner.

Ideally, but not always is it (**laughs gently**). It'd be great if it was, **mmm**.

Ok, erm...key person then. What do we think about the key person?

Erm, I, I real, I really support the key person I think, **mmm**, and that kind of approach, and I think you can see in practice how, kind of, important it is, **yeah**, especially with the settling in and knowing the child and then...I see a lot that parents...I think they...you see a lot from parents knowing who the key person is, erm. A lot choose to speak to the key person, **mmm**. I think if they're conf...if they're not that confident to ask, it's nice to know that they know, **yeah**... that they will talk. Obviously when the key person's not there, **yeah**, (and then whispers) it's a bit different, but anyway...**Well, sometimes that's something, yeah, you have to deal with, isn't it, in practice, erm...what else have we got on that sheet?**

(whispers) **Assessment. Assessment. Now, in the EYFS, we're talking about two assessments mainly, the Two Year Check and the assessment at the end of reception class, which, of course, has changed now from the Profile to the Baseline. Yeah. So how do you feel about assessment in early years?**

Erm, I agree with the Two Year Check. I think that's...erm...but when a child's...if they're coming in at 3, then that's where...the next check's not 'til they're...the end of their time with us, you could say, so that's...or the time, before they go to...I think that's sometimes a bit of a...it's almost like there should be a three year check or, **yeah**...it's a big gap again...I know it was a big gap between zero and 5, **yeah**, and so they put the two year old in, but, especially with us taking in twos and threes, **yeah**, I think that's a bit of a....

So would you say that assessment doesn't exist then between those two?

It doesn't not exist, it's just not statutory is it, **mmm**. Obviously you, you assess them yourself with all what we do but...if you didn't...(pause).

And do you think it's appropriate to assess in the way that you do?

Yeah, **yeah**, through observations, **yeah**. It's a lot better than a...as long as it's done in the right way and done as an observation and not a...(then whispers) tick list (laughs gently) (**laughs gently**).

Ok, what else have we got?

I think we've done the...done it all.

Alright, ok. So, is there anything else that you want to comment in terms of well-being having looked at all those, erm, five. Anything about...do any of those topics make you think about well-being and if so, how? Mmm. Where does well-being, sort of, fit amongst those topics?

To me it would fit between these three, erm - learning and development, **yeah**, partnership and key person, **yep** – erm, and then obviously, knowing the child, rather than maybe not so much an assessment, more the key person and the child, **mmm**, and there's no point with this – school readiness (pause).

Where does well-being sit with the other, the other two then? So...what are the other two – assessment and ...assessment and school readiness. Where does well-being fit there would you say?

Erm, I think it fits with the assessment in the sense you can, kind of...you incorporate a lot of that in to your assessment...not incorporate, but you'll...it c...when you're assessing the child you can pick up on, you can pick up on their well-being, **yeah**, **yeah** if they're not where they should be, **yeah**, or, kind of, age and stage appropriate, erm, and then I don't think school readiness...I think you need your well-being to be sch, **right, yeah, yeah**...before you start school readiness, **yeah**.

Yeah, cos you've kind of tied that in with the prime areas didn't you initially, yeah, which I think is probably wh...makes those three link together, don't they? Mmm. Ok. What about erm...what about how parents fit in with all these?

Parents are a...a big part of the well-being of a...well, **yeah**, the well-being of a child, erm.

So, how, so, for example, if, when you're talking about school readiness, erm, how do...how do you erm, acknowledge the views of parents in school readiness?

If they, erm...sharing it...sharing it with them, and getting them to support the children, making sure they're school...they're ready for their child to go to school. I think that's a big thing. **I think that's, I think that's really**...you might get parents go 'Ohhh nooo, I know it's next year!' but...**yeah, yeah**. Yeah, and it's looking at their well-being. Are they ready to...**yeah. I think that's something that's, that's come about in the, in the research, is the importance of the well-being of the adults involved with the children. Definitely. Mmm.**

Ok. Anything else you want to add? Erm...A burning opinion that you have or...about well-being or....

No, I think I've covered it!

Think you've covered it?

Yeah.

Alright then. I've kind of found myself at the end.

That's good. Thank you very much.

Appendix 12 – Interview with Linda

Ok, first question then. What does the term well-being mean to you?

If I had to choose one sentence it would be children being happy in their own skins, erm...but because of my role in a local authority erm, I have a definition that comes from Ferre Laevers, erm, that's first and foremost in my head because we train around it, erm...I've done some recent training on it, erm, so, you know, well-being has been couched a lot for me in terms of, you know, his definitions about that.

Mmm.

What specifically? Can you think of something thing about well-being that, that defines it from...?

Erm, I think it's a number of things really. I think, erm, it's about children feeling settled. It's about children being comfortable and confident, erm, to learn and get on. Erm, you normally see it in terms of happiness on a child's face. Erm, you see it when children, I think, are able to separate happily, erm, when they are happy to be social, a bit outward facing, erm, they've got the kind of confidence to explore. Erm, in terms of, you know, early years provision, you know, able to go and have a look round your provision and access what you've got there and feel comfortable to do so, erm, perhaps able to chat with you or other people, erm - a feeling of I think being safe as well, you know, that there's a key person or an adult there that will support them. Mmm. (long pause).

Ok, thinking about your understanding of well-being, what would you say were the factors that affect a child's well-being?

I think, erm, one of the biggest ones is really the home, home circumstances. So you see children of any age really, come to school in a variety of ways, erm, some generally, you know, appear to have that sense of well-being when they enter your doors, others you know often don't, erm, so I think how they come to a setting or a school in the first place, you know, each morning largely depends on what's gone on at home, the evening or that very morning. Mmm. Erm, so I think that has the biggest effect. I think personality has a lit...a bit of effect as well, so you I think you get some children who are naturally quite shy, and may remain so throughout their life, but, erm, I think that has a, an effect on feelings of well-being.

What, about the home specifically, would you say are factors?

(sighs) I think there's a variety of, parenting, erm, skills and things that parents do or don't do that result in it really, so erm, I think it's a mix. It's a mix of a lot of things like, erm, parents ideas on behaviour, erm, rules, you know, and consistency, that sort of thing. Children understand that there's a bi...a kind of a routine and a consistency to their home life, erm, that people don't perhaps come and go, you know, that they've got that significant person there. They're being looked after in terms of the basic needs, so, you know, some children will come to school and

simply haven't had breakfast or a good night's sleep, erm, that, you know, has a huge effect. Yeah.

So are you looking at the home from a relationships point of view specifically?

For me, yeah, yeah, more so. I see in my role, in terms of being a consultant in schools, where schools are in areas of greater deprivation...that I...deprivation...that I think. I think there's probably a greater need to look at some of that and, I, I think, and I've got no basis on which to judge it but I think you'd find more cases of children not, mmm, perhaps coming in with that sense of well-being.

So you're say...you're linking deprivation with reduced well-being? Is that what you're saying?

No, I think for me it's about that first steps stuff, it's about relationships, yeah, because I think you can have all those, and not have a lot of money, yeah, I don't, but I'm, but I'm...but it would be interesting to see whether there was increased lack of well-being in areas of deprivation, erm, because of the pressures that that puts on home life, erm, and so for example, anecdotally I know of, erm, schools where, I can think of one, where they have, erm, a room for quite a number of children to come in and have a space, and it's, it's mmm, designed to help well-being in the mornings. mmm. So they come in...it's a nurture space and erm, the head is quite clear that they just come to school in a state where they're not ready to learn, yeah, so it provides them with that, kind of, calming down, getting ready to, you know, face the school day, deal with the 'stuff' that's come in with them from home, yeah, leave it at the door and then go on to school. And equally they come back to it at the end of the day to actually prepare them to go back home.

And what sort of things do you think those children are having to deal with?

Erm, I don't know, but I suspect that there'll be some, you know, erm, safeguarding type stuff really, erm, substance misuse erm, by parents? yeah. Erm, just I think probably poor parenting, erm, chaotic home, home life, mmm, you know, lack of routines. (long pause). Yeah, ok.

Right, I'm trying to think of how to phrase this question to suit your role. I'll give you the question yeah, and see if you can interpret it. Thinking about what you've said about well-being and the factors that affect it, how would you use that knowledge to provide an environment that helps to support children's learning and development? So, I suppose in your particular role, mmm, it's about how, how you approach mmm, your role with children's well-being in mind, yeah, because you're not actually working in a yep, setting yeah, but you must have other...local authority person... you must have an impact on mmm, that in some way, can you...yeah, yeah, describe how your knowledge of well-being comes into that role?

Yep, well, I mean, we do a number of things in the role, all of which are designed, you know, to, erm, support practitioners, you know, and one of those things we

would support them with is well-being, so, **yeah**. Erm, I would support them with things like training, erm, we do have specialisms so, erm, it's not all...it's not been me particularly that trains around, erm, areas of learning, such as PSED but, I mean, well-being is...we'd tackle that in there **mmm**. I've used it, erm, a lot because I do a lot of work around, erm, planning, observation and assessment, erm, so I've helped a lot of settings think about well-being in regards to their observations of children. Err, we've given out pro for...observation pro formas which they can look at which have the well-being, erm, prompts on there for them to, you know, to note that. I've found that a lot of places, especially schools, have got leftovers of that from when we did a lot around those Ferre Laevers scales years ago and they're on there but they don't really know why they're on there or they don't have a deep knowledge of them, so, erm, with us schools, that's coming back in at the moment, largely because of the Early Excellence baseline, erm, because the majority of our schools do the baseline and it talks about well-being and involvement on there, erm, and personally I've always been interested in it, so whenever I've gone to schools and seen that, that sometimes leads to consultancy where we actually go and then talk about it properly **mmm**, you know in a session like a staff meeting or something like that. So we do it there. Erm, another of my roles has been, as I say, to work with that company on rolling out the baseline over the summer. Erm, I think three quarters of schools nationally were trained so that's thousands and thousands of teachers who were trained and then would go back and cascade to their staff, erm, and that's based on a model where, erm, Jan Dubiel was quite passionate that well-being and involvement and the characteristics were the things that were really important. Literacy and numeracy (laughs gently) yes, we really need to know about them but they come next. So that's, you know, regardless of getting into the ins and outs of which baseline, if any, **mmm**, are a good idea, the chance to educate people about well-being through that was, was good.

It's interesting, from what you've said, that looking at well-being has c...has come along with some kind of assessment tool, mmm, yeah, so, an...and that's very specific to schools. So, how, in the PVI sector, how...how...how does that translate into the PVI sector in terms of mmm, of where well-being sits? Erm (long pause). Cos obviously that...what you've been looking at there is a very specific yeah, task.

I think, I think there is a, a bit of a correspondence in, in terms of it being linked to assessments in the PVI as well **mmm**, because you're looking to assess children's well-being. My role, my particular role in the LA, has always been around standards and quality, so I've been hugely involved in audits, you know, erm, making judgements for settings, erm, making recommendations and so on, so it...even in doing a child observation, you're assessing well-being or making some comments on it **mmm**, quite often, erm, and then in the audits, for example, we've got questions about well-being where will just make comments on it. So that's not, it's not being assessed primarily **mmm**, but it's part of wi...part of a, **yeah**, you know, some, some **so can you...evaluation actually.**

Can you give me an example of a circumstance in which you would do that?

Erm, so in schools and settings, we would go in and, erm, spend some time looking at everything. These audits are based around...they're done in the Ofsted headings but they're based on just good practice in the EYFS, as well as, you know, anything else that we know **mmm**. So we talk...we, we look in schools for school readiness, err, you know, and, sort of...a, and that's interesting, cos I don't think that's necessarily the same as well-being, erm. In the PVI sector, we will look at things, erm, and make comments on, for example, like the emotional well-being, what it feels like to be in a room, you know, do the children display some of the characteristics of effective learning, **and would you be...would you be...do they look like they're enjoying it, would you be physically looking for that?** Yes, yes, **ok**, yeah, **and it's just getting an understanding of how, how well-being fitted into that particular exercise, that was all**. Yeah. It, it's a kind of, I feel it's a bit of a phrase that a lot of people, erm, talk about but haven't necessarily studied in great depth, so we'll go 'ooh yes that, you know, that's really good for children's well-being', erm, it's a bit like PSED, it sort of floats about in the ether (**laughs gently**), and nobody's quite sure what it means **mmm**.

Do you think practitioners have an understanding of well-being? Do you think...I think as humans...**when you, when you mention it...**

I think as humans we all have a, an intuitive understanding of what it means to be well...well-being **mmm**. I think we are good at picking up signals when well-being is lacking. As to whether or not it's being done in a kind of educational and learning and care type of, you know, **mmm**, context **mmm**, is another thing, but I think, I think we, you know, tend to be a nurturing, caring profession, erm, so I think, that and, you know, hugely female, I think we're, we're programmed really as humans to look for those sorts of signs in body language and perhaps basic intuition. **And perhaps practitioners don't realise they're doing it, perhaps?** I think so. **Mmm**. I think most of them would know if a child was feeling, you know, a sense of well-being or not. They probably just wouldn't use that language. **Yeah, that's interesting**.

Right, in terms of early years settings, I'm not necessarily talking about well-being, **mmm**, erm, what do you expect early years settings to provide for children? Generally? **Wh...why? Why do we have early years settings?**

Oh, ok, erm (long pause). Well, (both laugh gently) the first thing that's in my head that I have never answered is...err, and I think it's...I'm not sure it's ever going to be answered...is why we do any of it at all, when we know from other models around the world that, you know, it doesn't actually always...it's not the best thing, and yet we do. So, erm, without going down that particular road (both laugh), let's talk about the fact that we...**(laughing) or we could go down that road if you want! That's a very interesting...I think it's talked about a lot...people perhaps frightened to talk about it sometimes but...**

That's the tension one has as an LA officer, erm, with an early years pedagogy who has to work within Ofsted frameworks and, you know, standards and stuff. You can think your thoughts but you are, as everyone else is, tied into a system, you know, **mmm**, where you have to...there's compliance and...actually a quality discourse in this country that is what it is, you know, so. My feeling is had...do...if I had such strong opinions I probably couldn't do this because...I might not believe that two year olds should be where they are etc. etc. **mmm**, ...but actually I love the job, I love meeting people and mostly I think it does more good than harm, **mmm**, and so I would rather work in the system and try and work towards **mmm**, making it better.

