

Athlone Institute of Technology

Childcare Managers and Professional Views of the Health Service Executive Inspection
Process

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation and the research involved in it are entirely the work of the author. This work, or part of it, has not been submitted for a qualification to any other institute or university.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Abstract

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of the Health Service Executive (HSE) inspections of childcare from the perspective of childcare professionals. The study had three main objectives. Firstly, to investigate childcare professionals' experiences of HSE inspections (for example, the number of inspections, what the inspection involved, impact of inspection on their services). Secondly to investigate managers' and childcare professionals views and opinions on the inspection process (e.g. effectiveness, fairness, the extent to which it was it worthwhile). Thirdly to explore the childcare managers and professionals views on the changes to the HSE inspection process, including the publication of the reports online and also to investigate any changes they would like to see implemented. This topic was chosen due to the growing demands on childcare in Ireland today and also due to the limited research current available on this topic.

A qualitative method was used to gather data in the form of interviews. The research was exploratory and broad in nature and interviews were well suited to the character of this particular study.

The main findings of the study were as follows. According to the childcare managers and professionals from this study there is no standardisation when it comes to the inspection of childcare facilities. The inspector did not inspect the childcare facilities according to the Child Care Act 1991. The participants had no two inspections the same and could not know what the inspector would be looking for on each inspection. The participants also believe that the inspector is too reliant on coming up with recommendations which are not occurring to the Child Care Act 1991 regulations. The views of the childcare managers and childcare professionals was that the inspection process is unfair and that the inspector is not focused on the primary concern which is the care of the child. The participants believed that the inspector was focused more on the cleanliness and hygiene of the facilities instead of the level of care being provided to the children. All the participants in the study welcomed the publication of the HSE inspection reports online. They believed that the publication of the reports online will allow parents to make more informed decisions when they are choosing their child's childcare. Some of the changes that the childcare managers and professionals would like to see introduced is a standardised inspection process, so that all childcare facilities can be

inspected in the same way. Additionally the participants would like to see funding allocated to the childcare sector for the recruitment of additional staff. These additional staff would be employed to carry out the paperwork and assist when the HSE inspection is taking place.

Literature Review

Introduction

According to Fallon (2005) the traditional family unit, of the father as the main breadwinner and the mother as a full-time housewife and carer, is no longer the dominant model in Irish society. There is now a multiplicity of family models within our society, such as two parents who are both working; single parent families; remarried partners and step-parents (Fallon, 2005). Between 1999 and 2008, the number of women in full-time work in Ireland increased by 67.9% from 595,800 to 877,000 (Central Statistics Office Ireland, 2009). Suggesting that there is a high likelihood that in recent times children between the ages of birth and six years maybe regularly attending childcare facilities in Ireland has increased. A range of full-time and part-time childcare services have emerged over the past twenty five years to meet the growing demand of working parents (Donohoe and Gaynor, 2007). Figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showed that in 2008, 56% of three to olds were enrolled in either full time or part time childcare settings in Ireland (OECD, 2013). In Ireland, 46% of children under the age of 3 years attending some type of childcare services. In the past two decades what is now termed as Early Years sector, which includes crèches, pre-schools and other childcare settings that care for children from zero to six years, has increasingly grown and developed placing more and more demands on the regulatory system to ensure that adequate and satisfactory care is being provided.

The law in Ireland provides guidelines and procedures for the regulation and inspection of pre-school childcare services. Under the Child Care Act 1991 the Health Service Executive (HSE) is charged with ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pre-school children attending services (CitizensInformation, 2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the HSE inspections of childcare facilities from the perspective of childcare professionals. The author intended to investigate childcare professionals' experiences of HSE inspections (e.g., the number of inspections, what the inspection involved, impact of inspection on their services) and to investigate the views and opinions of

childcare professional about the inspection process (e.g. effectiveness, fairness, extent to which they believe it was worthwhile)). The information was gathered through interviews conducted with childcare professionals from an array of childcare facilities. These topics were chosen for investigation due to the limited amount of information currently available due to lack of research to date carried out from the perspective of the childcare professional. With the growth of childcare in Ireland there is increasing need to investigate that the provided childcare service is being inspected appropriately occurring to the legal regulations and guidelines.

Child Care Act 1991

The Child Care Act 1991 is a crucial piece of legislation in relation to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and it created a national context within which the ECEC could regulate and manage standards across all childcare services. (Hayes and Kernan, 2008). It is under the Child Care Act 1991 as amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 that the Child and Family Agency (CFA)/Health Service Executive (HSE) is charged with ensuring that all health, safety and welfare standard of pre-school children attending such services are met, and allowing for the inspection of pre-school childcare services to ensure all such standards are being adhered to. Pre-school providers are required to notify the Child and Family Agency/HSE that they are providing a childcare service. Pre-school childcare services include pre-schools, play-groups, day nurseries, crèches, child-minders or similar services catering for pre-school children. Pre-school children in Ireland are defined by law as children under 6 years of age, who are not attending a national school. Specific information about the regulation of pre-school services is set out in the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006. The Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 are made under Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991 and prescribe the measures which must be in place to meet the requirements of the Act. The regulations include an explanatory guide to the specific requirements and procedures for notification to the Child and Family Agency/HSE that a pre-school service is being provided and additionally guidelines for inspections, which offers directions and suggestions for good practice in relation to the relevant health, safety and welfare areas for pre-school children.

The Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996

In 1996, the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations were introduced under Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991. The Regulations cover the various types of pre-school provision catering for children under six years who are not attending school. The Regulations focus predominantly on the childcare premises' structure, equipment and curriculum, but do not regulate quality in terms of staff qualifications and/or experience. They cover areas such as: Development of Child; First-aid; Adult/child Ratios; Class Sizes; Premises and Facilities; Equipment and Materials; Food; Safety Measures; and Insurance (Department of Health, 1996). The regulation has been criticised heavily for their exclusion of staff training and qualifications of staff working in childcare settings (O' Kane, 2004).

The Purpose of Inspections

Inspections within pre-school childcare settings are based on the Child Care Act 1991, and are designed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children is maintained and the setting is just such a standard that it will promote the child's development. According to Willoughby (2007) the inspector considers the following major issues:

- How the children are being cared for and how their development and welfare is being promoted through child- centred practice.
- The suitability and safety of the premises.
- The standards of the premises in terms of space, heat, lighting, cleanliness, ventilation, and repair and maintenance.
- The suitability of the provider of the childcare service.
- The availability and suitability of toys and equipment

Publication of Inspection Reports

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has begun the process of publishing the retrospective Inspection Reports on Early Years Services. All new inspections conducted from the 1st July, 2013 will be published on the Pobal website upon completion. Pobal is a non-profit organisation with charitable status that manages a number of funding programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the European Union (EU). Through this process, the HSE is providing the public with open access information about their local pre-school services and has begun to standardise how the information is collected and reported. As well as providing the public with transparent and instructive information about pre-school inspections and settings (Willoughby, 2007), the process is aiding parents to make information judgements about their children's care.

Number of Inspectors and Gaps

The present (October 2013) cohort of pre-school inspectors totals 38 and includes 27 (Whole Time Equivalent) inspectors from a public health nursing background and 11 (Whole Time Equivalent) inspectors from other professional backgrounds including teaching, health education, social care; paediatric nursing; intellectual disability nursing and childcare (O' Kane, 2004). It's been suggested by O'Connell (2013) that in recent years a number of areas in the country have had no inspector or an inadequate number of inspectors. The HSE and the Child and Family Agency are in the process of recruiting 5 new inspectors, to cover gaps in Louth, Dublin South/East Wicklow, Cavan/Monaghan and Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan. In addition, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has received approval from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for additional funding for the new Child and Family Agency, so as to increase staffing numbers and provide for extra posts to strengthen the inspectorate, with parts of this funding being sourced from the Budget 2013 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2013).

Studies on Views of Professionals about the Inspection Process

So, far two surveys, in 2012 and 2013 have been conducted in Ireland on the views of childcare workers towards the inspection process (Early Childhood Ireland). Both of these surveys were conducted by Early Childhood Ireland, which represents and provides support for the various individuals who play a role in the development, delivery and oversight of early childhood care and education services in Ireland, by prioritising the interests of the children (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012). One of the surveys was conducted in June 2012 and aimed to get an understanding of the childcare professionals' experiences of the HSE inspections in their childcare facilities. Information was gathered from online surveys sent to members of Early Childhood Ireland. The survey was emailed to 4,245 members and was also put on Early Childhood Ireland Facebook and Twitter accounts (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012). However, the survey was only completed by 260 childcare professionals. The survey asked about how often inspections were conducted, how they were conducted and the respondents' opinions about them. Of the 260 respondents who replied, 75% of these were private childcare and education providers, with the remaining 25% came from community childcare and education settings. Over half (52%) of survey respondents operated sessional childcare settings (a pre-school service offering a planned programme to pre-school children for a total of not more than 3.5 hours per session), while 33% of respondents operated full time childcare settings. The remaining 15% came from various other settings (e.g. child-minders and sessional childcare services). The survey respondents were spread equally among the four HSE areas with 28% of survey respondents coming from HSE South and 22% of the remaining three HSE areas respectively (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012). The results of the survey are outlined below.

2012 Early Childhood Ireland Study: Advance Notice and Duration of Inspections

The survey investigated the timing and advance notice that providers obtained prior to an inspection. Almost ninety percent of respondents reported that they had an inspection within the previous 2 ½ years. Only 5% of services reported that they were informed of their inspection in advance. In terms of duration 39.5% reported that the inspection time lasted between an hour and a half and 3 hours, while the remainder of the sample reported that inspection duration times ranged from 30 minutes to 3 days (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012).

2012 Early Childhood Ireland Study: Inspection Process

The childcare providers were also asked for their reaction to the inspection process. When asked to describe the style of the inspection, 30% described it as “*thorough*” and 20% responded that they found the inspection style to be “*supportive*” and “*positive*”. Additionally 13% of providers remarked that it was an “*encouraging*” and “*helpful*” experience. Only 12% of the respondents reported that the style of inspection was “*negative*” but 37% of respondents claimed that it was “*nerve wracking*”. (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012).

