

High satisfaction among parents using Children's Centres

Research carried out on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) reveals there is very high satisfaction among parents using Children's Centres, and the services result in a wide range of benefits to both the parents and their children.

The Research challenge

Children's Centres have been set up under the banner of Sure Start to provide children under five years old and their families with holistic, integrated services and information and access to help from multi-disciplinary teams of professionals.

The Centres provide a range of services including good quality early learning combined with full day care for children, child and family health services, antenatal services, family support services and links with organisations such as Job Centre Plus.

There are approximately 800 Children's Centres in England which are typically located in disadvantaged areas.



The client wanted to carry out some benchmark research to understand more about the views of parents using Children's Centres and in particular to establish:

- how they found out about their local Children's Centre
- which services most attracted them to the centre
- which services they had used in the last 12 months
- levels of satisfaction with services used;
- benefits of using the centre to both parents and children
- overall satisfaction with the Children's Centre

- the likelihood of recommending the Children's Centre to friends
- what marketing activity would raise awareness of the Children's Centre

Why GfK NOP

GfK NOP was awarded the contract because of:

- the approach to the study
- cost
- timetable
- expertise in this area and ability to ensure a quality product.

What we did

The sample was drawn from a database of Children's Centres held by the client. It was stratified by key sample variables including the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). A random sample of 42 Children's Centres was drawn.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the client, taking care to ensure questions were clear and straightforward, as lower literacy levels are often associated with disadvantaged areas.

Feedback from a Children's Centre

The DfES received a letter from a manager at one of the Children's Centres who participated in the research praising the GfK NOP interviewer who 'did a great job in facilitating the questionnaire process'

A small pilot survey was carried out in three Children's Centres to test the questionnaire wording and length, as well as the recruitment and survey method.

The research was carried out on-site at Children's Centres via face-to-face interviewing using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) software. Footfall counts were also collected, split down by gender, to provide an estimate of typical visitor numbers per day.

Survey deliverables included an SPSS data file, technical report, verbatim comments and a spreadsheet of Children's Centre characteristics.



Benefits

The research provided the client with a much greater understanding of the reasons for using, frequency of use and levels of satisfaction with, Children's Centres across the country. It also gave them a better understanding of how best to raise awareness of Children's Centres.

Testimonials from the DfES project team

"Thanks again to you and the rest of your team for all your hard work on the project, we have been really pleased with how it has gone"

Overview of organisations

The Department for Education and Skills, which is now the Department for Children, Schools and Families leads work across Government to ensure that all children and young people:

- stay healthy and safe

- secure an excellent education and the highest possible standards of achievement
- enjoy their childhood
- make a positive contribution to society and the economy
- have lives full of opportunity, free from the effects of poverty

GfK NOP Social Research is a leading primary research partner to public sector organisations in the UK providing both quantitative and qualitative research services to all major government departments as well as non-governmental organisations. We frequently work in partnership with a range of academic institutions and consultancies to supply outputs that incorporate specialist sector knowledge and recommendations. We combine first class research experience and public policy knowledge to deliver robust data that is used to inform policy development, spending decisions and communication strategies. ■

The survey findings are available on the DfES website.

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