So what would be your ideal model then?

I think, and this is a personal opinion, so it's nothing to do with the LA, but I think, I think we could look at being far less formal, erm, and not testing children 'til a lot later on. I think there are good models of children accessing quality pre-school, erm, but not with the formality and standards and conditions and everything that we've put round it.

Can you give me an example of one that does that?

Erm, I think Scotland's model is better, erm, **ok**, it's a bit of a half-way house, erm. I haven't been to look at them myself but I've read a little round the Scandinavian models, for example, **yep**. But I don't think it's black and white, you know, they have, erm, much greater taxes over there so that, you know, there can be a universal offer. It's complex **mmm**, really, **mmm**, yeah.

It's difficult isn't it sometimes to...it's not just about the education bit, is it, it has other implications perhaps.

Yeah, yeah, and ours is wrapped up very much in, you know, return to work **mmm**, and, and parents, **yeah**, actually. The child care system wasn't primarily there for education, as such, it was there in, you know, a big part of it was there to, en...enable, erm, pract...parents to get to work, **yeah, yeah, and I think that's a that's so...something you either believe in or you don't believe in isn't it.** What I believe in is that we can supply some, err, wonderful opportunities for children to learn **mmm**, from, you know, from birth if necessary but I don't think it needs to be done the way it is but the system is so big and so complex, and everything is so interwoven now that it wou...you know it's hard to see a way of changing that.

What would you change if you had the opportunity?

I would change the testing **yeah**, erm. I think some of the principles behind some of the tests are not bad in themselves, so... The integrated two year old check is still a bit of a pickle, but actually the idea of everybody coming together and looking at a child seems very sensible. Erm, so I would change the testing...and that would include Ofsted I think as well. **Specifically at this age group? For early years** (said together). Yeah, **mmm (long pause)**. I think it would be early enough to test children

once they are...(pause) certainly in school, and maybe in school for a bit of time before they're tested **yeah, yeah.**

And why would that be? What's...what do you think the implications of testing are?

Because it drives practice that people have to comply with. It drives...I see a huge amount of fear in practitioners at the moment with the power that Ofsted hold over them, **yeah.** I see a lot of compromise in practitioners in schools, in particular in schools actually, where early years pedagogy about, you know, what's best for the children is, you know, they are unable to pursue their, you know, their, their personal beliefs really, and values because of the, **yeah...system. and that's a shame isn't it, yeah, I think we probably lose a lot from early years because of that, yeah, yeah.**

Ok. You've touched on a couple of things already for the last bit. I've picked out some, some key phrases from...or themes...from the EYFS and I was just wanting general thoughts and feelings about some of those aspects and how you feel about them.

OK, if we start with school readiness, **mmm.** When school readiness came out, it come out with some poor descriptions of it, erm, from various sources, and it, it came out with a real negative vibe to it. Erm, but one of the things I did for the EYP's at the time was a bit of a trawl around what school readiness meant and looking at some research and papers internationally, and it was really interesting personally to do that because you could see where some of the programmes from America and so on were dealing with children who perhaps, you know, were not...had feeling senses well-being... they were looking at deprivation and all sorts of things. They came from really good beginnings and that all then drove things like having a focus on the prime areas, you know, as the things that we need to get right for children to be school ready, it wasn't about necessarily, you know, how much of their uniform they could put on themselves, or, you know, some of the things that head teachers were wanting, was not my idea of that, erm. So I think that got, and still has sometimes, a bad press in terms of what we think we mean by that, erm. I think if you're...if you work on the bits underneath it, like the characteristics, the prime areas, the good stuff, the dispositions, that underpinning stuff that allows children to function brilliantly whenever, wherever in their life, erm, that's what will create a sense of well-being. So for me, that school readiness, is the good stuff underneath, you know, connected to well-being, not some of the, you know, how many letters can you write, do you know what I mean, can you write your name independently...that doesn't matter to me as much, **mmm.**

And how does that fit in with the EYFS in terms of what the learning goals are, would you say?

Erm, I think some of the learning goals, you know, still cause people a bit of an issue, erm. On the whole some of them are based developmentally and I don't have too much trouble with them. I think it's what you do with the early learning goals

more than anything else, erm. **Because the EYFS suggests that you're looking at those prime areas that you've just referred to initially and then you move on to the other areas, almost as though you're leaving those three behind.**

Yeah, I think, I think... there are...sometimes there's that opinion so we get practitioners asking us, should we actually look at them in terms of assessment or should we just not bother, erm, and I think by the time you get to school age, you are doing things around literacy, you are doing things around numeracy so I, I would look at them all by then but the younger the child, the more the prime areas come in to focus for them I think.

Choose another one then. Erm. It kind of links in with this really doesn't it.

Yeah, I think so, erm, well, key person, you know that's a fundamental part of the EYFS, erm. I think the principle of the key person is right, particularly for the tiniest children, so, erm, that idea of being in loco parentis and erm, you know, com...absolutely linked to a sense of well-being and attachment, you know, that that child has got a consistent, significant other that they can go and talk to. (phone rings) I'll just leave that ringing, erm. So I think that's really important, erm, I think it's...I don't know if you're...is it just PVI's that you're looking at? Is it schools? **Primarily early years settings, yeah.** Yeah, so early years in schools, **but at reception as well,** that's an issue. **Right, ok.** It's a big issue because when I go out and see reception classes they don't know that the key person is a statutory requirement. **Now that's really interesting.** And when they do know it's a statutory requirement there's not a lot they can do about it because there's often just two people in the class. So who is the key person? And how would you answer somebody coming to, for example, to inspect. It's a really hard area to answer because often it just has to be the teacher but you can't deliver what the EYFS is wanting as a key person role, erm, easily at all and a lot of people don't understand that actually, that's statutory. And when they do, they think if it in terms of preparing learning and development records, they don't understand the well-being and attachment part of it being the fundamental role of the key person and that link to parents. so that is meant to support well-being, isn't it, and yet erm, yeah, so it's quite a (laughs) a hole! **Because we're still EYFS in reception.** Yes, absolutely, yep.

Kind of links in with this really, doesn't it.

Right, so parents working in partnership with practitioners, I think, you know, that is...obviously the key person is meant to be the first port of call really, erm. I think that maybe if we had a bit of a different model, that we had more time to do things, we could do a lot more with our parents, erm. I think we know so much around early years education that we didn't know years ago, erm, and I think, I think we could help support parents with things a lot better than we do. I think in recent years there's been quite a lot of models that were supposed to be about parental partnerships and actually it was very top down. So, children's centres did a lot of, that a lot of them

working was around kind of almost saying to parents, you know, you should be doing this, you should be doing that. I don't think the government's helped because I think it says it's empowering parents and a lot of what they've done has actually disempowered parents to be parents, erm, and so there's a huge upsurge of the responsibility of schools to do everything, you know, with the, kind of, community hubs, centre of excellence, self-sustaining systems, schools being the centre of that and all this work around parents. And I know heads spend up to, you know, can often spend half, more than half their time dealing with children and, and parents, erm. And we, we have some community teachers which we, which are on our team doing specific intervention projects and they're often around PSED and whilst it's not well-being per se, they'll work around things like confidence, and helping parents to understand, you know, what's a great idea to do with the child, really easy things and that definitely builds a sense of well-being so we have, do have one or two little projects which, you know, well-being is probably unspoken, but is very much part of it. Yes, implicit.

What about the learning and development side of things. This one here.

Erm, in terms of my role? **Or, just generally.** Just generally. **In...at this age, what does learning and development mean? What are your immediate thoughts about it?**

My immediate thoughts are I still believe in learning through play and that's been eroded a bit, erm, sort of, goes in bits of waves of things, erm. I think, I...if it was me and I could wave a magic wand, I'd be in a setting where we were free to follow the children a little bit more, we were free to add in those sumptuous experiences that they might not have. I think it's a balance of breadth and depth definitely so, not all child led interests necessarily, because I think...especially with children that haven't perhaps had wide experiences like others, you have a duty to broaden them really, you know, you're, you're there to introduce them to other things in the world, erm. I think we have a particular way of setting up our settings, you know, we don't, we don't tend to question a lot, erm, as a workforce that's not perhaps, you know, engaged in perhaps direct educational, you know, establishments. If you are doing some qualifications, I don't think you start questioning a lot of this until you get up to masters level. **Really?** Yeah, yeah, or perhaps a bit of a degree...but my experience is practitioners that come through at Level 3 and so on, they get taught things, they don't, they don't question. So for me, you know, you can do learning and development anywhere, anytime really, but we, we do have a set way of presenting things, you know. Continuous provision tends to look a certain way. We tend to think we have to do, you know, have to have, we have to have, you know, small world play, block play, erm, that's interested me, erm.

What have we got left on there? Oh, assessment. You've mentioned that a little bit already, haven't you. But I was thinking more about the two specific assessments in the EYFS, so that's the two year check and then the assessment that's done at the end of reception in preparation to go in to...what we...used to be the profile.

Yeah, it still is, **still is**, it's the last year of that, erm. Well, the two year old check I think's got capacity to err, ...you...do you mean what do I think about them or in terms of well-being? **No, generally, what do you think about them? That may well link to well-being but...only if that's what your thoughts are. You know, the whole notion of doing a two year check, on a two year old. How does that feel and what sort of thoughts does that provoke?**

Again my personal opinion on it, and I haven't really given this a lot of pre-thought, I'm talking off the top of my head here, erm, is that health wise I can't see a reason for having...can't see a reason for not having a bit of a check around two, erm, because children get various, you know, checks. Educationally, I'm not sure it feels quite the right time of life to do that, erm. From what I know of children, I think it would be better to do it age 3, when they've got a little bit more language and a little bit more knowledge, because from just turning two, to be almost three, that can look very different, that, that aged two. So, I suppose I might not think that's the best time to do it, but because health do it, I've always done the check at two, I guess that's why and it's to try and pick up issues early. **But they're integrating now though aren't they. They're going to integrate the two.** That's quite problematic really. I think we're still very early days with the integrated health check. I do a lot of, erm, regional and, you know, it comes at nationally at the steering groups and things about, about that. There's some good practice examples, but, erm, for instance, in areas where children are in rural settings, it's impossible. So, integrated doesn't mean everyone's sat round together. It means combining bits of paperwork because they can't meet. **No, because they're so physically separate.** So I think, erm, for me, I would do a kind of educational, kind of, are children where they where they should be, somewhere in three, actually, which I've never really thought of before.

What about the profile one?

And then the five year old one, again, I think, erm. If you're gonna test them, I'd rather you tested them on everything, so, the baseline, no, the profile, yes, erm. I don't think the profile is a bad thing in and of itself because there's nothing wrong with doing a bit of summative assessment, and people do that all the time, erm, but where it falls down is just the fact that it's a formal test, so you end up teaching to the test, and, erm, it's what's done with the, with the data. So, a large part of my role is working with EYFSP data, and then that then drives all sorts of other stuff.

What sort of thing would that be influencing, that data? I don't mean what would be influencing the data, I mean what would follow on from that data, as a local figure?

Ok, so if it looks good, schools for example, nothing. If it looks bad, erm, it'll come out in the school improvement conversation, erm, so it would be looked at by the improvement partner, erm, whether they're independent or one of the LA ones, erm. It will result in conversations like that and then possibly putting them forward for moderation, so there's a big moderation, erm, cycle but we, we're able to pick up

schools where the data doesn't look quite right or...so that's like a spring board to...yeah, yeah to more improvement work or, or, you know, erm, sometimes supporting schools from the budget that we have sometimes, you know, drawing their attention to things, erm. It then also goes, you know, nationally into the pot, so there are drivers that come out of that so, for example, erm, boys writing, you know, everyone ends up working on boys writing, but you, you know, you have to ask yourself then, if you go back to the EYFS, whether or not we're testing the right stuff then, you know, because that's never changed. So it comes back to policy and beliefs and stuff, you know, in the learning goal itself, is that, is that appropriate, because we know that boys don't particularly, generally speaking, relish writing at that age, you know. Developmentally, they're not as ready as girls, psychologically, they're not as interested, I mean, that's a generalisation, but, you know, but we just know developmentally what's likely to happen and what isn't and yet we go 'well, we're going to test this' and 'oh, boys writing isn't great' again! And it's like 'yeah, no surprise there then'. Weird isn't it.

I think we've covered all of those now haven't we. Ok, well that's the last question. Have you got anything else you want to add? Any other comments?

I will talk to you...shall I just mention what that...you know that...those thoughts about well-being because, erm. I have often talked about well-being in terms of the, either the scales of the indicators from Ferre Laevers and err, I was recently at a conference where, erm, Guy Claxton questioned it because he was talking about learnerly behaviours and resilience and all sorts of, you know, erm, models which I can show you in a moment, but he, he then had a little friendly spat, actually, around the word well-being, because it looks as if you can just, kind of, erm, for the assessment there, you being asked to judge that very, very quickly. Your being asked to look at a child, over a small period of time and go do they look happy, you know, are they socialising, are they outward facing, you know, does the body language tell us, have they got a little sparkle in their eyes, you know, are they investigative, curious, erm, so are they there already, in other words, there was a sense of, are they easily happy, I suppose. And he was saying, he prefers the word, to look at fulfilment actually because well-being isn't just necessarily about being happy in the moment. Sometimes it's about having a right barrier or obstacle or having to work through something, have to master something, have to get over something and have gone through that journey and then feel that satisfaction, feeling that 'yes I've done that' 'yes I've got through that' and that sense, you know, of, of completion or, you know, success is very much part of well-being and that, so that stimulated my thinking cos I thought, yeah, we don't talk about that when we talk about well-being. It's just another dimension of it isn't it really. Yeah, that's interesting.

