



Working together to reach your goals

Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust Participation Group

Disability Participation Project 2007



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1. Introduction

The Bucks Play Association was commissioned by the multi agency Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust Participation Group to carry out a Disability Participation Project.

The aim of this pilot project was to gain the views of children and young people with disabilities or specific needs with regard to opportunities available to them and the ease with which they could be accessed.

This project was a key action within the Buckinghamshire Every Child Matters Participation Plan which is approved and funded through the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Trust. It was felt particularly important to engage with children and young people with disabilities as they are often excluded from having their views heard.

The project took place in settings located in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Worminghall from March to May 2007.

The project was supported by Theresa Doyle, Inclusion Officer, Early Years and Childcare Service, Buckinghamshire County Council with guidance from the Participation Group.

This report was produced by staff from Commissioning and Business Improvement, Children and Young People's Services, Buckinghamshire County Council and by The Bucks Play Association.

2. Project Overview

The project took issues that had previously been identified as being important to children and young people with disabilities through the Needs Analysis undertaken for the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), 2006-2009.

These issues are:

- Wider range of extra curricular activities.
- Better access to services, including specialist transport.
- More education/awareness about disability.
- More help for parents, carers and siblings.
- More outings for kids.
- More respite care.
- More mixing of children and young people with minor disabilities in regular schools.

Quite often, when adults meet with children and young people in order to involve them in participatory projects, it is the adult(s) who decide the topic or issue for discussion, based on what they feel is important to children and young people.

This project differs in that the participation is about moving forward with the above objectives which were identified by children and young people with disabilities, their parents and carers and those supporting them as being important issues.

A range of activities were designed which would enable the children and young people to express their views on services currently accessible to them, whether these services met their needs and what other facilities they would like to have.

The activities were designed to cover a wide age and ability range and assist those with communication difficulties to express their views as easily as possible.

The Disability Participation Project visited the Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe Areas as part of Phase One of this work. Phase Two included the Chiltern and South Bucks Areas.

The project worker attended an initial planning visit with the nominated disability group for Chiltern and South Bucks area. It was discovered early on that the group had already planned a programme of activities for the term. If the Disability Participation Project went ahead it would take over the programme and therefore interrupt the group's ready made plans.

It is important that this Disability Participation Project involves children and young people in a meaningful way. The nominated disability group operate from a large hall and following an identification of need assessment it was clear that the environment was not entirely suitable for all children and young people in terms of access and exploring the project themes. It is important that the working environment is enabling, inclusive and accessible. This is what Phase Two aims to work towards.

Phase One of the project is complete. As a result of the above Phase Two is planned for 2008/09 subject to appropriate resources being available.

Phase One of the Project identified five groups, which provide services for children and young people with specific needs and these were visited on at least two separate occasions to involve as many children and young people in the project as possible.

The groups that took part were:

1. Desborough Play Den, High Wycombe.
2. Let's Play Together, Aylesbury.
3. Spectrum Club, Aylesbury.
4. Spectrum Club, High Wycombe.
5. Thomley Activity Centre, Worminghall.

3. Method

The following methods were used to obtain views from children and young people taking part:

Activity 1 - Picture chart and sticker exercise

- More outings for kids
(Corresponds with CYPP, Enjoy and Achieve LP11)
- Wider range of extra curricular activities
(Corresponds with CYPP, Enjoy and Achieve LP2)

Materials

- A2 sheets of paper (flip chart sheets) with words and pictures of approx 20+ activities and space to add new activities not covered in the chart.
- Colourful stickers.
- Colouring pencils and pens to add new illustrations of activity pictures.

Method

Children and young people were asked what they like doing with their friends after school, at weekends and in the holidays. They expressed their preference by fixing a sticker alongside the picture activity.

Activity 2 – Transport Picture Form

- Better access to services, including specialist transport.

Materials

A4 sheet with pictures of different modes of transport and questions to determine how children and young people with disabilities travel and what their preferred method of transport is.