2012 Early Childhood Ireland Study: Inspection Report

Providers were also asked about their views on the inspection report after the inspection had taken place. The most prevalent comment about the report was that childcare and education providers would like to see some positive feedback on childcare services, not just ticked boxes and negative comments.

Fifty percent of the respondents who had other inspections said the advice given was in line with the 2006 Child Care Regulations, but 24% said that they were given conflicting advice from these officials. These other inspections were from the Environmental Health Officer who checks the water, food safety and infection control measures and the Fire Safety Officer. The fire safety officer checks the fire equipment, smoke alarms and fire exits in the childcare facilities. They commented that the advice they were given was about Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) compliance regarding issues such as ratios, space availability, fire safety and planning issues.

The 2012 Early Childhood Ireland survey also questioned the length of time providers had to wait for their outcome report succeeding their inspection had been carried out. The majority of survey respondents reported that they received their report in less than a month (72%). However 5% reported that they were still waiting for their report and the longest waiting time was 6 months (2%).

2012 Early Childhood Ireland Study: Improvement to the Inspection Process

The survey also asked the childcare professionals how the inspection process could be improved. The majority of survey respondents replied that they would like to have been given an indication of when the inspection was taking place so that they could arrange for staff cover, and in some cases so they could prepare their paperwork (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012).

2012 Early Childhood Ireland Study: Results from 2012 Survey

A reoccurring theme throughout the survey responses was that childcare providers would like to receive more positive feedback and would like to see this reflected in the inspection report. Where participants were given positive feedback from the inspectors, they really appreciated it and appeared to have a positive view of the inspection experience (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012). Some also commented that they would prefer if the inspector would be more supportive and helpful rather than being negative and just ticking boxes. These participants suggested that the inspection report should be graded rather than just box ticking around compliance/non-compliance. Others stated that the inspection should be focussed more on interactions between the childcare staff and the children and the quality of care and commitment from the staff, as required by Siolta, (the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education), and Aistear (the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework). Providers reported that they would prefer less 'nit-picking' about health and safety requirements. Participants, who had services under different HSE areas, complained that there were inconsistencies between the different Health Service Executive areas. Qualifications of the HSE inspectors was also an issue raised by survey respondents who mentioned that they had to continue with their training and professional development even though their inspector did not have an early childcare background. In contrast to these comments, a number of participants stated that their last inspection had been a big improvement on the previous one, and that the inspectors had been much more friendly and helpful (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012).

Early Childhood Ireland: Findings from 2012 Survey

Some of the key findings from this survey were that although the inspection process is a “*nerve wracking*” experience it is also seen as necessary, and 39% of respondents found the style of inspection to be supportive and positive. Childcare providers stated that they would appreciate an indication of when the inspection was taking place so that they could arrange for staff cover in order to comply with adult and child ratios, and lessen the disruption to the running of their service on the day. The majority of comments indicate that they would prefer if there was scope for more positive feedback and explanation from the inspector both verbally during the inspection and in the returned inspection report. Some respondents felt that the inspection process needed to focus more on interactions and the quality of the service with regard to the children’s care and education, and less on health and safety components. Some participants who had spent a lot of time engaging with Siolta and Aistear felt that this was not recognised.

Early Childhood Ireland 2013 Survey on Effectiveness of Childcare Inspections

The second survey carried out by Early Childhood Ireland in 2013 focused on the effectiveness, transparencies and fair manner in which HSE inspections are carried out. This survey was an online survey sent to all Early Childhood Ireland members. In total 1,078 early childhood care and education services replied to the survey and a good geographic spread across the country was represented (Early Childhood Ireland, 2013). Of the 1,078 Early Childhood Care and Education services that were accounted for in the survey, 39.2% were fulltime services, 76% ran sessional services and 25% ran a part time service. This survey focused on the childcare professionals views on the inspection reports been published online for the first time.

The main theme of this survey was that HSE inspections reports are made public, as for the first time last year, 2013 HSE inspections are now available to read online. However, it was discovered that one in four Irish preschools and crèches have not been inspected in the last two years, according to Early Childhood Ireland so they could not comment on the reports been published online (Early Childhood Ireland, 2013). The results from the Early Childhood Ireland 2013 survey are published below.

Early Childhood Ireland 2013 Survey: Views on Reports been Published Online

The survey questioned the professionals' views of reports being published online. The views of the childcare professionals were that, many of the inspection reports being published online by the HSE are outdated and inconsistent. The percentage of inspections taking place over the last decade were reported as being 36% in the last year 2013. 39% in 2012; 16% had their inspection in 2011; 6% in 2010, and the remainder having theirs in 2009, 2008 and prior to that. Only 34% of respondents submitted a right of reply in their most recent inspection report. 75% say that if given the opportunity to submit their right to reply before their inspection report going online they would have. 82% of crèches and preschools surveyed welcome inspections going on line (Early Childhood Ireland, 2013).