Thank you very much. You're welcome.

Appendix 13 – Interview with Maria

Yep, that's going. Ok, so the first question is, what does the term well-being mean to you?

Somebody's well-being is about how they feel, erm, so, sort of, that feel good factor, erm. Equally it could be somebody's well-being's not good, erm. So, general health, erm, emotions, erm, social well-being, erm, just sort of, general feelings really, **mmm**, of somebody.

How would you describe social well-being?

Erm, social well-being I would say is, sort of, the child's extended self, so, be it family, friends, erm, how they were treated or felt within a setting. So, if they attend school, that would be, like, the social well-being within school, or if it was playgroup, then obviously playgroup, erm. So it's that extension of themselves really.

And how would that be displayed? How would you know about a child's well-being socially? From that child? Yeah.

Erm, just by observing them and seeing how they acted in that situation and how they portrayed themselves. So, if you saw a child that had, what I call good well-being, for example, actually they'd be, sort of, be playing alongside or with other children, erm, and looking to be enjoying themselves and comfortable in their environment. If I was worried about a child's well-being it might be that they're sat in a corner on their own, or they keep crying over things that you're not sure why, **mmm**, erm, you know.

So you would...you would look at the way that that was being displayed in a child in order to judge whether that well-being was there or not? Yeah, yeah.

Ok, so thinking about what you understand as well-being, what would you think are the factors that influence a child's well-being?

Everything! (laughs, then both laugh). So, obviously, erm, starting at home. So you've got parenting, parenting styles, you've got culture, you've got religion, you've got everything that that child's... brought in to that home environment, **mmm**, erm. You've then got people, sort of, within that environment, be it parents, siblings, extended family, erm. And then if we're thinking about, sort of, younger children, then that would extend then to the setting that they were attending, **yeah**, erm, and also friendships within that setting, also adults that they're involved with in that setting as well, **mmm**.

And how would...how would people and environment influence a child's well-being? What specific things might influence it?

If it's, for example, at home, if you were using the home environment, erm, if parents are happy and they are encouraging and supporting of a child, then obviously you're

gonna get a child that's potentially got good well-being because they are being supported and developed, as a child should be, **uhhah**. If you've got parents who are not in a good situation themselves or they're arguing or there's domestic violence and different things going on, then potentially that child could be ignored, or they could be abused, or whatever, which is going to have a massive effect on their, **yeah**, erm, well-being.

What about outside the home environment? What type of things would influence well-being outside the home?

So, it could be housing, **uhhah**. It could be, erm, sort of, the area that they're living in, so, for example, if they're living in a big built up area that's not got free places to play, **mmm**, and they can't get outside and run around then that can have a massive effect on them, **yeah**, erm. Equally, it could be that they're attending a setting that they just...they don't get on with, for example, erm, or they don't get on with their peers or the adults that their working alongside, erm, which again is going to have an effect on everything. I mean a good example is, like, children who are put into a nursery, **yeah**, if parents are going back to work, but actually that nursery's too noisy for them, cos it's, **yeah**, quite a big establishment. The well-being of that child might not be very good at that point, **mmm**. Actually, swapping to a childminder where you've got a more homely environment and a one-to-one, that actually could change that child's well-being massively.

So do you think well-being is something that is static or is it something that changes over time?

Changes all the time, **yeah?**, definitely, yeah.

On what sort of scale?

It'll depend, erm. I'd say it's little bits cos, unless something massive happens in a child's life, or a parent's life, it's probably just gonna tick along, **mmm**, because that's the norm. If something happens where, I don't know, a parent might lose a job, when they're lived in a certain area, **yeah**, or a certain house, **yeah**, that'd have a massive impact, but it's highly unlikely that's...probably, sort of, one in however many... whereas, **mmm**, the norm would be that we've always done this and this is how we do it, **yeah**, so it, **yeah**, sort of continues.

So, effectively, changes could be a factor, couldn't it?

Yeah, definitely. **Yeah**, right.

This is quite a difficult question for local authority people (laughs gently) because you're not based in a pre-school setting, yep. But the quest...I'm gonna tell you the question and then we'll try and interpret, that's fine, how that fits in with your role. So thinking about what you've said about wellbeing and the factors that influence it, how

would you use that knowledge to provide an environment that helps to support children's learning and development?

Erm, the environment that we'd use in my role, erm, within children's centres, erm, so that's me, sort of, supporting my staff and the centre, **yeah**, that I manage, **uhhmm**, erm. Within the centre we'd look at the learning environment as a crèche room, family room, whatever you want to call it, **yeah**, erm, so similar to what you would have in a pre-school, **yeah**. It would be set up, erm, with lots of areas where children can develop erm, and grow, but also where we can role model for parents as well, so that they can, **sure**, sort of, do some of those, those things as well to, erm, support the children's well-being at home, **yep**, erm. The staff that we use are obviously really important because they need to be able to support the children's learning environment as well, **yeah**, and their well-being, **mmm**, erm. And also within the area of work that we do, not just the children, about supporting the parents actually, as well, **yeah**, so for some of those where we talked about parenting, we'd encourage, erm, some parents to attend parenting type courses so that they could learn to do things differently to how perhaps they've had it done to them in the past as well, **ok**, erm. And then on a one-to-one basis, cos we do work one-to-one with families, **yeah**, it's about supporting the whole family, **yeah**, to make the changes needed to make that child's life better.

And what sort of, erm, strategies would you use for supporting parents in that situation? What do you mean, sorry? (laughs). What...what would you do? So would it be about training or would it be in the home, or...how, how would you deliver that kind of support? On the one-to-one stuff? Any of it. Anything? Mmmm.

It...it could be any of it. It could be within the children's centre itself, **yeah**, so like I said about the role modelling, erm, showing different activities, erm, making parents understand why children do do what they do and encouraging and extending their learning, **mmm**. If we're working one-to-one with families, again, that, that can, sort of, be developed within the universal services that we offer, through stay and play, **mmm**, and such. Equally, we do do, sort of, specific learning in the home with the parent on a one-to-one basis so that they can understand why children need, or are doing what they're doing, but also extend their understanding so that they can then support the child when we've, sort of, **ok**, moved out, **ok**, of that situation.

So you're, you're education the parents really, yeah, aren't you? Yeah. So would that be around things like play?

Definitely, yeah, **yeah**, yeah. Play, boundaries, behaviours, **ok**, erm, obviously depending on the needs of the family, **yeah**, it can vary so much, **yeah**, because especially with us families that we work with on a more, sort of, one-to-one basis, the parent's that we're supporting are the parents that perhaps haven't been parented, **ah, right, I see**, you now. So, their well-being as children probably wasn't, **no**, as

you'd want it to be. Right, so you're trying to break that, yeah, that cycle, cycle, yeah, basically, yeah, ok.

And what, sort of, erm...what sort of family situations are those children coming from?

It can be all sorts. There can be domestic violence, drugs, alcohol, yeah, erm, cultural issues, erm.

What sort of cultural issues?

Cultural issues of, I would say, like, especially in the area that I work that's very very diverse...you've got families coming in from abroad that don't particularly understand, ah right, our, sort of, culture over here and what the expectations are for children. So there aren't...they don't have any toys at home, ah, right, they don't know how to play with the children. So sometimes it's just, sort of, educating them, mmm, in the things they can actually do as well, mmm. You kind of assume, don't you, sometimes that parents know, yeah, what to do. But if they've never been shown, shown, then they don't know, no, what to do. Yeah, I can understand that, yeah, yeah.

Ok, erm, so, why do we have early years provision, would you say? What, what does that provide for children? Everything! What would you hope that would provide for children?

A good, sort of, stability of the set up for them going in to school, erm. Obviously the earlier that you do intervene with children, you can recognise, sort of, any disabilities, any, sort of, needs that that child might have, mmm, erm. To support them, sort of, at a later level, I mean, the earlier that you get in to put some of those support things in place, it's obviously gonna be beneficial for the child, the parent and the next setting that they're moving in to, mmm, erm. And like we just talked about, for some children that are in homes where they're not encouraged to play or develop or do what children should be doing, erm, it's an opportunity for them to do all those things as well.

So, what sort of things in that circumstance would you expect an early years provision to give the child?

Opportunity to play, yep, opportunity to learn, uhmm, and to develop their interests, yeah, to be children really (both laugh).

And is that...is that how you view an early years setting, or a pre-school, somewhere where children can be children?

Definitely, definitely.

And what are the features of that?

A good, a good setting, **mmm**, would be a staff team who are trained and understand children's development, **yeah**, and actually want to encourage it and make it the best place possible for them to be, erm. Equally, especially, like, when...in certain areas especially...erm spotting and supporting parents, **yeah**, as well and encouraging that family learning rather than it just being the children, **yeah**, erm. So, supporting that child's learning and development within the setting, to the home environment as well, and the other way round so that actually they can bring things in from home into setting to extend their learning as well, erm. And I think if you look, sort of, over the last probably 30, 40 years, how massively pre-school, sort of, developed, **mmm**. It went from just, like, somewhere where you went along to play to now being an education setting really, **yeah**.

And do you...how do you feel about that?

Positive. It's good, **yeah**, yeah. **Ok**. I think the younger generation, the littlies (laughs gently) the under 5's, **yeah**, you know, if...**well that's what we're really looking at here, yeah**, yep, yep...if it's made right for those children then, then it's setting them up for their, you know, the rest of their, sort of, childhood really, in't it, erm. Whereas for those that don't have that, sort of, education and support, erm...and yeah, for some it's not always right, I agree, **mmm**, you know. For some two year olds, a setting's not the right place, **mmm**, but there are other opportunities. There's so much out there now, **yeah**, that you can do to support them, erm, and develop in the right way that, you know, it doesn't have to be pre-school as such. It could be a childminder cos there are some good childminders, **yeah**, that, especially children that have got additional needs or, sort of, any disabilities, then, **mmm**, you know, it's finding the right environment, **yeah**. **And that's very much about choice isn't it**. Yeah, definitely. **It's about, yeah, deciding what's right for the child, yeah, yeah**.

Ok, sort of, slightly connected to that, erm, I've taken some key themes from the EYFS, yep, and, I'm not testing anybody (laughs) on what they know about it, (laughs), that's not the intention! (both laugh). It's really just getting a feel for...thinking about, yep, under 5's, yep, generally how people feel about these particular themes that come from the EYFS. So, I'll give that to you and just, just pick one and we'll work round them.

Ok, so school readiness, **yep**. So you, you just want me to tell, say why I think that's about for the... **yeah, yeah, what, what does it mean for you? What, what does it make you think of?**

So getting the little ones ready for a more structured environment of school or nursery, **mmm**. So, things like independence, so being able to, sort of, go to the toilet themselves, dress themselves, erm. Starting them to, sort of, understand and...and play, you know, **mmm**. It doesn't have to be, sort of, just the, those sorts of things, it...even, like, picking a book up and understanding what a book's about, cos for some children, they won't have books at home, **no**. So...and some structure as well,

erm, because even in early years you've got your structure of, like, erm, you know, like, tidy up time, break time, where you have your snack...break time!...snack time, **mmm**, (laughs gently) erm, you might have a story time, **yep**. So, it's putting some of those routines in place that will definitely be more structured within a school environment, **yeah**, erm, so that children, when they do get there, it's not alien to them, **yeah**, and they can...and for some parents as well. It's about getting them, getting them ready, so they understand, like, a session starts at this time, and you collect your child at that time, cos again, culturally, some of that's quite new to some of the parents. So, school readiness, yes it's definitely about the child, but also it's about the parents understanding as well, **mmm**, as to what that means in terms of routines...yep, definitely, yeah.

Ok. Pick another one then.

Key person, **yep**. So, key person, erm, is the main person that would be linked to a child, **uhmm**, erm. So they're the one who would understand that child, erm, lead on any, sort of, erm, if, depending obviously on what setting, if you've got a, sort of, a learning journey, or whatever you want to call them, I don't know, cos we all call them different things, don't we, **mmm**, but, but they sort of, lead on, and develop that, for that child. **So, like, their development records?** Yes, yeah, **uhmm**, erm. If the child was on any kind of plan, or, erm, Early Help Assessment, or anything **yeah**, like that, your key person would be, what we call, a lead practitioner, as well, **ok**. So they're the one that would lead and understand everything for that child really, **yeah**, and feed back to the parents and other staff that needed to know as well, **uhmm**.

How does the key person relate to the child? What do you mean, sorry? What does the, what does the key person mean for a child, would you say?

I'd say it was the one with the best attachment to that child, **yeah**. So it might be, for example, in a setting, Sandra's Alfie's key person but actually Sandra and Alfie don't actually click, **mmm**, so actually the key person for Alfie's not that...wouldn't be appropriate, so you...sometimes, on paper you might have a key person but within a setting, **mmm**, it might be somebody else, **mmm**, or you might change it, **mmm**, and that's alright.

And how do you feel about that system within a setting?

Erm, ok because, I think if somebody takes responsibility, erm, whereas if you didn't have somebody that was specific for a child then, free for all, some things might not get done that actually needed to get done, from, sort of, a rules and erm, an Ofsted (laughs) type view, **yeah**, erm. So, yeah, I can understand it and I think it's a good thing to do. **Erm, good**. And, as well, a parent knows who to go to, **yeah**.

