



# **Accessing Childcare Training and Careers: Including Black and Minority Ethnic Groups into the Childcare Workforce Executive Summary**

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The Pre-school Learning Alliance is committed to the idea and ideal of family learning. Its founding principle is that parental involvement in pre-schools is positive for both a child's and a parent's learning and development. The Alliance is a leader in the field of equal opportunities and a driving force in promoting the inclusion of marginalized groups in the childcare workforce and in communities, believing that pre-schools offer parents numerous opportunities to engage in training and access new careers. In light of the principles and objectives of the charity and the current Government's drives on inclusion- and workforce-related issues, the Alliance has commissioned research on including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups into childcare training and the childcare workforce.

Over the past five years, the charity has been offering parents the opportunity to access childcare training via the Getting Started course. Parents volunteering in pre-schools, parents that want to help their children learn through play and newly appointed unqualified workers in pre-school settings primarily constitute the course's target group. The course represents the first step in the progression route leading to the awards laid down in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's Framework for the CPP and DPP. An evaluation of the course between January and July 2003 illustrated that the vast majority of students accessing the Getting Started course were white females of British origin.

This project then represents the charity's objective of promoting childcare as a career option for parents from BME groups. It hopes to discover the specific support structures that are needed to include these groups into childcare careers and redress the balance between parents from the dominant ethnic group and those from other ethnic backgrounds in childcare training and the childcare workforce. This appears all the more relevant given that a significant percentage of children (10%) are from black and ethnic minority communities and that these groups constitute a significant number (56%) of those that live in the 44 most disadvantaged local authorities.<sup>1</sup> This project offers further

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<sup>1</sup> Daycare Trust (2000) *Ensuring Equality* London: Daycare Trust.

evidence in support of the Government strategy of ensuring the recruitment of ethnic minorities, men, people with disabilities and people aged 40 or over into the childcare workforce.

The aims of this research are threefold: (1) to discover the level of demand among BME groups for language, literacy and numeracy skills, childcare training and childcare careers; (2) to identify the factors that impact on the Getting Started students from BME groups that do not move on to further childcare training courses or into the childcare workforce; and (3) to offer recommendations regarding the measures that must be implemented to enable greater access to training and careers in childcare for BME parents.

This research draws on the findings from the 2003 Getting Started Evaluation Report, which discovered that the vast majority of Getting Started students had White British origins and very few of the BME students accessed further training and/or entered into the childcare workforce. By eliciting information from BME parents that had accessed the Getting Started course, this report hopes to ascertain what factors impact on BME parents gaining further training and beginning childcare careers.

A review of the existing literature on the Getting Started course and on similar courses offered by other educational providers (such as Sure Start local programmes) was initially undertaken. The empirical data was collected during visits to three groups (Leicester, Oldham and Newham) and the Pre-school Learning Alliance's Regional Office in London. In order to elicit data-rich responses from the participants a qualitative research method was selected entailing focus group interviews with parents (usually former Getting Started students), tutors, pre-school staff and staff at the Alliance's Regional Office in London. Focus groups were undertaken at each of these venues, field notes from which are located in the appendices. The interview schedule was developed in the initial stages of the research design with the following suggested areas for exploration: training, language support, leaflets/materials in other languages, employment, language, literacy and numeracy skills, problems associated with training and entering the childcare workforce, and what parents wanted. Other themes (such as funding issues and bureaucracy) emerged during the research gathering stage and gained increasing importance as the analysis progressed. Additionally, demographic features appeared progressively more relevant and significantly affected the findings; this was further confirmed by the interviews at the London Region.

Interestingly, the pre-schools that participated in this research did not experience some of perceived problems often conceived as impacting on BME access to training and employment. Many of the women that participated in the project had pushed themselves forward and were very self-motivated; they were determined to help other mothers to do the same. Moreover, factors impacting on inclusion initiatives vary in different contexts; this was first discovered during the Oldham visit and was further confirmed in Newham and Leicester.