Some of the comments from the respondents indicated that more early childhood care and education providers would welcome the reports going online if the inspection process and reporting system included a "a right to reply" including a follow up visit and the opportunity to have reports amended . The providers also reported that they would like if there was a distinction made in the reports between major and minor non-compliance issues. Results from the survey also indicated that there should be a greater focus in the reports on the quality of care and well-being of the children. The most prevalent theme of the comments was that the emphasis in the inspection process and reports should be more on the quality, care and well-being of the child, and not just on structural and safety issues of the childcare setting (Early Childhood Ireland, 2013).

Exposé in the Media

The Irish independent revealed in a major expose in 2012 that inspectors had found a major lapse of standards in many childcare facilities throughout the country (O'Regan, 2013). They uncovered this information, after a trawl through inspection reports obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. 1997 Childcare settings in damp and cold buildings and additionally, a lack of vetting of carers for possible criminal records were largely highlighted (O'Regan, 2013). The shocking litany of complaints included shouting at the children and slapping, serious understaffing and youngsters being left go thirsty by childcare professionals (O'Regan, 2013).

The problems were revealed in both private and publicly funded facilities. For example, in one crèche it was found that, just one person was caring for 22 children. When the ratio should have been one childcare professional for every five children (O'Regan, 2013). In 2011, there were just 2,789 inspections carried out of the 4,500 childcare facilities registered with the health authority (O'Connell, 2013). This will undoubtedly lead to some childcare facilities failing to be inspected. Also at least 280 serious complaints were referred to HSE staff by parents in the course of the year. In many cases, the names of crèches were eliminated and it was not made clear what action followed the complaint. There were deep differences in some cases between parents and childcare providers over discipline, for example, some parents felt that childcare providers were too strict with their children (O'Regan, 2013).

A Prime Time programme, "*Breach of Trust*", aired on RTÉ One in May 2013 and looked at an investigation into the conduct of some Irish crèches. The programme revealed that in 2012, three-quarters of childcare facilities were in breach of HSE regulations (O'Connell, 2013) and undercover reporters for the Prime Time team witnessed a number of different breaches of HSE standards in many different facilities. It showed staff in three crèches in the Dublin area handling children in an aggressive manner and shouting at them repeatedly. In one crèche, staff were seen using their mobile phones when they were supposed to be taking care of the children. Many problems were observed during the children's nap times. One worker was shown flipping a child over on a mattress in an attempt to take their blanket and put it over them. In another case, a child's mattress and blanket were taken from them in punishment for bad behaviour. The programme showed scenes of children being shouted at and physically restrained at three early years' settings, one of which is owned by Giraffe Childcare, one of Ireland's largest private nursery providers (O'Connell, 2013). There needs to be questions asked about how these childcare facilities passed their HSE inspections if children were being cared for in such a manner. These childcare staff are not carrying out their work occurring to the Child Care Act 1991.

Planned Changes to Legislation

There are plans to introduce new legislation for childcare inspections. The former Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, has said new legislation will provide for a tougher approach in dealing with childcare services that breach regulations (O'Kane, 2013). The new laws will

mean that for the first time the country's 4,600 pre-school facilities will have to be registered, and inspectors will be able to order improvements in childcare facilities. Failure by any setting to comply will mean registration being withdrawn. Fines for non-compliance are expected to increase fivefold from €1,000 to €5,000. It is understood all new crèches will have to meet the standards immediately and existing facilities will be given up to three years to comply, however crèches in areas deemed to be potentially problematic will be among the first to be inspected (O'Kane, 2013). This study will seek to investigate how childcare professionals are concerned about such changes and if there are any significant changes that they believe should be implemented.

The Current Study

Generally, in previous research, there has been very little research has been conducted in relation to the inspection process in childcare settings. Due to this hiatus the author has chosen the views and opinions of childcare professionals in particular as the main topic under investigation. Therefore, this piece of research adds to the discourse at a time when legislation is changing in terms of childcare workers. The objectives of this research was to investigate childcare professionals' views on HSE inspections and to examine the views of childcare providers regarding the effectiveness of the HSE inspections. In addition this research examined if the HSE reporting differed from one childcare facility to another.

Although this was only a small study it was expected that it would add information to the existing limited research that had been completed. The author used a qualitative method by carrying out interviews with childcare professionals as it was believed that this would provide deeper information and more in-depth analysis of the childcare professionals' views and opinions.

Method

Research Design

A qualitative research design using interviews was chosen for this research study as it was felt that this would be most suitable and necessary to gain an environment in which the participants would have the flexibility to discuss issues that are important to them. While the author used the interview questions as a guide, the questions were open, allowing participants to talk freely about issues. This also allowed the author to follow up on the participants' concerns and gain an in-depth perspective of the issues raised by the participants. With this interview context, there were opportunities to gather more information, ask follow up questions and clarify meaning by the author with childcare professionals.

Childcare managers and childcare professionals were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. Both groups were chosen as both members have a different role in the inspection process. The manager have to take all the responsibilities, while the childcare workers are the ones working in the room's one on one with the children. As part of the design, professionals from both private and community childcare settings were also chosen. This decision was made to see if there was a difference in inspection from private to community childcare facilities. The participants were asked about their experiences of the HSE inspections, their views regarding the inspections and how they felt about the inspections reports being published online. The participants were also asked how, if any, changes could be made to the inspection process (see appendix 1 for interview guide). These interviews allowed the interviewees to speak openly and freely about their views and experiences. Bryman (2004, p.338) claims that "semi-structured interviews allow specific information on the research topic to be elicited, while affording flexibility and freedom of expression to both interviewer and interviewee". Riessman (1993, p.34) notes that qualitative data provided "richness, diversity, accuracy and contextual depth".