Method

Children and young people were asked to complete the Transport Picture Form with support from an adult if required. They were able to draw or point or communicate verbally or non verbally what their experiences with transport are.

Activity 3 – Hot Air Balloon

- More education/awareness about disability.

Materials

A2 Sheet of paper with a large picture of a hot air balloon. This balloon is large enough to write on. Pack of Flipchart Markers.

Method

The balloon represents children and young people making everyone aware about disability. The issues they discussed and contributed to the writing on the balloon focused on:

1. Who needs to be on board?
2. What needs to be in place for education on disability to take off?
3. What is holding us back from sharing this information?
4. What will really make it fly? (Factors that will really make the awareness raising happen).
5. What might blow the balloon off course? (Representing the winds that could buffet the balloon about – factors that may be problematic for education/awareness raising regarding disability).

Activity 4 – Questionnaire for parents/carers

- More help for parents, carers and siblings.

Materials

Questionnaire Form.

Method

The questionnaire focused on questions relating to support the groups receive from other organisations. The services they would like to be able to access. Do they receive short break/respite care? How they feel current services could be improved.

Note:

Although Activity 3 is described above, it was in fact not used. The Hot Air Balloon Activity is designed for a more lengthy and detailed discussion verbally or non verbally. The activity was not used in Phase One because it was not suitable for the individual children the project worked with. It is hoped the activity will be introduced in Phase two of the project. As a technique it can generate a lot of responses, both positive and negative.

Activity 5 – Play in and out of school

- More mixing of children and young people with minor disabilities in regular schools.
- More education/awareness about disability.

Materials

Laminated figures representing children, young people, friends at school, friends in their neighbourhood and siblings. Boxes representing different locations e.g. Home, School and Playground.

Method

The children and young people selected a figure to represent themselves, they were asked where they play when they are out of school and who they play with. The next stage in the activity is about children and young people identifying where they would actually like to play if they were given the choice and who they would like to play with given the choice. This is progressed further in a conversation with the child about their school and their feelings about being at that particular school.

To find out from the child:

- 1) Who they play with out of school hours.
- 2) Where they play.
- 3) Where they attend school.
- 4) If they would prefer to attend the same school as their friends.

4. Evaluation

The views of 36 children and young people varying in age from 5 years to 24 years were collected.

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Number Participating</u>
Asian/Black British – Caribbean	3
Black or Black British – African	1
Chinese	1
Mixed White & Asian	1
Mixed White & Black African	1
Mixed any other background	2
White British	24
Not known / Not Provided	1
Any other	2

<u>Gender</u>	
Female	16
Male	20

<u>Age (years)</u>	<u>Number Participating</u>
5	1
6	2
7	4
8	3
9	1
10	6
11	0
12	7
13	4
14	2
15	2
16	0
17	2
18	0
19	0
20	0
21	1
22	0
23	0
24	1

<u>Declared Disability</u>			
ADHD	3	Visual Impairment	1
Aspergers	11	Hearing Impairment	5
Autism	15	Other Disability	17

From these views, a number of key findings have been identified which give some very valuable information relating to disability priorities in the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Plan. These are broken down under each Activity.

Other children and young people were approached and invited to take part, but did not want to do so. This was particularly so for the Spectrum Clubs, which is a club for children and young people with either Aspergers or Autism, and meant there were difficulties in building rapport as many of the members were not comfortable with the idea of interacting with someone they did not know.

Some response forms from the younger age group are incomplete, as the children's specific needs made them tire easily or lose interest. Children and young people were encouraged to answer those questions they could and were not put under any pressure to continue with the activities if they did not want to do so. Some children and young people were unable to understand the concepts around making a choice or having different options.

Some observations were undertaken on children and young people who were unable to communicate verbally, but time constraints limited the number completed. The observations relate to individual children and young people, but are representative of observed behaviour for a number of children and young people in the room.