Right, do you want to pick another one?

Yep, assessment. If we were looking at, sort of, child's assessment, you're looking at, erm, sort of, where they're at, erm, assessing their needs, erm. **I'm thinking with**

assessment, primarily the two year check, oh, right, and yep, the end of reception, yep, assessment. Yep, so looking at...yeah, that's fine. So, things that are specific to the EYFS.

Yeah, so assessment then...so, just using the two year old check, for example, mmm, then, erm. Obviously it's linked to where a child should be, mmm, but we know that it doesn't always work like that, erm. So, at two years, children are expected to do x, y and z. If they're not doing it, mmm, then looking at how and what we're gonna put in place to develop those for that child, erm, and I'd say as well, especially with some of the, erm, assessments that are out now, it's not about one professional or one area, it's about people coming together to make, erm, the best plans for that child to move them on, yeah, cos they're integrating aren't they, yeah, yeah, yeah.

And do you think that's going to work, integration?

I think some of it'll depend on personalities yeah (laughs gently), definitely, erm, but if the professionals and the parents involved work together well then yeah, because you've got a holistic approach, mmm. It'll be those people that just see it as just their role and somebody else can't be involved, mmm, and again, that just comes down to personalities, doesn't it, yeah, which...

Do you agree with assessing children at two?

Erm, I think it (sighs), the thing is we probably assess all the time, yeah. As practitioners, yeah, as specially trained practitioners, you assess without writing it down. So when you see a child walk through the door that you've never seen before, straightaway you'll look at them, you'll listen to them and you're assessing them, mmm. So, I think that we do it, yeah, we just might not have wrote it down before, yeah, and if you had any concerns, if you're a good practitioner, you would have done something 'bout it, about them, yeah. So I think it's something that you just do.

So does that question whether it's necessary?

I suppose it does really, but, I think if you've got good practitioners, you've got a good setting and everything else, that would happen. I think what a piece of paper and a tick list probably does do, somewhere along the line, is pick up for those settings that perhaps aren't as good at it or erm, perhaps if there's something specific that's been missed that is not your, sort of, specialism, then it's gonna encourage that, mmm, whereas if it's, sort of, you, and it's, sort of, your thoughts or whatever. So, I act...(sighs) to some extent I do agree with it, yeah, but I do think it's something that we do anyway, yeah, yeah, so it's not particularly intrusive? No, no, no. They're not sat down with a pen and paper, it's, it's an observation, isn't it, yeah, yeah.

What about at the end of reception when they...these baseline testing that they're...is coming in? Do you know anything about that?

I know little bits about it and I also know that some schools do it to suit themselves, **mmm?**, erm, which is a bit worrying.

In what way?

Because they set the, the, erm, entries at a level where it's quite low, which actually isn't...doesn't always look good when the child's come from another setting...and actually by the end of them being in school for a year, it's gone up a lot which shows that they've actually then, developed a lot while they've been through school but actually we know they've set the entry level lower than it should have been, **mmm**. So, is it a true, clear picture? I don't know, **mmm, mmm**. And you can only presume that it is fair, but actually, is it? I don't know, **mmm**.

I mean, some of the baseline stuff is quite formal, yeah, erm, what do you think about the formality of that type of testing at that age?

I think it can be difficult cos children aren't ready for it, **yeah**. So, again it'll depend on the area that you're in and the practitioners that you've got that actually support that and how they actually do it, erm, cos you will have some really good practitioners that make it work, **yeah**, but equally you'll have some that see it as a process that they have to follow and they can't divert themselves from it, **mmm**, which for some children will be really difficult, **yeah, yeah, cos they're phasing out the Profile, yeah, which is very much an observation based...yeah, and bringing in the baseline, yeah, which is a lot more formal, yeah, and as you say, that might not be right for, for some children, I suppose.**

Ok, do you want to pick another one?

Erm, parents working in partnership with practitioners, **uhmm**. Really important, **yeah**, erm. Obviously over the years there's been lots of research gone on to prove that, you know, parents are a child's first educator, **yeah**, which is what we've just been talking about, **yeah**, erm, and also I think they need to feel valued and understood about their own child, erm. And I think if, if the relationship's there between a practitioner and a parent, and parents do need any support at any time, erm, they're gonna take that on if that relationship's there. If you've got a practitioner telling a parent what to do, actually sometimes the parent will get upset by it and say 'well, it's my child' **mmm**, or whatever else. If the, erm, if the relationship's there and you're trying to work together to make the best outcomes for that child then it's going to work, **mmm**.

So that's really about the word 'partnership' isn't it? Yeah, yeah, definitely, and how that's interpreted.

Yeah, erm, again it'll depend on your setting, **yeah**, it'll depend on the personalities of people, **yeah**, and expectations as well. You've got some parents that probably don't want to engage, and aren't bothered, **mmm** – 'Once that child walks through t' door, they're your, they're your problem, not mine', erm, whereas you've got others

that probably want to know thread t' needle 'what did they do from when they took their coat off when they walked through, to when I pick them up at 3 o'clock' yeah, yeah, or whatever, you know, erm, so it's, it's making everybody understand the expectations of what it's about really, yeah, isn't it, yeah.

Ok, what have we got left?

Learning and development, yep. O, yes, supporting a child to reach their full potential, whatever that might be, really, cos for every child that is gonna be different, yep. So which again, brings us back to the learning environment which is really important within an early years setting, that, actually it's very diverse. You've got lots of things going on because children learn differently, they engage differently, erm, you know, different interests, but equally, that there are opportunities for them to learn new things but develop the ones that they've got as well, mmm, and their interests, yeah. So, if we extend that to, like, the staffing, it's making sure that staff have opportunities to learn and develop, mmm, as well, yeah, so that they've got, sort of, motivation, job satisfaction, they've got something about them that wants to, sort of, be there and encourage and develop the children and that they actually enjoy their job, because, actually, if you've got a good staff team, supporting those children right, mmm, then you've got your best learning environment mmm, yeah. You can have all brand sparkling new items, but if your staff aren't right, it in't gonna work. No, it's about the role of the adult, isn't it. Definitely, definitely, yeah, yeah.

Ok, right, I think that's everything. Anything else you want to add about well-being or early years or anything?

I just personally think that, you know, at that early...at tho...in those early years, so within that first five years of a child's life, if you haven't got those environments right, mmm, then that's gonna affect a child's emotional and social well-being which is one of the most important, sort of, aspects of growing and learning and understanding and actually that's going to affect a child all through, even in to adulthood, yeah. So if you don't get it right there, we're not supporting that person to grow into a functional adult, let's say, mmm. So, are you...do you feel...I say it's more important than some of the academic and the other things, yeah. The actual well-being is about them and their feeling and how they, sort of, are able to portray themselves and it's, it is really important, mmm.

You mentioned, erm, the word 'environment' which is quite interesting because there's... there's quite a debate, isn't there, across, learn...development, full stop, about the nature/nurture yeah, debate, yeah. So, as far as well-being's concerned, I'm not sure how...to what extent that debate is there, because you've pretty much settled on environment from what you were saying. Yeah. Do you think there's any nature element to it?

Erm, just thinking from my own personal experience, mmm, like my, sort of, step son, erm, and his few, sort of, first few years of his life. He's struggling now at nearly

9 years old because some of the nurture wasn't there when he was young. So, had it been there, **mmm**, who he is as a child now, and who is probably going to be as an adult will be very different, **mmm**, so there's got to be some nurture, **mmm**, but again, some of that links to attachment, which again, so the earlier that you get in and support the parenting of that child then the better it's gonna be for that child, **mmm**, but again, it comes back to that cycle again, **mmm**, if that parent's never been parented...**well**, yeah, then how do they know how to do that for their own children, cos, yes, some people it will just come naturally, **mmm**, whatever, but some, they'll do what they've been done to, **yeah**. So, I, you know, if professionals are there to support some of those things, or signpost or encourage the right kind of parenting, erm, you know, and that's why, I know we, sort of, have that debate about 'two's too young for them to go into a setting' **mmm**, but actually, if they're going into a good setting, with good practitioners that are experienced and understanding, that can develop and support that child, and the parent, **mmm**, then there's gonna be a good outcome for everybody, isn't there, **yeah**, but if you wait until that child's five, they've already missed out on five years of their life where they've perhaps never been to a playgroup, they've never socialised with other children their age, **mmm**, erm, you know, whereas at least that can be encouraged and if the parent doesn't do it and is never gonna do it, then at least part of their life they are, sort of, getting some of that stuff which they need, **yeah, yeah**.

Brilliant! Right, that's, that's all we need to do. Alright. Thank you.

Appendix 13 – Interview with Julie

Ok, that's ok. Righty ho, my first question is then, err, what does the term well-being mean to you?

Erm, well I believe it's, like, a holistic term and it, erm, it encompasses a whole range of things. So, it could be, erm, the physical well-being, **uhmm**, erm, so, you know, is the child physically well?, erm. It also encompasses the physical environment, not only in an early years setting, but also in the home surroundings, cos that's, you know, **mmm**, quite key in the role I do as Children's Centre Manager, seeing children from different backgrounds, **yeah**, erm. It, erm, also encompasses their mental well-being, erm, erm, social well-being, **uhmm**, erm. Again, there's a lot of factors, erm, in the home, erm, that can affect that as well as the, erm, nursery or **yeah**, preschool that they, they are attending.

What do you specifically mean by mental well-being? What sort of things?

Erm, well, are, are children, erm, you know, are they, erm, being provided with, erm, opportunity to interact with others? **Uhhmm**. Erm, are they being stimulated by the parents or carers?, **mmm**. Are they being stimulated in, erm, early years terms within the nursery or preschool or childminder where they attend?, erm. Are they being, sort of, challenged to, erm, you know...look at progressing them? Erm, that kind of thing.

And what would that do for children? What would that...what impact would that have on, on them?

Well, I feel that it would, erm, motivate them, erm, stimulate them, **mmm**, erm, you know, erm. They would be looking at, erm, you know, exploring and learning through that exploration and investigation, erm, that, that kind of thing. Erm, cos if children are not stimulated, erm, and praised and, you know, erm, they, they can very quickly become, erm, withdrawn and, **yeah**, erm, and it's not, erm, you know, it's not good for, erm, children's learning, **mmm**.

What about social well-being? How would that...how would you see that?

Social well-being's very important cos children learn a lot of skills for the future and life-long skills, **mmm**. So they need to be able to communicate with others, erm, learn to share and take turns and tolerate, erm, other children as well as adults, erm. They need to be given, erm, lots of opportunities to socialise, **mmm**, lots of different ways to socialise, erm, and that can be at home, it can be out in the community, it can be at the early years setting. **Yep**.

And how would that impact on their well-being? Socialising and the things that you just mentioned, sharing yeah, and taking turns.

Erm, well, the, they will, erm, learn how to, erm, behave with others and learn skills about, erm, you know, erm, what's acceptable, what's not acceptable, **ok**, erm, sort of, behaviour, **mmm**, erm. Behaviours for the future really. **Yeah**. That's all about early learning, **mmm**, and, and those social interactions with others. **Yeah**.

Ok. So, what factors would influence a child's well-being do you think?

Erm, well, there's a number of factors that would influence, erm, a child's well-being. The home surroundings and background is absolutely key, **mmm**, erm, you know, erm. We work with a lot of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. So, there's a lot of worklessness, **mmm**, erm, where parents are at home, but they become, sort of, entrenched in, erm, poverty and not going out to work and being under motivated and then that rubs off in the home, **yeah**, erm, you know, with the children, erm, **mmm**. There's other things, like, erm, you know, some parents, erm, may have issues with drugs and alcohol, erm, you know. They might be meeting their own needs before that of the children, **yeah**, erm. There's children that are, erm, subject to witnessing domestic violence, which, of course can, erm, affect the children, **uhmm**, erm, cos they're witnessing that and they, they might think that it's acceptable, **yeah**, and they will, erm, you know, display those kind of behaviours with other children, **yeah**, erm. There's...that...the, like, if parents have got learning difficulties, that can affect children's, erm, well-being, **uhmm**, because they, they might not understand how to parent their children, **mmm**, erm, you know, erm. They might not be, erm, providing opportunities and being a good role model, **mmm**, erm, for those children, erm, **uhmm**. There could be, you know, due to poverty and worklessness, it could be that they simply don't have the money to buy the resources, **yeah**, erm, for children's, you know, overall development, erm. **So that, that's material resources?** Yeah, yeah, **mmm**, erm. In addition to that, erm, you know, there could be parents with mental health problems, erm. Sometimes we work with families that have got quite severe mental health problems and then they don't see it as important to bring the child out, **mmm**, **mmm**, and bring them to playgroup and nursery, **mmm**, so, you know, their well-being is being affected, **mmm**, because they're not coming out and about, **yeah**, and socialising with other and learning these important skills for the future.

And what would you see in a child that would tell you that that's having an impact?

Erm, well, the, they're usually quite well behind in their development, **ok**, in their milestones, **uhmm**. They can be quite withdrawn. Usually their speech and language is well behind, **mmm**, erm, erm. Quite often their PSED skills are non-existent. They might still, you know, start nursery and they'll be in nappies, **mmm**, and they've got dummies in, **mmm**, and they're trying to talk with their dummies in. **Yeah**. They might still be using bottles, erm. They find it very difficult usually to, erm, settle in, erm, to nursery or preschool, **mmm**, erm. And then, you know, once they do start nursery or preschool, quite often they can be quite disruptive, erm, **yeah**, in their behaviour,

and, and find it difficult to get on with other children or follow, **mmm**, you know, instructions from, **yeah**, erm, staff.