Participants

A non-probability sampling strategy was applied in the form of purposive and convenience sampling. Bryman (2004, p.33) states “that purposive sampling is essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling”. This sampling method facilitated the author to attain interviews with childcare manager and childcare practitioners. Six participants took part in the study. Interviews were carried out in five childcare facilities; a manager and childcare professional were interviewed in one specific setting and then four other participants took part from four separate childcare facilities. Three of the sample were managers of childcare facilities and the other three were childcare practitioners. Of the managers interviewed, two were managers in rural community childcare facilities and the other was a manager who ran a private urban childcare facility. Two of the childcare professionals worked in private rural childcare facilities and the other childcare professional worked in a community rural childcare facility and the other childcare professional worked in a community rural childcare facility. All of the sample group were based in the west of Ireland. The starting point for the selection of a sample for participation in the research was the researcher’s access to three private childcare facilities and more limited access to four community childcare facilities. The author had access to these facilities having previously carried out work experience in three of the facilities and having been employed in the other two childcare facilities. Five out of the seven childcare facilities in the sample agreed to participate in the research. Time constraints and a change of management were given as a reason for the non-participation in two of the facilities.

The median age of the participants was 26 and the mode was 30. All of the participants were female. Each of the managers had at least ten years’ experience and each of the childcare practitioners had at least six years’ experience.

Materials

A letter of introduction (see appendix 2) that explained the research project was sent to all the participants prior to the interviews taking place. Included in this letter were details of the study and the researcher’s name and telephone number and an assurance of confidentiality for any information recorded. Before the interviews took place a consent form (see appendix 3) was also given to all participants and signed before starting the interview. Also for the semi structured interviews, the author had a schedule of questions for the interviews (see appendix 4).

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. A separate consent was obtained to record the interviews. All the participants names were kept anonymous and the facilities where they worked were, not included. Also, the names of the inspectors were not included in order to preserve their anonymity.

Furthermore, all the participants were aware that the author would not ask them any other questions aside from the topic of the research. All the participants had the right to end the interview at any stage if they did not feel comfortable. Ethical approval was obtained before any of the interviews took place from Athlone Institute of Technology ethics committee.

Procedure

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with the participants during March and April 2014. Consent was obtained from all the participants by sending them an information sheet with all the information about the study. After the information sheet was sent, contact was made with the managers of the childcare facilities by telephone to see if they wanted to take part in the research and to see if they had any further questions. After participants agreed to participate, interviews were arranged.

Participants were offered the choice to carry out the interview at their selected time, and in a location convenient to them. All participants chose to be interviewed in their workplace. These venues were chosen by the participants as it was familiar to them. Each of the interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes.

During each of the interviews the settings was free from other staff members and measures were taken to ensure that no interruptions would take place. The author conducted all the interviews herself with all the participants. The interviews were conducted at times that were convenient to the participants. All the interviews were recorded with permission from all the participants.

The researcher accessed the participants via the managers and owners of the childcare facilities. The researcher then met with all the individuals who agreed to participate in the study and ensured that they fully understood what was involved in the study. When the researcher was happy that the participants fully understood their role in the study they were asked to provide consent for participation in the study. At the beginning of each interview the researcher again informed the participants of the nature of the research and what would happen to the information collected from the interviews.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the small scale nature of the study. Five childcare facilities agreed to take part in the study, which is a small number compared to the number of childcare facilities in Ireland. Had the time allowed, the researcher would have approached more childcare facilities and asked them to participate in the study. Time limitations were a major influence for this study, it resulted in the author deciding that only one research strategy could be used effectively within the given timeframe. The author of this study choose to conduct interviews through a qualitative research design. It was believed that the qualitative method would allow for interviewees to discuss their views and experiences in relation to the inspections of childcare facilities. Also with this design the researcher would be able to set the agenda and structures for all interviews. Qualitative research allows more contact with the participants and seeks to genuinely understand the issue at hand from the perspective of the participants.

Results

A typed transcript of each interview was completed and the author read the interviews through repeatedly to form a general impression and to search for emerging themes. When the author was familiar with the interview transcripts a preliminary coding of the data emerged.

Topics Explored in the Interviews

The first topic of the interview focused on the facility's most recent inspection. The second topic was the professionals' views of the inspection process and the final topic was the childcare professionals' views on the inspection reports and the publication of all reports going online for the first time.

The topics explored during the interviews:

1. The childcare professionals experiences of the HSE inspections
2. The childcare professionals' views of the HSE inspections.
3. The childcare professionals' views on the reporting process and how the inspection process could be improved.