In addition, there were eight questionnaires completed by parent/carers. This was a disappointing number, but many parent/carers did not have the time to stay (either after dropping their children off or collecting them) in order to complete the forms and were not willing to take them away and return them at a later date.

5. **Key Findings**

Activity One

This asked what mode of transport was used:

- a) to travel to school and back;
- b) outside of school.

and whether this was an enjoyable experience.

Key findings

- The results showed that the majority travelled by car both to school and for all other outings and that this was the easiest and most enjoyable for them.
- The reasons given for disliking travelling by car and school buses related to the journey being “too noisy” and therefore upsetting. This was particularly so for those children and young people in the autistic spectrum.
- Some young people felt uneasy about travelling alone on public transport for fear of being victimised or harassed.

Full findings can be found in Appendix One.

Activity Two

Activity Two looked at various extra curricular activities, hobbies and interests.

Key findings

- Children and young people in the 5 – 12 age range undertook a wide range of activities, including a number of sports or exercise related interests.
- Approximately 93% of the 5 – 12 year olds listed bike riding and swimming as activities they currently undertake.
- This dropped to 60% for cycling and 40% for swimming in the 12+ age range.
- Statistics for most sporting activities fell significantly in the older age group.
- This result may merely reflect the changing interests as adolescence is reached.
- Very few identified activities that they would wish to take part in but were not able to.
- “Parental Concern” was the main reason given in the 5-12 age range and would indicate fears that some activities were considered “too dangerous” or “risky” for the child to cope with.
- Responses from the 20+ age group clearly indicated a wish for more opportunity to socialise with their friends and have the opportunity to go to pubs and nightclubs etc.
- The difficulties encountered in spending time with their friends fell mainly into two areas:

- Educational establishments attended were not local and this made it difficult for friends to visit or for there to be a suitable place to meet up. Lack of public transport also limited the ability to socialise.
- Fear of victimisation and not being accepted by others encountered on a night out, particularly in pubs etc.

Full findings can be found in Appendix Two.

Activity 3

This activity asked the children and young people:

- How they spent their time after school?
- Who they spent this time with?
- Whether they were happy with the choices available to them?
- Whether they had friends outside of their school friends?
- Which schools they attended or would like to attend?

Key findings

The results showed that:

- The majority spent their time at home, playing with siblings or spending time alone. This is particularly the case for those over the age of 12. Feedback indicated that this was mostly through choice and could be indicative of behaviour traits for some children and young people with specific needs.
- The 5 – 12 year range also stated they would prefer to play outside in parks/playgrounds with their friends.
- Younger children found it more difficult to discuss preferences for where they went to school and who they spent time with, as they had no wide experiences to draw on or base an opinion.
- The majority seemed happy with the schools attended and spent time with friends from these schools both at school and outside of school hours (where possible).
- The majority of the 5 – 12 year range already attended mainstream schools and felt well included.
- Views from the 12+ age group reflected those of the younger age group.
- However, the young people over 18 felt more isolated, as further education tended to be at special needs colleges and they did not have the same level of inclusion as their younger counterparts and lost contact with some of their mainstream friends.

Full findings can be found in Appendix Three.

Parent/Carer Questionnaire

Parents/carers were asked to complete a questionnaire.

Key findings

The results of the questionnaire highlighted:

- The need for improved support to families and for information to be made more easily and readily available.
- Parents felt they had to search for information and fight for their child's needs to be met.
- No family received additional help at home, with 37.5% indicating they were happy with the situation.
- Only one family had access to short breaks, with this being arranged through the RAF Welfare Agency (SSAFA). No assistance was received via the local authority or social care.
- Two families had access to informal short breaks through assistance from other family members when the child was younger.
- One child has now been placed in residential care and is home on alternate weekends.
- It was felt there should be more opportunities to mix with mainstream children and young people and for mainstream children and young people to be able to understand their child's specific needs – with this being done on their child's terms, rather than their child having to adapt to mainstream provision.