And why do you think that might be?

Well, I think that's probably due to the fact they haven't had a role model within the home, erm, **yeah**, to model that sort of behaviour, **mmm**, and, you know, expectations, you know. Quite often we find, erm, when staff go on home visits, children are put in front of the TV for, you know, long periods of time, erm, erm, or, you know, go on home visits and there's very few, erm, resources, **yeah**, for the children to play with, **yeah**, **ok**.

So, taking that on a little further then, erm...and you might have to think about this in your role particularly...so how would you use your knowledge about children's, erm, well-being to provide a suitable environment that helps to support that learning and development? What do you do to, right, well, to support those children?

Erm, well, we'll look at what the issues are, in both roles we look at what the issues are, **uhmm**, erm, you know. We work with a range of other partners. So, we work with health visitors, speech therapists. We work, usually closely, with, erm, early years settings, erm, to establish what the issues are. We usually do some joint partnership working, **yeah**, erm. We start off by going in to the home, **mmm**, erm, observing the child in their home surroundings, identifying early what the issues are, **mmm**, within the family home, or what any potential issues are. We also look at if there's any other siblings, **yeah**, erm, you know, if they've presented with issues that quite possibly, erm, might be an issue for any younger siblings, **mmm**, and then we, sort of, look at all that. Once we've done observations we'll invite them into early years or in to the children's centre. We do, like, observations here, **mmm**, erm, see where the children are at, **yeah**, what's the starting point really and then we plan activities around that, erm. There's two strands to this. With the children's centre we, we try and, erm, provide some, like, parenting so that parents understand, erm, you know, why children's well-being is important and how they can play a part in that, **mmm**, erm. And then in my other role as Childcare Co-ordinator, we work with the, erm, early years settings to look at what they're providing and advice, give advice and support on how that can be improved, **yeah**, erm, looking at, holistically, what, what they're providing, **yep**, erm (long pause).

And where does...where does well-being specifically, sit within that work, would you say?

Erm, well, I think it's key, **yeah**, erm. Well-being is key, **mmm**, erm, within that work, erm, you know. If we don't get children's well-being right, there'll be a whole host of issues further down the line, **yeah**, and quite often we see that with, erm, older siblings within school, **mmm**, high school, **mmm**, erm, and then on into adulthood. **Yeah**.

Ok. So what would you expect a setting to provide in those circumstances?

Erm, I'd expect them to provide a warm, stimulating, caring environment, **uhmm**, erm, where they, sort of, assess initially the needs of the child and the family because, like, you know, it's not just wholly about the child because, like, if the parent's got mental health issues or experienced domestic violence or any other, you know, erm, factors such as that, then they're not going to be able to provide that environment at home, **yeah**, erm, which is like an extension of what, what's happening, erm, within the, **mmm**, early years setting, erm, so initially it's, like, looking at, you know, what's, what's being provided, **yeah**.

Ok, erm, right, I've got a few little themes here, erm, just to discuss generally about how you feel about these within an early years context. **Yep**. So, it doesn't matter what order, ok, if you want to hang on to that, right, ok, and erm, just pick one and tell me how you feel about it.

Erm, well, they're all really important but I'll go with school readiness first then, **yeah**, erm. So, in terms of early years provision, **mmm**, erm, you know, that, that's ultimately what we are trying to prepare children for. **Yep**. So, we're trying to prepare them to make sure they have the necessary skills, erm, in order to start school. So, that's, you know, PSED is really important. So, we'd work with the early years practitioners, parents and other partners, cos I think it's imp...really important that you don't just do things in isolation, **mmm**, erm, you know, to involve other partners, **yeah**, erm. So, erm, you know, we need to be providing...looking at the activities that we're providing that promote, erm, those early PSED skills, **mmm**. So, you know, can the child get dressed and undressed?, **yeah**, you know, so that they're able to take part in PE without not being able to, to do that, **yeah**, erm. Are they able to recognise their coat peg so that they can hang their own coat up? **Yeah** (both laugh gently). Are they able to carry a tray so that, **yeah**, you know, once they start school they can, erm, get their dinner? Erm, are they able to form relationships with other children, **yeah**, erm, and that within their peer group?, erm, so that they can, erm, you know, progress forward, **mmm**, erm. And then there's the academic side of things that personally, my personal view, **mmm**, is that I feel that you need to get PSED right first before, because if children haven't go that, **mmm**, they're less likely to be able to learn academically, **yeah**. You need to get those points right first, **yeah**, erm. And then in terms of the academic things, erm, like your language, literacy, erm, maths, erm, that kind of thing, there's all sorts of activities, **mmm**, that we can, erm, provide for children to learn those skills, but I do think that PSED is absolutely key, **yeah, yeah**, before we even get to any of those other things.

Ok, do you want to pick another one?

Erm, yeah, I've touched on assessment, **mmm**, erm. So, assessment's, sort of, an ongoing thing in my view. **Yeah**. So, initially, erm, children within an early years setting would be assessed, so, you'd be looking at a baseline assessment. Where

are they coming in from?, **yeah**, erm. What skills have they got now? Where do we want to take it?, **mmm**, and then it's like a continuation then, **yeah**. You're continuously assessing children, **yeah**, so that you can plan, erm, for their next stage of development really, **yeah**, erm. And then I think it's important to share those assessments with any other relevant parties, **yeah**. So, it could be that the child, erm, is not meeting their milestones, **mmm**, erm, and then, erm, you know, it's important then that we intervene early and get other people in to support, whether that be, you know, a speech and language therapist, **yeah**, or any, erm, any other person that could support. **Ok**.

How do you feel about the Two Year Check?

Erm, yes I think the two year check's really important, erm. I think it's actually good now that, erm, it's, it's looking at it more holistically and in K, there's just a pilot at the moment where they're doing it in partnership with health. So, erm, I think that's good, especially for people like working parents because otherwise they'd be getting involved in one, **yeah**, side of the assessment and then, **mmm**, the health side of it. So, bringing it together, **yeah**, is good and, erm. I think it's good because you're identifying any potential issues, erm, really early on, **yeah**, so that measures can be put into place, **mmm**, erm, before it's, you know, too late, **yeah**, because then, obviously, will affect their school readiness, **mmm**. If things, if things aren't identified early, it's gonna escalate on, **mmm**, and they're not going to be ready for school. So I do think it's a good thing, **yeah**.

What about the profile at the end of reception?

Erm, yeah, it's, it's, sort of, erm...I've had mixed views about that, **mmm**, because, erm, we as a children's centre have just had an Ofsted inspection last year, **yeah**, and one of our recommendations, erm...because of the school next door...there's a lot of children that live in the most disadvantaged area, **right**, so the, erm, FSP scores for boys was really low. We're double below the K average, **right**, so, we were picked up for that, erm, and that's been given a recommendation for us to work with boys, **yeah**, that are expected to attend that school. Now that was last year. But now, the FSP scores for this year have been announced and now we've put all that intervention in, **mmm**, boys have shot up, and girls have, have come double below what they were! (laughs). **You can't win can you? (laughs)**. So, no, so, erm, you know, **mmm**, **yeah**, erm. And not only that, I think there's a lot of external factors as well, erm, such as, like, the school next door, for instance, erm, they have a lot of Hungarian children, **really?**, erm, attending, erm, the school and they're a really transient, erm, population. **Right**. So, they'll come in and then they'll go and, and so I don't think it's really an effective measure. Or, you'll have somebody coming in half way through the year that can't speak any English at all, **mmm**, and then I think it just totally skews the figures then.

So that makes you question the validity, mmm, of doing something like that, yeah, doesn't it? Yeah, yeah.

What about generally...I know that's a specific situation, mmm, ...but generally, is the profile the right, the right thing to do at that age?

Mmm. Erm, I mean, think children do need to be measured, mmm, erm, but I think probably they need to look, erm, you know, at these things that can, erm, affect figures, mmm, because then, you know, it, sort of... the head teacher's, like, not happy about it next door, mmm, because it does affect, erm, you know, how people view the school, yeah, and things, yeah, and parents views, mmm, and such like. So I think it probably needs to be looked at. Yeah.

Ok, do you want another one?

Erm, yeah, work in partnership with practitioners, mmm, erm, parents working in partnership even, erm. I think again, that's absolutely key, mmm, cos as I've just discussed earlier, erm, there's...you've got to, sort of, get that picture right from the beginning so it's really important to, erm, go out and do a home visit, erm, and see, you know, establish if there's any issues potentially at home, yeah, erm, and assess parent's, erm, you know. Clearly if they've got, erm, learning difficulties then you would need to, yeah, erm, adjust things so that, mmm, it meets their understanding, but then it has to be a continuum, you know, you have to work with parents on a daily basis, yeah, and build up their trust and, erm, you know, as I mentioned earlier, it's not just about the child, it's about the family, yeah, and the parents, yeah, erm. And I think communication's really important, yeah, so, you know, that daily verbal, erm, communication, mmm, with parents to say how they've been and, yeah, what they've been doing and how they could, perhaps, extend that at home, mmm, erm, so...(pause).

Ok. Do you have a key person system here?

Yes, erm, erm, we don't have at the children's centre because we don't provide childcare. Oh, right. OK. It's more about, erm...parents are always present with their children, ok, so you don't have that...so it's more about, like, parenting so we don't have any on-site childcare. But you must see key person systems in your other role, yeah? but in my other role, yeah, erm. Key person, erm, you know, it's really important because it, erm, builds those early attachments, erm, between, erm, the child and the worker, mmm, and the parents, mmm, erm, you know. The child forms that attachment with the key person, yeah, erm, and, you know, they deal with their intimate care, erm, as well as the, erm, learning side of things, erm. (long pause).

Ok. What else have we got? Erm, learning and development, learning and development, just generally within the age group?

Erm, well, erm, as a Childcare Co-ordinator, we got out and, erm, like I say, we don't really assess the learning and development because that's the role of the, erm, early

years consultant, **mmm**. But, like, you know, we do work with some before and after school clubs, some of which, erm, we get the younger end in, **yeah**, like I've got one in D where there's, like, children that are 3 that go, **yeah**, before and after school and to holiday care, **mmm**, erm. So, we look at, you know, making sure that the, erm, learning is suitable for a wide age range of children, **oh, right, yeah, cos they'll have a big, yeah, wide range in those circumstances**, so, there'll be, like, 3 to 11 year olds, **yeah**. So, what, what you're providing for a 3 year old's gonna be, **mmm**, completely different to what you're providing for 10 and 11 year olds.

And what sort of thing do you think, erm, in that age group, we should be providing in terms of learning and development ?

Erm, I think we should be providing, erm, sort of, a range of, erm, activities that promote those, erm, learning opportunities. They've got to be fun and exciting, so, to entice, **mmm**, children to explore and investigate because that's how children, ultimately, learn, **mmm**, erm, and within that, of course, you've got to look at progression so when you provide learning and development opportunities, think about how those activities can be extended, **yeah**, to extend those...that children's learning. **Yeah**.

Ok, is that everything? I think so, on there, yeah. I think so. Right, well that's it. Oh. Is there anything else you want to add? Or comment about well-being?

Erm, no, I don't think so.

You've said it all? (both laugh) Ok, right, thank you very much.

Appendix 15 – Examples of Stages of Data Analysis

Level 1 – Initial Analysis of Interviews

DATA ANALYSIS

WHAT DOES WELL-BEING MEAN?

<p>Happy / Happiness (PT, P1, P2, EYP1, EYP2, EYP3)</p> <p>Mentally OK (PT, P2, LA3)</p> <p>Not stressed (PT)</p> <p>Not depressed (PT)</p> <p>Able to <u>participate</u> (PT)</p> <p>able to <u>learn</u> (PT)</p> <p>Being content with your lot (PT)</p> <p>Being satisfied with what you have (PT)</p> <p>ability to deal with <u>places beyond home</u> (PT, P1, P2, LA1, LA2, LA3) <small>(emphasis on surroundings)</small></p> <p>Feeling of <u>self-worth</u> (PT)</p> <p><u>Belonging</u> (PT, LA2)</p> <p><u>a sense of security</u> (PT, P2) EYP3</p> <p>Being <u>safe</u> (P1, P2, LA1)</p> <p>Feeling at <u>ease</u> (P1)</p> <p><u>Emotional happiness</u> (P1)</p> <p><u>Having friends</u> (P1)</p> <p>It's a <u>collection of things</u> (P1, LA1, LA3,)</p> <p><u>Viewed differently by people</u> (P1)</p> <p><u>Varies according to environment</u> (P1)</p> <p><u>Welfare</u> (P2)</p> <p><u>Physical well-being</u> (P2, LA3) EYP3</p> <p><u>Secure</u> <small>in home</small> environment (P2)</p> <p><u>Confident</u> (P2, LA1)</p> <p>Secure in one's self (P2, EYP2)</p> <p><u>Healthy</u> (P2, LA2) EYP3</p> <p><u>Content</u> (P2)</p> <p>Happy on the inside (EYP1)</p> <p>Shown through <u>non-verbal comm</u>? e.g. smile, sparkly eyes (EYP1, LA1)</p> <p>Demonstrated through <u>involvement with others</u> (EYP1)</p> <p>Being unhappy = well-being affected by something (EYP1, LA2)</p> <p><u>Difficult to define</u> (EYP1) EYP3</p> <p>Happiness is 'shown' (EYP1)</p> <p>Observe happiness (EYP1)</p> <p><u>Emotionally secure</u> (EYP1)</p> <p><u>Emotional well-being often forgotten</u> (EYP1)</p> <p>Feel good factor (EYP2, LA2)</p> <p>Knowing someone is there when you need (EYP2, LA1)</p> <p><u>Confidence to explore</u> (EYP2, LA1)</p> <p>Builds self-esteem (EYP2)</p> <p><u>children being happy in their own skins</u> (EYP2, LA1)</p> <p>Feeling comfortable (LA1) P1</p> <p>Happy to be sociable (LA1, LA2)</p>	<p>Outward facing (LA1)</p> <p>No-body's quite sure what it means (LA1)</p> <p>Term used but not studied in depth (LA1)</p> <p>Human intuitive understanding of what it means (LA1)</p> <p>Heathier</p> <p>Emotions (LA2)</p> <p>General feelings (LA2)</p> <p><u>social well-being</u> (LA2)</p> <p>↓ well-being = withdrawal, crying <small>disruptive</small> (LA2, LA3)</p> <p>Habitual term (LA3)</p> <p>↓ well-being = <u>dist delay</u> (LA3)</p> <p><u>Depends which day you ask</u> (P3)</p> <p>You can see it (P3, EYP3) (P3)</p> <p>Can be expressed by child (P3)</p> <p>Personal (EYP3)</p> <p>at ease (P1)</p> <p>shows in behaviour (EYP3)</p>
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Level 2 – Deeper Analysis of Transcripts

Saira

Wrestling with the Term ‘well-being’

‘Child’s welfare...their mental, physical well-being’

Quite quickly came up with a meaning but having paused, knew that this needed explaining further. Perhaps thought it was too broad. Two popular areas of well-being concerned with the self.