The Professionals' Experiences of the HSE Inspections

The participants were asked under this topic about their last inspection from the HSE. Information was gathered regarding the notice, if any, that was given to childcare professionals that an inspection was going to take place, the duration of their inspections and any preparation the participants carry out prior to an inspection taking place. The themes that emerged from this topic are illustrated under the following subheadings.

Notice that an Inspection was to Take Place

Even though the inspection process is meant to be random, the general consensus among all the six participants was that no official notice is received before an inspection commences.

None of the participants reported being given official notice of the time at which the inspection was to take place. However, a theme emerged among the participants that there was a pattern to the times when the inspector carries out his/her inspections. For example, the following interviewee said:

If they are coming on a yearly basis the inspector does try to come at the same time every year. If you had it in February last year then we could have it in February this year (Childcare Manager 1).

This theme was also echoed among some of the other participants, who felt that there is a pattern to the HSE visits and that inspectors tend to call at the same time every year.

Another theme that emerged under this topic was that even though there was no official notice given that an inspection was going to take place, participants were generally aware that an inspection was going to take place. Information from other childcare facilities was passed on from one facility to another to let them know that the inspector was in the area. For example the following interviewee said:

Usually another childcare facility will call us to tell us that they have had the inspector, and then we might expect her to call then. Also if we were talking to the inspector and she could say that she is hoping to call soon. We could have a vague idea of when she is going to call. However, there is no official notification given around her visits (Childcare Manager 3).

Duration of Inspections

The results from the interviews showed that the inspections tended to last between one to three days. There were mixed views from the managers and childcare professionals regarding the length of time the inspector spent in the childcare facilities. As one manager commented that:

The inspection usually lasts three days. Which as a manager I think is too long. The inspector could easily get all she needs to get done in a day and a half. It is too much of a slow process (Childcare Manager 1).

Whereas another manager felt that the inspection process could be longer the manager said:

I would like to see the inspector more in the rooms with the children. If she spend a couple of hours in each room to see how the curriculum works. I would also like if she took each of the room leaders out and spoke to them about their work and how the children are getting on. As on the last inspection the inspector only spent about ten minutes in the room, which I definitely feel could be longer (Childcare Manager 2).

These views were echoed by a childcare worker who said:

The inspector tends to just come into the room asks some questions and then leaves again. On the last inspection she only spent between ten to fifteen minutes in the room, which is very little time to get to know the work that is carried out, I believe that she does not spend enough time in the room getting to know the workers and the children (Childcare Worker 1).

In summary, there was a split between views from the managers and childcare professionals regarding the duration of inspections. Some of the participants believed that the inspection process is too long, while the other participants felt that the process could be longer and that the inspector does not get a good insight into the work carried out, within the short period of time that he/she spends in the facility. In most cases the participants reported that the inspection process lasted between one to four days.

Preparation carried out prior to Inspections

Another topic that the author explored was if the childcare managers and professionals carry out any preparation work before the inspectors visit. Some of the comments from the participants were that they ensure that the paperwork is up-to-date and that all the cleaning has been done. One of the manager commented:

We would usual prepare for the inspection, by cleaning and getting all the paperwork up to date (Childcare Manager 1).

Participant Views of the HSE Inspection

Under this heading the author wanted to investigate participants' views of the HSE inspection, and how they found the whole process in general. For this sample group all the participants had the same HSE inspector. Overall, all the participants found the inspector to be approachable, friendly and nice, however, some of the participant's found her unsupportive and unhelpful. Most of the participants found her open and easy to get on with and asked her questions.

One of the manager interviewed found the inspector to be very supportive in their role. She recognised their efforts to improve their facility in order to meet with the HSE regulations. She did not put them down as non-compliant even though they were failing on regulation

five, which prescribes the measures which must be in place to meet the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991, as she knew that they were working towards meeting the regulations. This is in comparison to one of the other childcare workers who did not find the inspector to be helpful. There was an incidence of an infectious disease in their premises and the childcare professional reported that the inspector was not supportive towards them when dealing with parents' concerns. The worker commented that:

When there is help needed there is no support given from the HSE inspector. We had an incident lately and the inspector was not helpful at all. She offered no support to us as workers and did not give us guidance on how to deal with the incident, regarding parent's concerns. The inspector is meant to be there to provide support and help but when there was help needed there was no given (Childcare Manager 3).

Overall, the views among the participants were mixed with some the participants finding the inspector to be very friendly and supportive, whereas others found him/her to be intimidating and unhelpful, and the process to be nerve wrecking. One of the childcare managers spoke about how the inspection process is nerve wrecking, especially for the new members of staff. There was a sense from some of the staff that the inspector was there to catch them out. One manager commented that:

Some of the staff were suspicious of the inspector's questions. It was the way in which she asked the questions, the way she was phrasing some of the questions. It was as if the inspector knew more than she was letting on and that she was trying to catch the staff out (Childcare Worker 3).

One strong theme that emerged from the participants' views on the HSE inspection is that the inspector tends not to stick to the regulation during the inspection process. Most of the participants felt that the inspector comes up with recommendations that are not associated with the regulations and overall, he/she is not impressed if he/her recommendations are not followed. The participants would welcome these recommendations if they were occurring to the Child Care Act 1991 and were necessary to implement. The participants commented that what the inspector is looking for during the inspection is biased on the individual inspector's views and expectations. There was a sense from the participants that the inspector might pass the facility as compliant on one visit, but then on the next visit she could decide that they are non-compliant even though nothing has changed in the facilitates. Another theme that emerged was that the participant's felt that there is no transparency between the inspections.