Full findings can be found in Appendix Four.

6. Conclusion

This project has provided some valuable views from children and young people with disabilities and from their parents and carers. This has been achieved by using a variety of creative and enjoyable methods.

These views build on previous participatory work and have involved a range of children and young people in terms of their age, disability and geographic area.

The information obtained will be used to inform the 2007/08 refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Subject to funding further participation work with disabled children and young people is planned. This will build on what has been learnt during this pilot project.

Any future work will take the geographic areas that were not able to be covered in this pilot as priorities. These are Chiltern and South Bucks.

Thanks go to all the children, young people, their parents and carers who took the time to take part and give their views.

7. **Appendices**

Appendix One - Parent / Carer Questionnaire

Appendix Two - Project Statistics:

- i) School type children attend
- ii) Friends and sibling school type
- iii) Preferred school type

Appendix Three - Glossary of Terms

Appendix One

PARTICIPATION PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire forms part of a survey being carried out to gain the views of children with specific needs in relation to play services, which they have access to or would like to have access to. The aim of the questionnaire is to compile information on the levels of support available to parents/carers. Individuals will not be identified and the information will not be used for any other purpose.

1) Are you the child(ren)'s main carer? YES / NO
Relationship to Child:

2) Do you receive additional help at home for your child? YES / NO
If the answer is No, please answer questions 7, 8, 9 & 10

3) What assistance do you receive?

Please give details:

4) Are you happy with the level of support provided? YES / NO

5) Does the assistance you receive meet your needs? YES / NO
If the answer is No, please answer question 6

6) How could this be improved?

Please give details:

7) Do you have access to respite care, as provided by Social Care for Children and Families? YES / NO

Please give details:

8) Are you able to have "Short Breaks" away from being the main carer for your child? YES / NO

Please give details – i.e. grandparent, other family member providing care; attendance at play schemes or other organised activities.

9) What (other) help would be of benefit to you/your child if it were available?

Please give details:

10) Any other comments you would like to make regarding the support available for you and your child?

Please give details:

Interviewed by:

Date:

Monitoring Information

Details of Child:

Age:

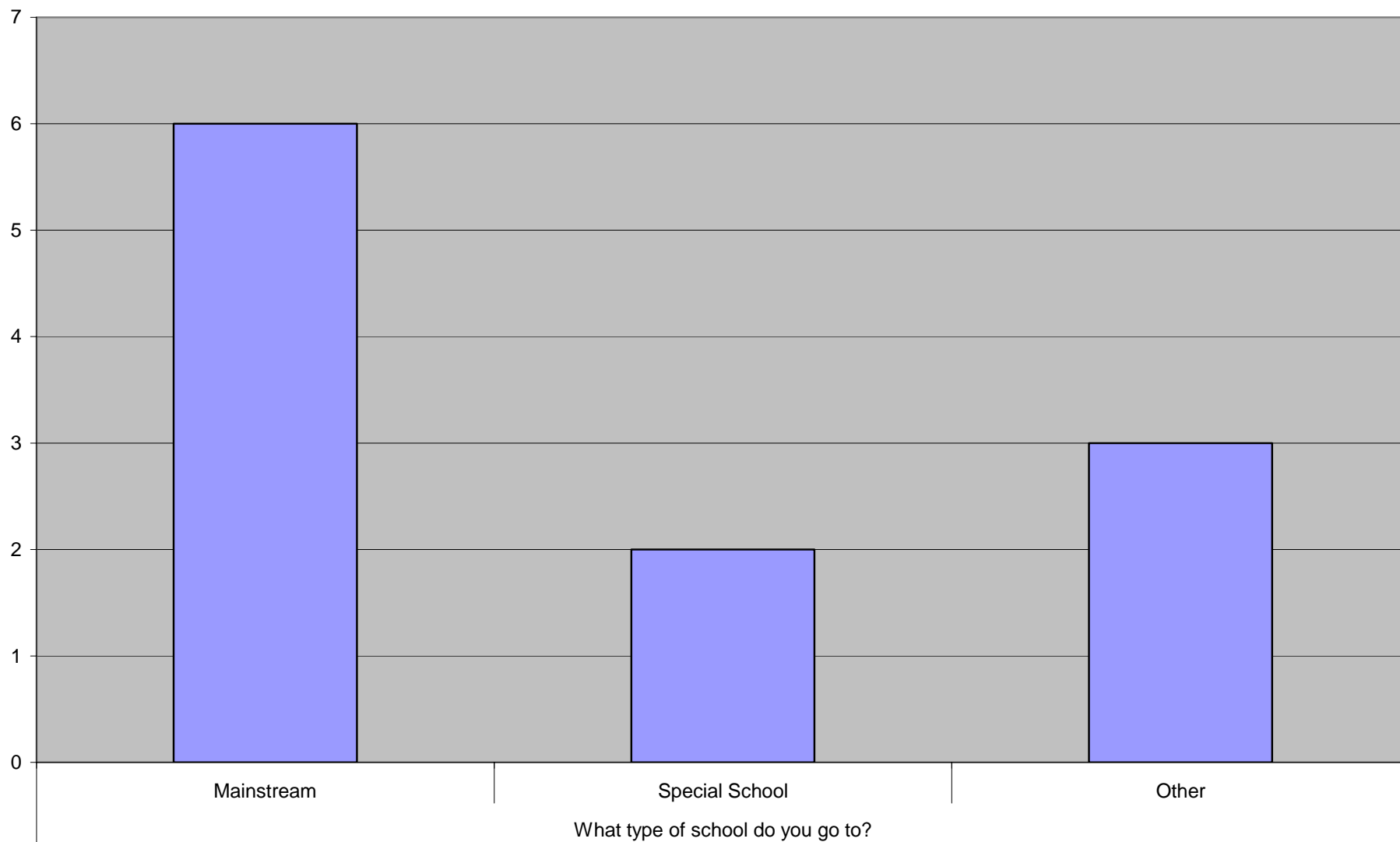
Level of Assistance needed: High Medium Low None

Specific Need		Comment (if applicable)
ADHD		
Aspergers		
Autism		
Cerebral Palsy		
Downs Syndrome		
Wheelchair user		
Visual Impairment		
Hearing Impairment		
Other: please state		