‘Do you want me to elaborate?’

Almost as if she was asking for permission to speak. Once she knew she was allowed to, she talked for a very long time. It was as if she now owned the interview.

‘I’ll be talking in my terms’

This refers back to the first few words. Perhaps she would not be able to sustain an interview at that word level? Once she had permission to elaborate, she needed to clarify that this would not be in an ‘academic’ way. She could now relax into it and say what she wanted.

‘Basically’ refers to this drop in language level – she wants it to be basic and was more comfortable with the term ‘happy’. She knew what was meant by that. This raises the question about people being comfortable with the term ‘well-being’. Clearly she was not.

‘I was very close to her in that sense of her well-being.’

She uses her child’s adverse reaction to the new baby to demonstrate how children’s well-being can be affected and how she as a mother was highly tuned in to her child’s emotional state. It is almost as if she ‘feels’ well-being rather than being able to articulate it, hence the reason why it is so hard to explain. She confirms this at the end by saying ‘So, as I mean, the well-being of my child...’.

‘Other than that...’

She returns to other aspects of well-being

- Healthy
- Getting the right food
- Physically safe environment
- Right environment
- Happy environment
- Secure environment

She sums this up as ‘having a happy child’.

So, she began with 'child welfare', a very broad term, then broke it down to 'mental, physical well-being' but had great difficulty in describing these terms. Having moved past the 'emotional well-being' – which is what she meant by 'mental' at the start – she goes on to give a more comprehensive explanation of her original response, mentioning health and diet. These come up again later in the interview. This refers to the 'physical' well-being she originally mentioned. However, environment then creeps in and then dominates. Perhaps her story has made her realise the impact of the environment, for example, the arrival of a new baby.

'Secure, having a secure environment.'

P2 saw two sides to 'secure' – the physical environment and feeling secure. She uses 'safe' and 'freely' to describe being 'secure in their environment' and demonstrates the effect on well-being by describing her daughter as 'secure in her own self' and 'confident'. This illustrates the importance of the home environment and relates to Bronfenbrenner in placing the child at the centre, then parents then home.

'I think I've done a good job with her.' '...doing what most mothers do...avoiding sugars'

Here, P2 is looking for validation as a parent, associating her actions with what other mothers do. She feels responsible for creating this environment and for the child to thrive in it. It is interesting that she singles out 'avoiding sugars' as this has been the subject of a lot of media attention recently. Food is about survival and failure to feed a child properly has massive implications for the parent. This demonstrates the pressure that parents are under to 'get it right' and the possible influence of the media and government in that, demonstrating the influence of the wider systems on parenting.

'you hear this child's very isolated'

P2 contrasts her child's happiness with others who may not have high levels of well-being. She associates this with being isolated and not being able to express emotion. This illustrates the two faces of well-being – the existence of something that enhances well-being and the lack of something that reduces well-being.

Exploring the Impact of Adult Behaviours

P2 has already referred to the environment as being 'right', 'happy' and 'secure'. She mentioned the following negative factors first :-

Adult Behaviours

'the people they associate with...they do get influenced'

Perhaps 'right' relates to morality. P2 says 'I'm not biased about people who do certain things in their own environment' which clearly relates to behaviours. This

could be drinking alcohol, swearing, sex, violence or anything that she does not approve of. She is clearly aware of such things but doesn't want them to impact on her child.

Adult Mental Illness - Post Natal Depression

'it's a weakness within myself', 'I didn't do it intentionally', 'forgetting yourself in the process...you're a mother but you're yourself as well.'

P2 uses an example of her post-natal depression to demonstrate the impact of adult behaviours on children's well-being. She describes her perception of how a mother should behave – caring, protective, feeding, not causing harm – but her illness took this to an extreme. She uses the word 'possessive'. This all resulted in an anxious, overly attached child.

This reference to it being a weakness is further demonstrated by her inability to say the word 'depression'. She calls her illness 'post-natal'. There is an air of shame in her words. She was lost in this illness and realises that she could not be a proper mother whilst being 'lost' as an individual.

She later attributes marital disharmony to her illness.

Her behaviour has been different with her second child. She is more relaxed, looks after herself and has alone time. This has resulted in a child who is more relaxed and confident with a healthier attachment to P2 and other family members.

'...a child looks on their mother...it makes a child what they are...it moulds them into what they are.'

This sentence summarises the importance of the maternal relationship in terms of shaping a child and how if it is damaging, the child will suffer.

Marital Disharmony

'Me and my husband...we had a lot of issues...'

P2 refers specifically to behaviour as an influencing factor. Although her child was too young to understand the problems, she believes that the shouting, door banging and rowing during arguments had an impact on her older child's well-being, although she doesn't explain how.

I've seen a difference between M's upbringing... and how I've been with Z'

She is only able to see how the lack of negative factors mentioned above has had a positive effect on her second child.

Tensions between Generations

'I have had criticism from the elders'.

Such conflicts occur for a number of reasons – generational differences, eastern v western cultures, the position of the daughter-in-law within the family and the treatment of boys and girls. The daughter-in-law can sometimes feel trapped in these situations. This is something I came across regularly in practice with Pakistani Muslim extended families.

This debate extends to whether children should be ‘allowed’ to cry. Some of the lack of boundaries relates to crying as it is believed to be harmful. P2 was pleased that I believed that allowing her daughter to cry was teaching her to manage negative emotions.

Extremism

‘I don’t want my child next to another child who’s talking about extremism.’

As a British Muslim, P2 feels pressured by extremism. She wants her child to know about Islam but is very concerned that her child has a proper understanding and is not indoctrinated. She believes that this should be no sooner than 6 years old. She is almost suspicious of parents that don’t speak English and suggests that they should be targeted in terms of the preschool getting to know them. She said that this scared her. She sees the involvement of the community as the only solution. This demonstrates the dynamics of the ecosystems – the community mediating between the public and extreme religious beliefs.

I was shocked by this. She had to defend herself as a British Muslim and alienate herself from the Muslim extremists. This was the impact of P2 attending Prevent training. The idea that 3 and 4 year olds were being indoctrinated in to extremism and that it was the pre-school’s job to seek them out! More pressure from government.

Having reflected on these negative factors, P2 drew upon her experience of how this situation changed for the better.

Family Life

‘the way parents act is a big influence on the baby’s well-being’. ‘We were a lot more secure as a family.’

Reflecting on her experiences of post-natal depression and marital disharmony, P2 describes how the following activities in family life have a positive effect on well-being :-

- Spending quality time with both parents
- Going to the park
- Taking children to activities in the wider community
- Children going out with friends

- Playing out in the street
- Getting to know the neighbours

It is clear that none of these things could take place when she had post-natal depression and when she and her husband were having relationship problems. It was having a sense of security that allows P2 to let this happen – friendly neighbours, trustworthy friends.

There is a clear picture here of two very different home environments. It is interesting that this is usually associated with disadvantage yet these are two professional graduates with their own home and the support of family, friends and neighbours. It shows that these issues are not necessarily class or wealth related. The literature stresses that it is not necessarily family structure that is the issue but the relationships in the home.

Creating an Environment that Supports Learning and Development

Providing Appropriate Resources that Support Interests

'can I show you some of the things we do?' 'she does what she does in school'

P2 is using practical experience to demonstrate how she provides a learning environment. She begins by letting me know her child's interests – talking, interacting, reading books, making up stories. She produces 'writing' books that she has bought for her daughter, indicating that writing is her favourite thing. She also says that books are her favourite thing.

She links her child's activities to her child's interests at pre-school, for example, buying beads to thread having seen her do this on Tapestry. This is showing the dynamics of the ecosystems as the child shows her interests at pre-school and that in turn influences play at home. P2 has picked up on this and provided appropriate resources.

She chooses to tell me about 'school like' activities first. Again, there is an element of wanting approval in her manner and the language she uses. Later, she talks about dressing up but gives this less attention.

Pressure Free Play and Learning

'play freely here'. 'What shape is this?' 'she does them when she wants to'. 'play around with books'.

There is a real sense of freedom for this child to explore and play within the home, allowing the child to take the lead. She has written on the carpet and on the sofa but

this doesn't seem to concern the mother – although Dad seemed less impressed! She wasn't concerned about what other people thought about her house, as long as it was safe for her children.

There is little formality but P2 makes herself available when the child requests her involvement. Parents extend the child's learning by providing more challenging resources and by asking questions during everyday activities. Physical development is supported through outdoor play. There is also time for rest and relaxation, watching TV, cartoons and videos.

Giving Support and Encouragement

'we actually encourage her'. 'Oh, that's brilliant!'

Both parents are involved in the child's play, listening, taking part, supporting and encouraging. This applies mainly to formal learning. Imaginative play is supported but appears to carry less value as demonstrated in the video that she showed me.

Effective Behaviour Management

'She gets a star if she's done good work.' 'she loves...getting little sweeties for being good girl'. 'she loves being told she is a good girl'.

There is an interesting use of rewards here. Literacy and numeracy is viewed by the parent as work, not play. This is part of the debate around play in the curriculum and school readiness. This 'work' is rewarded by a formal sticker, but being a 'good girl' is rewarded by much more exciting, or even normally forbidden treats. This suggests that being a 'good girl' is valued more, reinforcing the value of focusing on the prime areas at this age.

There is much debate over the type and use of rewards and the nature of praise. Does the child know what she is being praised for? What is a 'good girl'? There is one school of thought that says that children respond better to verbal praise and that this should identify the reason e.g. 'good writing'. P2 does provide a mixture of verbal and tangible praise.

'I encourage good behaviour'.

This is an interesting statement because most of what followed was about punishing bad behaviour, although there is some encouragement of good behaviour through praise and reward as mentioned above.

She talks about the battle of wills that goes on between her and her child. However, this demonstrates the setting of firm boundaries and sticking to them. She makes sure that her daughter understands this too.

Involvement in the Child's Education at Pre-school

'Chatterbox Challenge'. 'They've had the tooth brush thing'. 'What did you do in school today baby?'

P2 supports her child's education by talking to her about her day and joining in with pre-school activities that extend into the home, for example, a sponsored event and learning about healthy practices. This is another example of the ecosystems influencing each other (Bronfenbrenner p 210). She makes a direct link between the enjoyment of pre-school and well-being.

Engagement with the Wider Community

'parks...taekwondo...rock climbing...go out and socialise'. 'bike rides in the neighbourhood...with some parents that I know'. 'Take her to the neighbours, get her introduced to everyone'.

This demonstrates how the wider ecosystems influence a child's well-being. By engaging in activities away from the home, the child enters the outer rings of the model. When engaging in these, they may come across different behaviours and expectations and the added influences of cultures for example.

Later, she talks about her daughter having temper tantrums and learning how to deal with this aggression and learning about patience. She thought that taekwondo would teach her about well-being and how to channel her feelings in a positive way.

What are the Parent's Expectations of a Pre-school?

'To mix in.'

Socialisation is the first and only benefit to the child that P2 comes up with. This is mentioned by other participants too and demonstrates the movement of the child out of their home comfort zone into a new social arena. It is seen as the first step into the world and has implications for both mother and child.

'To get a life of my own!'

Although she says this in jest, there is some truth in what she says. As a parent of twins, I was glad of some child free time where I could recapture something of my own identity. This is particularly relevant to P2 who had a terrible experience of losing herself through post-natal depression. It also says something about the need to consider the well-being of the adults which is mentioned in the literature.

'She needs to be able to enjoy where she's going'

P2 links her child's enjoyment of pre-school directly to effective learning and therefore happiness. She repeatedly refers to her child as being secure, happy and content in the pre-school environment. These are similar comments that she made about the home. This reminds me of the quote in the literature 'we cannot educate an unhappy child' and the need for high levels of well-being before learning can take place.

'one to one attention'. 'not many children'. 'they've got kids running everywhere'.

P2 talks about what she looked for in a pre-school. Her comments reflect a homely feel. She lowered her voice when she said **'they've got kids running everywhere'** as if she was mentioning an unspeakable situation literally! The adult child bonds are important to P2 and she fears isolation for her child and the emotional upset this can cause.

Factors that made the Experience Better for Parents

P2 wasn't necessarily aware that she needed to be reassured that her child was in the right setting but this came out as she began to unravel her experience of pre-school.

'she reassured me'. 'I had a whole day with you guys and I really liked it'.