Some of the participants' know through meeting with other childcare professionals, what is allowed in one childcare facility may not be allowed in another. One manager commented that:

I believe that there is no transparency at all between inspections. It depends on where the inspector goes what type of facility she is inspecting There is not the one system for all childcare facilities across the country. From talking to other people at professional development trainings there seems to be different inspections in every childcare facilities. The inspectors seems to be looking for different things, it's definitely not the same for all childcare facilities (Childcare Manager 2).

The Participants' Views on the Reporting Process and How the Inspection Process could Change

This topic was to get a sense of the participants' views regarding the publication of the HSE inspection reports online for the first time. Information was gathered to see if the participants felt that any improvement could be made to the HSE inspections. These two issues will be examined under the subheadings below.

The Participants' Views on the HSE Inspections Repots being Published Online

The general consensus among all the childcare professionals is that the publication of the reports online is a positive and a change that all the managers and childcare professionals reported to welcome. All the inspection reports from all the childcare settings involved in the study were already publically available for parents to look at. None of the participants in the sample group were ever asked by a parent to see the inspection report. Some of the participants feel that there is more openness and transparency now that the inspection reports are available published online. Some of the other participants felt that due to inspection reports being published online parents have greater information when it comes to choosing their child's childcare.

Some of the comments from the participants include:

I agree with the reports going online. The reports are freely available in the premise for parents to look at, even though I have never been asked by a parent for a report (Childcare Manager 1).

It is a very positive move that the inspections are now been published online. It is especially useful to parents that they are aware that the information is available online if they want to access it. Even though all the reports are available on the premise at all times for parents to read. When parents are choosing their childcare they can look at the reports online and know that they are choosing a good quality service with a good service delivery (Childcare Worker 2).

Childcare Managers and Professionals' Views on How the Inspection Process Could Change

A common change that all participants reported that they would like to see is a more transparent inspection process and they suggested that there should be one system for inspection for all childcare facilities, regardless of the type of service that is being provided. They would like to see one inspection system introduced covering all childcare facilities, so that the inspection process could be standardised across all settings involved. The participants would like to see the inspector focus on the regulations, of the Child Care Act 1991 and not to come up with unrealistic recommendations. One manger commented that:

The whole process needs to be standardised. Then each facility would be aware of what to expect from an inspection no matter what type of facility is been inspected. There is a definite need for the inspection process to be standardised (Childcare Manger 3).

The participants would like to see more funding in the childcare area, towards staff training and recruitment of extra staff. The participants would like to see is an extra member of staff employed. This additionally staff member could be in charge of completing all the paperwork for the childcare facility. This was made as a suggestion as there was a strong sense among the participants that paperwork is taking up a great deal of their time. The managers felt that the focus of taking care of the children is being lost and , that paperwork is being more important to the inspector.

The only change that I would like to see is if a full time member of staff to be employed to carry out all the paperwork. I would like to see financial budgets put in place to allow this to happen as the paperwork seems to be taking over. The focus is being lost from what we are trying to do in childcare and paperwork is taking up time which could be spent more wisely with the children (Childcare Manager 1).

A further change that the participants would like to see happen is the recruitment of more inspectors. In their views this would allow for more inspections to take place, rather than only

one a year. It would allow the inspector to spend more time within the specific childcare facility and to provide more specialised support. In relation to the recruitment of inspectors, some of the participants think that more questions should be asked regarding the qualification levels of the inspectors. This was due to concerns among some of the participants' that the inspector does not come from a childcare background and this would make it more difficult for he/she to be capable of relating to the area in which he/she inspecting. Some of the views of the participants include the following comments:

I think the changes needed are for more inspectors to be recruited so that more inspections can take place and that each inspector can spend more time in each facility (Childcare Worker 1). Another issue that needs to be questioned is the qualification level of each inspector. This is an area that I feel is not ever examined. A lot of the inspectors are at their job a long time and have employed their own style of inspection. Some of the inspectors also have not come from the childcare background, so they are not aware of the issues that staff have to deal with on a daily basis. When recruitment of inspectors takes place they should be people employed that come with some sort of childcare experience. This will allow the inspector to be more understanding of the work that staff do and what works in childcare settings in a practical way (Childcare Worker 3).