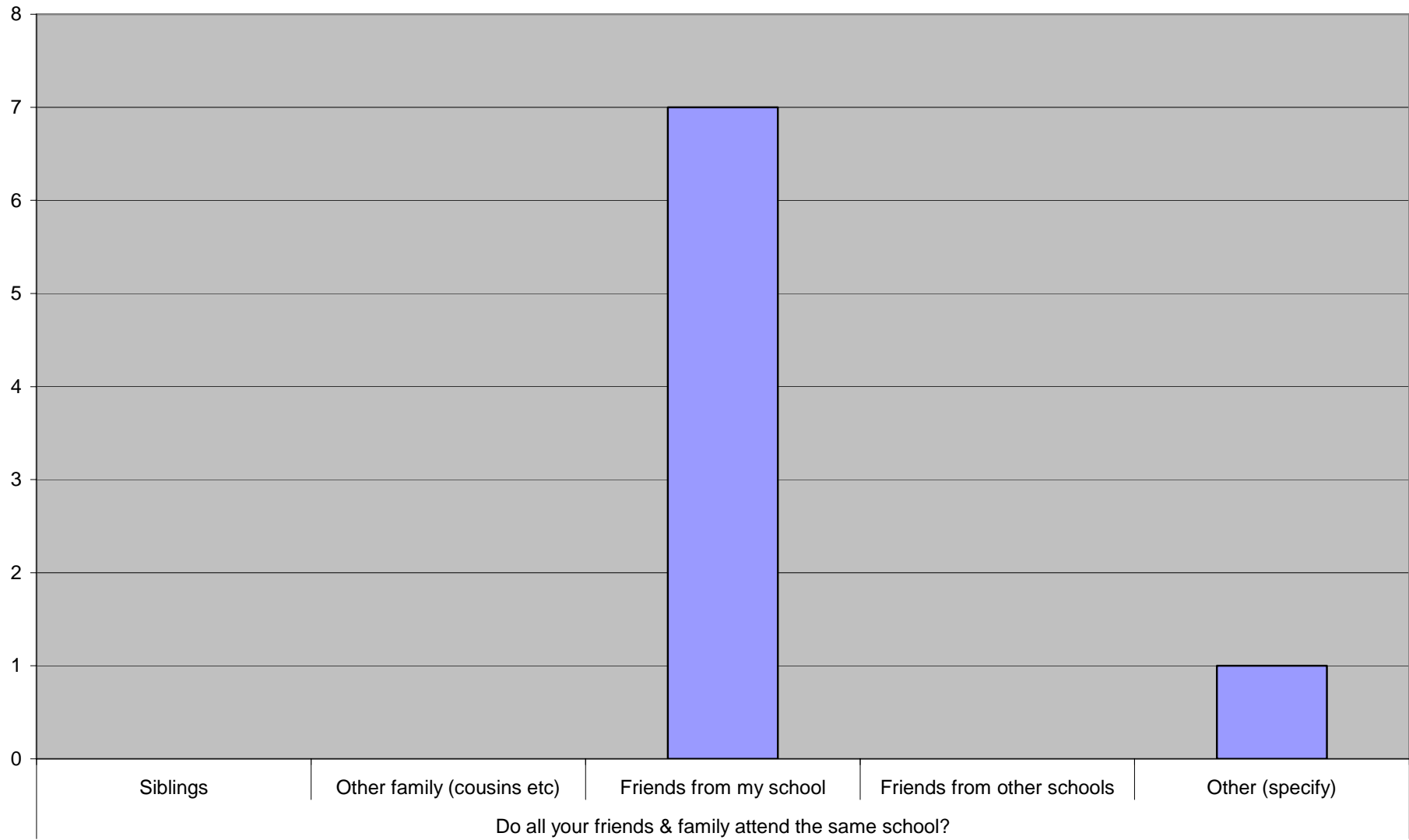
Ethnic Background

Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi		Asian/Black British – Caribbean	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani		Black or Black British – African	
Asian/Asian British - Other Asian/Asian British other Asian background		Black or Black British - Other Background	
Mixed - White & Asian		Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	
Mixed - White & Black African		Mixed - any other background	
Chinese		White - British	
White - Irish		White - Other background	
Not Known/not provided		Any Other	