Below is a summary of the key findings that emerged from the research:

- Demand: There is greater demand for childcare training and careers in deprived areas than availability.
- Fusion of Formal and Informal Childcare Provision: BME parents are increasingly accessing formal childcare settings and this research suggests that their inclusion has resulted in significant alterations to formal childcare settings with regards to how these formal settings operate. This is primarily occurring via the integration of informal networks/structures into formal childcare settings.
- Multiplicity of Roles: The take-up of training opportunities among BME (and other) groups is significantly impeded by shortages in the childcare workforce as well as by the multiple roles that pre-school workers perform.
- Language Support and Language, Literacy and Numeracy Needs: The research suggests that the lack of language support was related to both the level of demand from diverse BME groups for childcare training and the multiplicity of roles that many pre-school workers and tutors perform. Furthermore, a critical finding from this research indicates that there is a need for more language, literacy and numeracy training. (This research confirms the DfES's own findings with regards to developing *Skills for life*.)
- CRB Checks and Bureaucracy: CRB checks and bureaucracy impact on BME parents, particularly influencing their decision to locate and actively pursue childcare training placements and employment. (This invariably also impacts directly on the Government's workforce initiative.)
- Funding: The research findings suggest that the lack of funding (particularly long-term sustainable funding) and the complexity involved in securing funding impact on BME groups' ability to access further training and/or enter into the childcare workforce.
- Context Specific Inclusion Targets: The local context, primarily demographic factors and funding issues, impacts directly on the successful meeting of inclusion targets.

As a result of the data analysis and the key findings noted above, the following represent our preliminary recommendations:

- Funding: The discrepancy between the level of demand for childcare training among BME (and other marginalized) groups and the availability of training courses, especially in areas of deprivation, necessitates an overview of the current funding situation. This report suggests that if BME groups are to effectively access childcare training and eventually enter into the childcare workforce core allocated funding should be more readily available. Long-term, allocated and sustainable funding would guarantee that the required number of childcare
- workers are eventually incorporated into the childcare workforce as well as ensure that the childcare workforce is representative of the society that it serves.
- Staff Development: Pre-school workers perform a multiplicity of functions in their daily working lives (in part because of a lack of childcare workers). This invariably impacts on their ability to effectively support parents that would like to access childcare training and embark on a new career or enter the workforce for the first time. In order for staff at pre-schools to facilitate BME groups' access to

childcare training, pre-schools should be able to provide on-site childcare training for BME parents (with extra support measures, such as free use of childcare facilities for those accessing training, language support). Additionally, given the short-term nature of funding, pre-school managers should be trained in making funding bids. This would make the process of applying for funding less time-consuming and daunting.

- Childcare Courses: Childcare courses offered by the Alliance and other educational providers should include a 50% embedded language, literacy and numeracy component. This would also connect with the Government's *Skills for life* initiative. Additionally, childcare courses should offer language support for BME groups as standard. This necessitates that childcare tutors are able via extra language support to successfully support BME parents accessing childcare training as well as the production of resources in languages other than English. There is also scope for turning all childcare training courses into qualification-centred courses; indeed, many of the BME parents interviewed here suggested that they would prefer to opt for a qualification-centred course rather than a non-qualification-centred one.
- Tracking the Students' Progression: Numerous problems appeared during the course of conducting this research with regards to tracking the students' learning progression and their inclusion into the childcare workforce. Tracking the students' progression appeared to be connected with the forms (evaluation, monitoring, funding) that students had to complete during the course of accessing training. It is advisable that these forms be simplified as well as available in other languages.
- Co-operation between Educational Providers and with Government Agencies: Increased co-operation between educational providers and with Government agencies would no doubt facilitate tracking students' progression through childcare training and give a clearer picture of the number of people (from BME groups and other groups) accessing childcare training and entering the childcare workforce. It would also ensure that the childcare training courses offered by numerous agencies are similar in nature and standing.
- Redefinition of Inclusion Targets: Given that inclusion targets are impacted upon by the more local factors – not least the demographic composition of the areas served – inclusion targets should be context sensitive rather than generic.