

8 Childcare for Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

8.1 Introduction

National research about childcare needs for the black and minority ethnic population (BME) generally focuses on inner city areas with large BME communities. As the profile of BME communities in Swindon differs to those considered in national research, it is reasonable to assume that the childcare needs of the BME population in Swindon will not necessarily be the same.

The BME population in Swindon is 4.8% of the total population (2001 census) compared to 9.1% nationally. In 2007 it was estimated that this population had grown to 11.1%. This is lower than the national average in 2007 of 15.2% but higher than the South West average of 7.3%. School census data shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of school aged children from BME families in recent years. For the purpose of this summary document, BME will include any response where the parent has identified themselves as not white British, including white Irish or white Other, Black, Asian or any other ethnic group. A more detailed breakdown by ethnicity is available on request.

This analysis aims to gain a more in depth understanding specific to Swindon of any similarities or differences in the childcare needs between the BME population and the white British population which need to be accommodated in the Childcare Sufficiency action plan.

8.2 The 2008 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

At the point of the 2008 childcare sufficiency assessment 73 parents who were not White British responded to the consultation. This provided information to support some key development areas which is summarised below but it was not a large sample:

- Parents who were not White British were more likely to be working full time than part time (30% compared to 21%)
- Awareness of tax credits was significantly lower in families that were not White British (55% compared to 75%)
- Awareness of the Family Information Service was significantly lower in families that were not White British (67% compared to 78%)

8.3 Increasing the number of responses from BME families

The consultation questionnaire for the 2011 childcare sufficiency assessment was distributed to parents via preschool, nurseries, childminders, schools and Children's Centres. This differed from the 2008 assessment when consultation with parents of school aged children was carried out in different ways in different school clusters. By using the same questionnaire for all families in 2011 a higher number of responses (177 in total) was identified from BME parents which is a statistically valid sample. This included

- 67 responses from parents who described themselves as White Irish or White Other
- 110 responses from parents who described themselves as Black, Asian or any other ethnic group.

8.4 Parent feedback and comments

Parent comments about childcare usage included:

- I have used both a childminder and group care. Both were a positive experience for my daughter but having said that I feel she progressed more in group care
- In our opinion it is the parents that can provide their children with the best childcare

Parent comments about childcare barriers included:

- Why is it so expensive?
- The standards I have seen so far in general aren't high enough
- Providing childcare for three children at group care is tricky

Parent comments about work included:

- I work within school hours
- I don't work locally so I need a nursery that opens before 8am

In many responses to the consultation, barriers are identified but there is no significant difference between the white British population and the BME population. For example:

- Family size. Having a large family of three or more children means that childcare is significantly harder to find for all parents (13% for white British and 11% for BME)
- Cost is a barrier to using childcare (33% for white British and 37% for BME)
- Availability of childcare is a barrier (10% for white British and 14% for BME)

Significant differences in childcare needs between the white British population and the BME population are:

- Awareness of tax credits has not changed since 2008 and is still significantly lower than the White British population (76% for white British and 54% for BME)
- Awareness of the Family Information Service is lower than the white British population (58% for white British and 50% for BME)
- There is a strong preference for group childcare (48% for white British and 60% for BME)
- Preference for informal childcare with family and friends is significantly lower than the white British population (26% for white British and 16% for BME)

Significant differences in early education needs between the white British population and the BME population are:

- More parents from BME communities are likely to say that the reason they do not use their full entitlement is because they wish to use only one provider (7% for white British and 17% for BME)
- More parents from BME communities are likely to say that they are unable to find enough sessions (the percentage is even higher if excluding parents who are white but not British ie 9% for white British and 19% for BME excluding white other)
- More parents from BME communities are likely to say that they want five sessions of three hours (42% for white British and 54% for BME)

Parent comments about funded early education include:

- I am worried that we don't get a place for our son when he is three.
- There are not many availabilities for three year olds at a preschool in Swindon.

8.5 Recommendations

- Review current strategies for raising awareness in BME families about how to find childcare and sources of financial support
- Continue to learn more about the childcare needs of BME communities in Swindon and not rely on national research and guidance to make local decisions