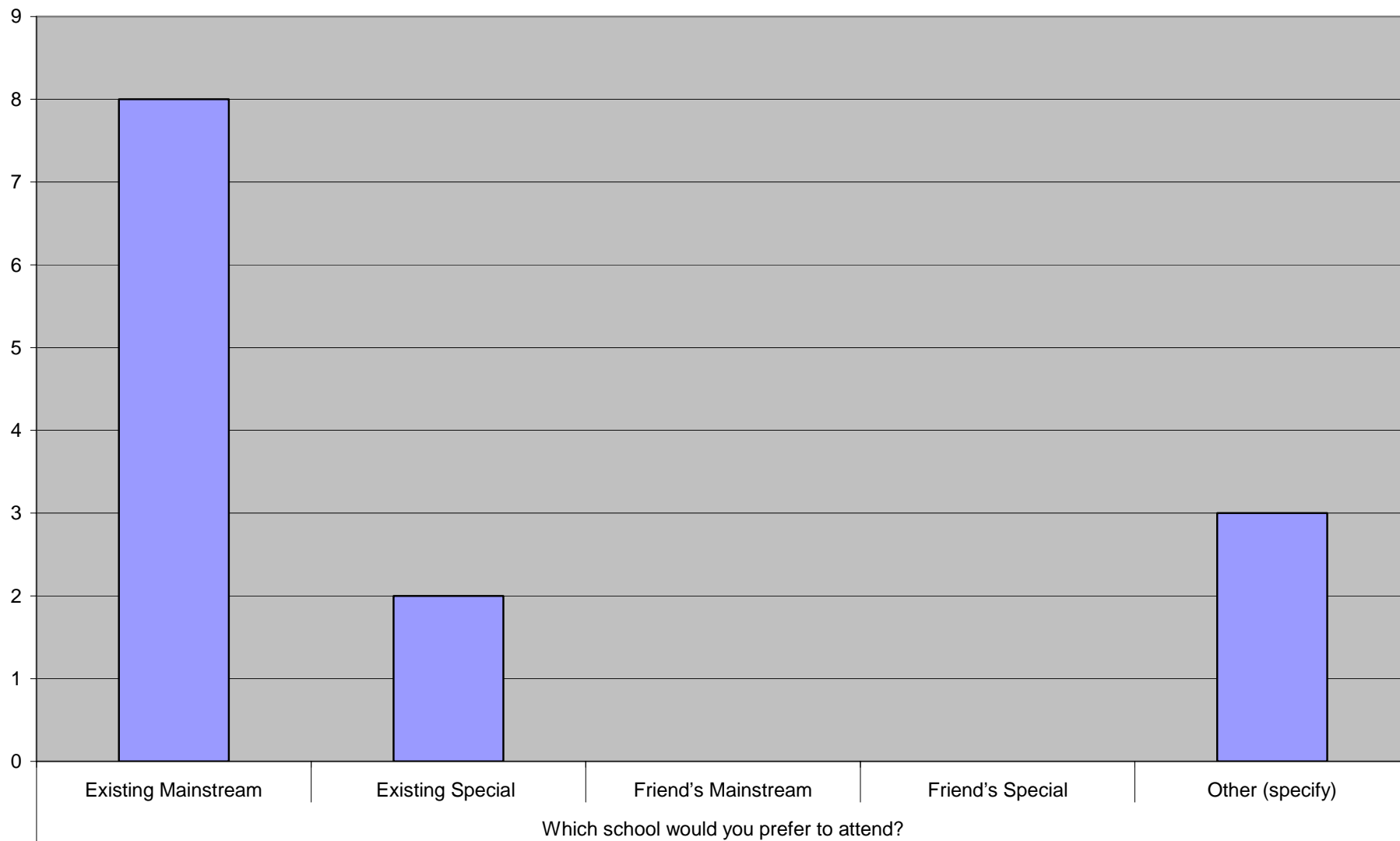
Appendix 2 (i) School type children attend



Appendix 2 (ii) - Friends and sibling school type



Appendix 2 (iii) - Preferred school type



Appendix Three - Glossary of Terms

Participation

'Participation is a term increasingly used by those working with children and young people to mean children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; it means involving children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of their community and the larger society in which they live.'

(Source; Introduction to Policy on Children's Participation – Save the Children)

Inclusion

'Inclusion means everyone having the right to choose to take a full part in all local services – and being equally welcomed and enabled to do so'

(Source: Kids associate Philip Douch – it Doesn't Just Happen)

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a person with a disability as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments and also hidden impairments. In the DDA 'substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. 'Long-term' means has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.

Other important background information to support this project work.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 23 states that children have the right to special care and education to help them develop and lead a full life if they have a disability.

Article 12 says that we should encourage children to say what they think and be listened to by adults when decisions are made that affect them.

The Children Act 2004

Provides the legal framework for the programme of reform Every Child Matters (ECM) which sets out five outcomes which all services should work towards, They are:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being

Achievement of all these aims has to demonstrate improvement of services for all children and young people including those with a disability or specific need.