This need for reassurance shows the impact of separation on parents as well as children. It made me think that sometimes practitioners do not consider the impact that this can have on a parent, tending to push them away very quickly. I wonder if this is linked to the demands of the curriculum and the pressure to show levels of PSED as quickly as possible when perhaps this is unrealistic?

'to see that my daughter was fine was reassuring'. 'and they've got the Tapestry, brilliant!'

On-going links with parents are essential to reassure parents that their child is happy in the pre-school environment. New interactive record keeping systems are an excellent way of involving parents and provide that reassurance. P2 would not have known about this until she arrived at the setting so perhaps advertising this facility would make the venture into pre-school less daunting.

Concerns for Parents

The discussion raised many concerns that parents have about their child starting pre-school. These are essentially connected to the mother/child attachment and the

uncertainty that their child will be able to form similar bonds with staff and peers. This was especially important to P2 as she was very aware of the 'damage' done to her daughter's social development by her post-natal depression.

P2 expressed concerns about her child feeling abandoned and her own feelings of separation anxiety. She was desperate that her child had someone who would act in loco parentis so she wouldn't feel alone. She had already made strong links between well-being and a secure environment both physically and emotionally which was very important to her.

Perceived Benefits to Children

'She's become a little boss...she's so happy'. 'She loves going to school.'

'She needed to socialise with other children'. 'She made friends'. 'She talks about her friends'.

'Her communication, her language just lifted off'.

P2 makes a link between her child's well-being and her school experiences. Confidence, having friends and being able to communicate more effectively are seen as contributory factors to her child's happiness, contentment and enjoyment – and therefore her well-being. The way she spoke about it was with relief that this daunting step for both her and her daughter had proved to be the right one and that this was all down to choosing the right environment and the people within it.

Translation of Policy

Practitioners Working in Partnership with Parents

'but the parents has to be willing to listen'.

I'm not certain that P2 would have talked about this relationship in the same way had I been another parent rather than a practitioner, let alone an academic! She used words such as 'qualified', 'expertise' and 'professional' to describe practitioners and the words 'accept', 'protecting', 'proudness', 'criticism', 'learning curve' and 'weakness' to describe the reactions and behaviours of parents. The perception was that even if you knew what was best for your child, the professionals knew better, and they held the power in this clearly unequal relationship. She described some parents as stubborn when it came to taking advice and that they should simply 'accept' what professionals say. But how can parents be certain that someone is a 'good' professional? Her belief was reinforced by advice given to her about bottle feeding, which resulted in an improved attitude to food, healthy weight loss and better sleep for her child.

Has this happened as a result of the 'professionalisation' of the early years workforce? Does the curriculum e.g. 2 year check, give the impression that professionals are 'all knowing' in the eyes of parents?

She describes this relationship as entering a 'cat and mouse' game with her as the inexperienced new mother thinking she knows what's best and being protective and the qualified experienced professional challenging this with the 'right' advice. She imitates the professional by saying 'yes we know, but this is the actual way' as though parents are playing at being parents. Parents counter this with 'you may have all the experience, but this is my child'. It's like a battle that eventually the professionals are always going to win.

The phrase 'parents are the child's first educators' that professionals troll out sounds somewhat hollow in these circumstances. It also calls into question the 'one size fits all' approach to education and care. What happens in reality is sometimes far removed from the ideology of policy.

'you need to separate yourself'. 'she'll cry'. 'Mummy's got to go, you're gonna be alright.'

P2's description of me personally evicting her from the setting, irrespective of how both were feeling, made me feel ashamed. My agenda was clearly driven by policy, not child development theory. I know all about attachment theory the importance of parents in the transition from home to pre-school yet this was thrown out of the window because I needed to move on to the next admission and the key person had observations to do and activities to organise. It was the perfect illustration of 'trappedness', but I am aware that it happens in most settings on a daily basis.

Assessment

'You need to know where they are'. 'talking to other parents'.

P2 perceived assessment as a way of identifying weaknesses and working on them. She viewed pre-school as a solution to her child's limited language and shyness and got the results she was looking for. She alluded to assessing her child by talking to other parents and comparing children.

There was a preference for observation over formal assessment and being able to speak to staff. She simply wanted to know that her child was progressing 'normally' in their personality and language. She felt that adults underestimated children's abilities, using her daughter's ability to be manipulative as an example. Is being manipulative the same as being clever and intelligent?

She strongly disapproved of streaming in schools, especially in early years, worried that this causes unhealthy competition, arrogance in the able and depression in the weak.

Learning & Development

This wasn't tackled directly as P2 felt that she had interwoven this into the conversation already. She felt that assessment was part of learning and development. When talking about how to play with children, she stressed that 'parents need to know this stuff'. How do parents get to know this stuff? What stuff? Who is responsible for making that happen? What are the barriers?

'You should encourage activities. You should have a routine.'

P2 could see the benefits of activities and routine, both in the home and in the pre-school and felt that this should continue into reception class. Routine is about having a degree of structure but not through formal learning. She gave story time and singing time as examples.

What does routine give children? P2 associates this with security. Activities provide stimulation. She notices that when her daughter is not stimulated she becomes disruptive.

'She doesn't need to know how to write her name. She needs to know how to play!' (age 3)

She disapproved of formal learning at this age, demonstrated by this comment. She clearly puts play at the centre of her child's life. She mentions the stress felt by parents when settings are pushing for a child to achieve something that is clearly developmentally inappropriate. However, this child may be very able and ready to write but for this conversation to be over the phone suggested a lack of engagement by the parents, but they have other children to consider.

'be fun Mummy'.

I liked the fact that fun came into the conversation, and that parents should be fun too. It captured the relationship between adult and child and that this encouraged participation and demonstrated the caring nature of the relationship which she related to well-being. Being a carer wasn't enough, there has to be involvement. This refers back to attachment again.

Key Person

'very important for your child's well-being'

This statement followed a series of statements of how the key person had supported her, not her child. The settling in process was clearly stressful for her. This goes back to my observation about how this is handled in practice. Parents are almost incidental which speaks volumes about the nature of the parent/practitioner relationship.

She talked about a trusting, open and caring relationship which was important for well-being and her daughter valued it by wanting to share information with her key person. She could also see that this allowed her daughter to build other adult relationships e.g. doctor, neighbours and other preschool staff.

School Readiness

P2 didn't understand school readiness. Her interpretation was very simple – Is she ready for school? She believes that pre-schools are getting children ready for school.

'When she turned two I thought school, she's gonna be starting soon'. 'she needs to go because I need to start preparing her'.

It's incredible that school enters a parent's mind at the age of 2. However, she does use 'school' to mean 'preschool'. This is an example of how childhood is being eroded. This whole idea of children 'needing' to go into a formal environment described as 'school'. Where does this pressure come from – funded places?

She knew of a parent who took their child away because he wet himself when starting to attend full days. P2 felt that the parent needed to be 'more supportive of the child' and keep trying but acknowledges that she didn't know the full circumstances. Why when the child is clearly distressed? What effect is this having on their well-being? Yet as a practitioner, I would always tell parents that we didn't give up and that some are sick, wet themselves, scream, have tantrums, yet we still battle through and encourage parents to leave. WHY!!!! This is cruel! Not good for well-being!

Her words indicate pressure on the parent too to start the preparations. I think she meant preparation for preschool. There was an element of the parents having to prepare too.

'Curious...she likes learning'

This is what makes her child school ready. She describes her child as a keen learner, liking new ideas and being curious and is disruptive if she doesn't have stimulating activities to do. These are some of the characteristics of effective learning and dispositions mentioned by LA1. She believes that preschool has contributed to this – routine, and staff, everything.

She adds the ability to socialise with adults and peers and being familiar with a school like routine to the list of factors that make her school ready. She feels that this is 'all her life' at the moment.

Should preschool be 'all her life'? If not then what should be? What is a modern childhood?

Other Observations

- Talking from own experience
- Use of language – talking in own terms
- Interviewer/interviewee power relations
- Getting it all out!
- Seeking approval as a mother

Level 3 – Three Emerging Themes

Emerging Themes - Practitioners

Relationships

Attachment - KeyPerson

Dawn – key person - good that children have emotional attachment to one adult. Consistency. Important for parent well-being too. All adults responsible to the child as well.

Jill – getting children used to the adults in the setting – stay and play. Role of the key person in this process – attachment to significant adult. Key person allocated but children often choose. Go at the pace of the child. Key person also helpful with transition into school.

Sam – key person supports emotional security, especially during settling in. See importance of it in practice with settling in and knowing the child. Not always possible to be there all the time – training, sickness etc.

Jill – keyperson pivotal for the child in enhancing relationships and getting to know the child.

Sam – having a connection with a child, being a support mechanism

Jill – get to know parents through the key person system. Tension over paperwork related to development records.

Dawn – listen to parents, don't use technical language and communicate in a way they understand. Come as a package so supporting the child's well-being is about acknowledging where they come from and supporting the family too. Equally responsible for the child – parents more so. Must work in partnership.

Jill – vital to work with parents – they can give most information about the child. Make it easier for parents to contribute to record using Tapestry. Open relationship especially with single assessments or SEN – need to know what parents do at home. This sounds a bit one sided? What about supporting the parents?

Sam – parent and practitioner relationship not equal.

Sam – priorities is the three way relationship – child (learning & development) parent (working with parents) practitioner (key person). Adults working together for the benefit of the child. Sam unifies these three. Benefits to parents too – gives them confidence.

Jill – professional experience of children who have spent long periods in day care – well-being not quite as good – away from home a lot. Snow day story. Lack of attention from parents. Crave that closeness. “done a lot of time in nursery” sounds a bit like prison! Heard of EPPE but didn’t know much about it.

Theory – Bowlby, Ainsworth, Rutter, Goldschmied

All three practitioners feel that children’s emotional well-being is supported by the key person system where children form a close attachment to one particular adult in the setting. Sam talks about making a connection with a child and providing them with a support mechanism. In some way, this is like acting as a mother substitute. Both Sam and Jill stress the value of the key person system at times of transition into the pre-school and when leaving to go to school in providing emotional support.

Dawn explains that whilst this special relationship exists, there is a collective responsibility to children in building positive relationships with all of the adults in the setting. Sam feels that this particularly important for times when the key person is absent, for example, due to sickness or training. Although settings may allocate a key person, Jill says that the child often chooses their key person by demonstrating who they feel the most comfortable with.

Put Dawn’s comment about parents coming as a package in here.

All practitioners feel that within this relationship, they are able to get to know the child and their family well which contributes not only to the well-being of the child but of the parent too. Dawn’s idea of the family coming as a package is in some way acknowledging where the child comes from.

Put Sam’s comment about working together in here.

Sam refers to the triangle of child, parent and practitioner relationship proposed by Elinor Goldschmied. Whilst the other practitioners talk about supporting the child and the parents and obtaining information from parents but Sam unifies them for the benefit of the child. All practitioners value the relationship with parents but is Sam that places the child at the centre of those relationships. This could be because of her lack of experience in dealing with parents or that she hasn’t gathered any career baggage yet or that she has a better understanding because of her training.

Put the story of the snow day in here.

However, Jill observes what happens when children have attachments with adults that are not their mothers due to spending long periods in day care. They do not appear to have the same levels of well-being as others in the setting and are needy and crave adult attention, usually by performing tasks that attract rewards such as stickers. She makes it clear that this does not apply to all children in this situation but is generally the case. She puts this down to the fact that they spend long periods of time away from their family. She uses the example of a little boy who spent a day at home because the pre-school was closed due to snow. He didn't settle back at all. Jill speculates that this day was probably spent altogether at home without the pressures of daily life and he simply wanted more of it. The language Jill uses suggests that spending long periods in nursery is like going to prison.

Research – EPPE study – lengthy stays at pre-school not beneficial. Ideal 15 hours. Quality care benefits disadvantaged children the most. Especially not good for younger children. Raises questions about younger children in day care, especially with the introduction of the 2 year old funding and increase in funding for working parents to 30 hours.

Put Jill's comment about record keeping in here.

The key person also has responsibility for maintaining the child's learning and development records. Jill questions whether the amount of time and effort spent in observing and recording children's development in this way actually has any benefit to the child as she feels that all practitioners in her setting would have sufficient knowledge of the child as a result of their relationships and daily interactions.

Knowledge

Knowledge of the Child

Dawn - Visible signs during interactions with children e.g. smiling.

Sam – well-being is about children's appearance – look fed, look clean, look secure, look well and happy. Not about learning but is the foundation to it all = holistic multidimensional.

Sam – well-being not being as it should be would show in children's negative behaviour because they're not being supported how they should be.

Dawn - Respond to needs – interact, ask questions, support emotional well-being. If child is unhappy then their well-being is not right.

Dawn – some children won't have had breakfast

Dawn – little boy who needs to transport play dough not a blanket as a comfort – allow children to have different forms of comfort – transporting play dough may be frowned upon?

Jill – practitioners really know the children well – tensions over ongoing assessment and the amount of paperwork and whether this benefits the child.

Jill – being able to identify special needs and provide extra support e.g. behaviour problem story. Tensions about amount of resources available to do this and expertise required – practitioner feels pressured.

Sam – looking at the setting through a child’s eyes in terms of accessibility. Sam has insight – knows how it feels. Agency?

Dawn – enhance provision with what children want – knowledge of their interests – child’s voice? Agency?

Dawn – peer relationships and how children treat those who are different = social and emotional well-being. Children can be cruel.

Jill – buddying system didn’t work – allow relationships to develop naturally. Agency?

Practitioners talk about being able to see well-being through non-verbal communication, such as eyes lighting up and smiling, appearance, such as looking clean and well fed and behaviour, such as looking happy and secure and not exhibiting negative behaviours. This illustrates the multiple dimensions of well-being, summarised by the practitioners as physical, emotional and social. Any changes in these visible signs are considered as indicators of changes in well-being. However, Dawn does warn that outward appearances could be deceiving and some people don’t take account of what might be going on on the inside. It is only knowing the child really well that you will be able to judge.

Dawn’s little boy with the play dough in here.

Getting to know children well allows practitioners to respond appropriately to children’s needs. Dawn refers to interaction and communication as ways in which practitioners can support emotional well-being and knowing things like whether they have had breakfast. She tells the story of a little boy who needs to have a piece of play dough as a comfort. Important for his well-being that this is permitted in the setting instead of the traditional blanket.

Jill’s example of special needs in here

Jill talks about responding to low levels of well-being indicated by aggressive behaviour. Working together, the problem was resolved and he is doing well. Jill expresses tensions here regarding the availability of resources to tackle such issues and the feeling of not being adequately qualified to take on the task of supporting families in this way.

Sam’s example of accessibility in here

There are several examples of how practitioners need to understand how children see the world and the ways in which they respond to it. Sam talks about seeing the setting through a child’s eyes and perceiving different circumstances through their eyes, for example, resources not being accessible and their perceptions of adult behaviour. Dawn talks about including the children’s interests in provision and observing how they socialise. She mentions that children can be cruel in the way that they treat those who are different. Jill tells of how a buddying system didn’t work and they now leave children to befriend others as they wish. This is all about children having agency and how adults perceive children as social actors.

Professional Knowledge

Basic Needs – Physical Well-being

Dawn – pre-school child needs 10-12 hours sleep

Dawn – milk is good for calcium

Dawn – breakfast is most important meal of the day, plenty of fruit and vegetables

Dawn – advocate the benefits of outdoor play for well-being. Need for appropriate clothing = physical well-being. Also social and learning benefits. But tension in clashes with parents over knowledge of effects of cold weather. Emphasis on ALL weathers as a healthy practice but it is more about the cognitive benefits. Dawn's emphasis is wrong here although she does acknowledge cognitive benefits. This is where LA input and trends in early years can be misinterpreted as gospel! Recent campaigns for more outdoor play aimed at tackling obesity and perceived dangers of sedentary lifestyles and impact of technology. Judgemental of parents for their lack of knowledge about cold viruses. Wants children to educate the parents!

Sam – priority for provision - accessible and safe environment – can't put children in danger. Safeguarding requirements of the EYFS – strong message in early years.

The practitioners demonstrated a lot of knowledge about children's physical well-being and how to keep them safe. This was mainly from Dawn who focuses heavily on physical well-being in her interview. There is knowledge about healthy eating and the need for plenty of sleep as well as safety, all of which are strong narratives in early years practice, especially in tackling obesity and issues around safeguarding such as the deaths of Baby P and Daniel Pelka and the grooming of young girls in Rotherham.

Dawn's outdoor play story in here.

There is evidence of clashes with parents over what is best for the health of their children. There is an element of misinterpretation of policy in what Dawn has to say. She does mention the intended benefits – physical well-being of fresh air and exercise, social well-being of active play with others and cognitive well-being gained from exploring the environment. However, her focus is on being out in all weathers which would not always be beneficial. There are tensions between her knowledge and that of some parents and she feels very strongly that it is her role to educate parents – is it?

How Children Learn – Policy Driven?

Dawn – personal opinion = children should learn through themselves (Piaget). Balance of child initiated and adult led play (Piaget & Vygotsky). Development is extended this way = cognitive well-being. Clash between personal belief and provision? Clash of knowledge with parents again here – parents are pushy and want to concentrate on formal learning and not prime areas – the great aspects of child's learning and development.

Jill – agrees with Dawn about pushy parents but feels this could be because of their own experiences and attitudes to learning.

Dawn – learning through play (Tina Bruce) but must provide correct resources for children to do this. Benefits of play dough as a stress reliever. Influenced by policy not training?

Dawn – children learn through themselves. Balance of child initiated and adult led play (Piaget & Vygotsky). Development is extended this way = cognitive well-being. Influenced by policy? Image of the child as a competent learner?

Put one of Dawn's statements in here about children learning.

There is knowledge of how children learn among the practitioners which alludes to theories proposed by Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruce. Learning through play is promoted and providing the resources to do this is seen as the responsibility of practitioners in order for children to develop new ideas. There is an image here of the child as a competent able learner.

Jill's example of not wanting parents to sit them down and write

Again there is a clash of opinions between parents and practitioners with parents focusing on more formal activities. Jill does say that the reason might be because that was how they learned.

Put in quote from EYFS in here

Much of this knowledge comes from the EYFS and not the theories that practitioner would have learned about in their training.

General Child Development Knowledge – Buzz Words?

Jill – learning is holistic thing – not just about literacy and numeracy. Parents don't seem to understand this

Jill – without well-being can't achieve anything else

Dawn – reference to Elinor Goldschmeid as founder of keyperson system.

Jill – early years most critical time for learning

Jill – parents are the child's first educators

Sam – prime areas underpin other areas of learning and development

There is some evidence of child development knowledge here. Jill talks about learning being holistic and belief that well-being is the foundation for everything else. Dawn knew that Elinor Goldschmied was the founder of the concept of a key person. There were some phrases used that appear in the EYFS and are often used as buzz words in publications. These appear to be hollow phrases that are not backed up by any form of theory or research knowledge. This makes me question whether practice around well-being is informed by training or by policy. The tensions around well-being in practice seem to be around not being able to do what is required and what practitioners believe to be beneficial but more informed by curriculum requirements.

Select some phrases here.

Everyday Practices

Adult Interactions with Children

Dawn – important to listen to children – some people not very good at this. Don't speak for them. Adult image of the child?

Dawn - Adult interactions with children – some people forget about what's on the inside. Is this reference to rather superficial relationships with children?

Dawn – professionals to be caring and empathetic towards children

Jill – Feeling of security knowing that there is an adult on hand if you need. About children having freedom and space but also about adults being available. Getting that balance right? Knowing when to interact and when not to.

Jill – setting welcoming and friendly, comfortable with the adults and other children are happy and secure.

Sam - make them feel welcome, loved, comfortable with you = secure, free to express selves, can help them. Sam and Jill agree about being comfortable with you but then Sam is about how they feel (impact of environment), Jill is about how the setting feels (what the environment offers).

Dawn's example of children not being listened to in here

All three practitioners carry out their day to day duties with the intention of promoting the well-being of children through their interactions with them. Examples of this are listening to children, having deep and meaningful relationships with them and adopting an empathetic and caring approach. This relates to personal attributes of practitioners which Dawn feels are sometimes missing from practice. This refers to the adult image of the child.

Jill's example of having an adult in the house in here

Jill mentions the availability of adults and knowing when to be there and when not to be involved. This suggests a certain amount of freedom given to the child but also the sense of security at having an adult at hand. This brings Jill's concerns about paperwork to mind and the amount of time that practitioners could be spending away from children meaning that practitioners aren't always available. Perhaps need to consider how adults are used in practice to support well-being.

Sam's comment here about making children 'feel' welcome.

Contrast here with Jill's comment about the environment being welcoming. This makes me think that relationships will affect the way children feel rather than the physical environment or is it a combination of the two?

Daily Routines

Dawn – meeting basic needs – food, balanced diet, shelter, adequate place to sleep, appropriate clothing

Dawn – providing healthy snacks with fruits and vegetables

Sam – look after, change and feed, general care = look comfortable and happy.

Jill – intend to make them feel comfortable – ask staff for help, access food and drink and toileting = independence = personal well-being. Gives confidence to enjoy group = social

well-being. Slight tension here as 'quickly' suggests pressure for them to do this – adult agenda?

Jill – settling in – working a system. Spend more time with them, diversion techniques, getting interested in activities – what about closeness and affection referred to with 'day care kids'?

Jill – higher than mandatory staff ratios to give more attention to children – in theory? Tensions regarding sufficient adults?

Jill – rules about kindness, not hurting people, tidying up etc. New children daunted by large groups.

Put Sam's quote about general care and Jill's settling in process in here.

The daily routines in the setting promote healthy lifestyles and physical well-being. There are also rules that promote kindness and looking after the space that promotes physical, social and emotional well-being. These routines are also to encourage independence and give children confidence to enjoy being part of the group. There is a hint of an adult agenda here in the use of the word 'quickly'. It supports Jill's concerns about not having enough time. Perhaps the time pressures relate to achievement and as a result, the well-being side of things is being rushed as too much time is spent helping the children to do basic tasks. With the ethos of school readiness, this would make sense. This also comes out in Jill's comment about settling in and how diversion tactics are used – what do the children really need? Can the setting provide this with the resources they have? So what happens to well-being? This also comes out in the ratios – the desire is there but the resources are not.

Play and Learning

Dawn – providing a good base, a good structure of basic provision - does this relate to 'secure' environment? Influenced by policy?

Jill – welcoming comfortable environment, free to explore alone or with an adult – ref to child and adult led activities – what about with peers? Leads on to talking about structured and unstructured to achieve learning goals - Influence of policy?

Sam – helping them feel comfortable here with their peers = social well-being

Put Jill's comment about the environment in here

The role of the secure environment in children's personal and emotional well-being comes up a lot in the interviews. The practitioners talk about providing security, structure and comfort to help children feel secure emotionally and socially. This in turn will allow them to explore freely which is then linked to learning.

Dawn – learning through play (Tina Bruce) but must provide correct resources for children to do this. Resources for expressing feelings e.g. empathy dolls and play dough

Jill – cosy book corner, cushions and soft toys more comforting.

Jill – activities for learning names = social well-being. Feeling part of the group?

Put Dawn's comment about empathy dolls and play dough in here.

The practice of learning through play is pretty much universal but what does this really mean? Do the practitioners understand what, for example, Tina Bruce says about it and its features? Are the activities play based in the setting or is there a more formal side to activities? The suggestions made here about promoting well-being through play are very limited and no one mentioned role play or small world play or activities that involve sharing, for example. This makes me wonder whether there is a real understanding about the PSED aspects of learning and how to support and promote them.

Assessment

Dawn – assessment should be abolished in early years. 2 year check fine for health and well-being but not learning – harmful? Assessment should be later on – wouldn't have dreamed of doing this years ago. Observation of how children are viewed by government – economic units and not as potential citizens? Uncompromising drive for achievement by all children – Ofsted.

Sam – agrees with 2 year check. Should be 3 year check. Associates checks with statutory requirements. Doesn't give as much value to ongoing assessment through observation.

Jill – practices re assessments keep changing

Sam – observing to be done sensitively and not as a tick list. Well-being can be incorporated into ongoing assessments, especially if children aren't reaching milestones. Consider well-being only when something is wrong?

Sam's comment on assessment in here re milestones.

All of the comments on assessment suggest that the intention is not unreasonable but the way in which it is done in practice could be. It's this uncompromising drive for achievement again. Sam says that if observations are done sensitively then they are not harmful. Focus on when things are not going right – deficit model. What about looking for what makes children thrive and championing the positive well-being?

School Readiness

Dawn – school ready at 4? Children go to school far too early in this country – children made to sit in semi-structured classrooms at 4 – prefers Scandinavian model – learning through play and everyday life skills. Too much too soon? Suggesting that this is damaging in some way. Disapproval of learning practices in UK education system.

Jill – happy with getting children ready for school is the ethos of the setting. Heard about problems with toilet training, behaviours and well-being. Getting more children not toilet trained as early. Most ready for school except summer borns. Pressure on parents for children to go at the right time and not delay entry. School readiness is about getting the well-being right.

Sam – uncertainty of meaning of school readiness - school readiness shouldn't be jumped on – need to be emotionally secure not write their name – big building, new people.

Dawn's quote about the Scandinavian model in here.

Our practice of sending children to school at 4 is criticised by all of the practitioners and goes against the main theme of early years policy – getting children ready for school. There is an awareness that children are arriving at pre-school less prepared than before (including well-being) but this could be because pre-schools now routinely take 2 year olds. Awareness of the summer born issues and the pressures of not delaying school entry. We have to ask whether it is indeed too much too soon and wonder whether the Scandinavian model results in higher levels of well-being.

Supporting Learning in the Home

Dawn – difficult to support learning in the home – parents job. Against EYFS!

Jill – re home learning – some confusion over this. Don't want parents doing sit down formal yet the setting sends home worksheets for children who are ready. Jill believer in more socially based learning in the home e.g. outings as a family.

Jill's comment about what learning looks like at home in here.

The practice of working with parents to support learning at home has mixed support. Jill here expresses what she believes to be the best way but is contradicted by the sending home of planning sheets and worksheets for children. This introduces this tension between what practitioners believe in and what policy demands.

Family Life

Dawn – extended siblings, complicated family structures – sibling rivalry = emotional and social well-being

Jill – allowed to have self-esteem at home. Secure family, secure base.

Jill – parents, who is in the family, siblings. Reconstituted families – children don't understand. Two sets of rules.

Jill – abuse, neglect, verbal putting down by family and friends

Jill – attention from parents not about money – wealthy backgrounds and low levels of well-being because of a lack of attention.

Jill – snow day story – not being pushed around – pressures of daily life on child well-being.

Sam – it's about how they are treated, what support they've got at home

Sam – family background – what's available – food, water, security, comfort, safe house, everything they need, love, emotional support. Given opportunities in the wider world – go to pre-school, meet people, socialise, going to places, social skills = feeling secure

Jill's comment about wealthy families in here.

There is a strong focus on practices in the home concerning the well-being of children. Home life comes up as the strongest influencing factor. Parents are criticised for the way they live their lives as well as their lack of knowledge e.g. non-nuclear structures.. Key practices that promote well-being in the home are providing a secure base, adequate basic resources, attention from parents, love and support from family and having opportunities to