Another change that the participants would like to see is for the inspector to be more supportive in his/her role and provide a liaison system. The fear that is associated with the inspection process needs to be taken out of the process. It is a nerve-wrecking experience especially for new staff and this needs to be eliminated. Further to this, some participants felt that the HSE inspections need to focus more on the quality of service being delivered by the childcare professionals. There was a sense that the inspector focuses solely on the cleanliness of the facilities instead of looking at the quality of service delivered. One of the manager's commented that:

The changes that are needed to the HSE inspection is for the focus to be more on quality of service that is being delivered. Instead of the focus being solely on cleanliness of the premises. The hygiene is important but there needs to be more focus on staff qualification and the quality of service being delivered. The inspection needs to focus on what work the staff are carrying out with the children and how engaged they are in activities as opposed to the cleanliness of the facility (Childcare Manager 1)

Summary of Results

Even though the inspection process is meant to be random, there is a sense from participants' responses that it is not entirely random. Even though none of the participants were given any official notice that an inspection was going to take place, there was some form of warning received. Some of the participants could tell when the inspector was going to call as he/she kept a pattern to when he/she carried out his/her inspections. Some of the other participants received notification from other childcare facilities that the inspector was in the area, so they were aware that their inspection could be about to take place.

There were concerns among the participants that the inspector is not focusing solely on the Child Care Act 1991, regulations during his/her inspection and that there was suggestions that he/she is unpredictable in what he/she will look for and that he/she does not stick to the criteria set out in the regulation. The participants also believed that the inspector is too reliant on making recommendations, which he/she likes to see implemented. The participants felt that what the inspector was going to be looking for during the inspection process was largely reliant on the individual inspector and due to the subjectivity of the inspector.

From the interviews there was mixed views when it came to the length of inspections. For some of the participants the process seemed to be one that was rushed and some of the managers and staff felt that the inspector did not spend an adequate amounts of time in the facilities. The participants felt that the inspector needs to spend more time in the rooms to see fully all the work that is being carried out by the childcare professionals.

The childcare managers and staff overall found the inspection process to be fair. There was a strong view among the participants that there is no standardisation of the inspection process that each of the inspections varied with, no two inspections being the same. It was felt from the participants that they can never know from one inspection to another what the individually inspector will be looking for. Most of the participants had a good relationship with the inspector. They find him/her supportive and honest. However, some of the childcare workers felt that she could provide more support especially in times of stress.

The feedback regarding the publication of the HSE inspection reports online was positive and viewed by participants as not being a great change to them. This was because for all the

childcare settings involved in the study all their inspection reports were already widely available to the parents of the children within their care.

Some of the areas in which the participants felt that the HSE inspection could change is that, the process needs to be better standardised so if there was a standardised process in place they would be fully aware of what is expected of them and what the inspector will look for on each visit. The participants also felt that there should be some questions considered around the qualification levels of inspectors because there was a suggestion that some of the presently employed inspectors have no qualifications in childcare or have no childcare experience even though they are inspecting childcare settings. A result, it was put forward by the childcare professionals that the inspectors may find it difficult to relate to the areas that they are inspecting. The participants believe that there is a need to employ further inspectors so that more and longer inspections can take place. Another area that the participants felt where change is needed is in the area of paperwork. A number of the participants felt that the paperwork is taking up a great deal of their time, which could be spent with the children. The results show that paperwork has become a high priority for each worker. The participants felt that this amount of paperwork needs to be reduced in some way.

One of the clearest messages that came from all the interviews was that all participants felt that there is no standardisation to the HSE inspection process, and that no two inspections are the same with each facility being inspected differently by different inspectors and at various times.

Discussion

The overall aim of this research was to investigate the effectiveness of the HSE inspections of childcare facilities from the perspective of childcare professionals. This aim was achieved by the author carrying out interviews with childcare managers and professionals. One of the objectives of the study was to investigate childcare professionals' experiences of HSE inspections and this was also achieved by asking the childcare managers and professionals specific questions in relation to their experiences of the HSE inspection process. Another objective to this study was to investigate childcare managers and professionals views on the inspection process. The author gathered a great deal of information on the professionals views through carrying out the interviews. The main themes from the results of this objective are discussed below. The final objective was to examine the managers and childcare professionals' views of the HSE reports being published online for the first time and also to hear about any changes the managers and childcare professionals would like to see implemented in the inspection process. Again the main themes that emerged from this objective are discussed below.

The childcare managers and professionals experience of the inspection process brought up a mixed reaction. Some of the participants found the inspection to be too short and not entirely focused on the care of the children, while some of the other participants found the inspection process to be too long. The participants reported that the inspection can be unpredictable. That on one visit the inspector could agree that everything is compliant and then on the next visit the inspector could decide that the facility is non-complaint. Even though nothing had changed in the facility. Also a number of the participants commented that the inspector is too reliant on coming up with recommendations. These recommendations are not according to the regulations they are just ideas that the inspector comes up with that she would like to see implemented. The managers and childcare professionals felt that these recommendations are not necessary that they would welcome recommendations if they were according to the regulations and were necessary to be implemented.

The main findings in this research study showed that there are serious gaps in the inspection of childcare facilities in the facilities used in the sample group. From the results it was found that there is no transparency when it comes to the HSE inspecting childcare facilities. The inspector seems to introduce her own style of inspection, which does not comply with the Child Care Act 1991. The majority of the participants agreed that the style of inspection can vary from one childcare facility to the other. There was a sense from the results of this study

that the childcare managers and childcare professionals are not pleased with the current method of HSE inspection. The childcare managers in the study recognised that the inspectors do not apply the regulations when they are inspecting childcare facilities. The inspector tends to come up with recommendations that are unrealistic that she wishes to have implemented.

It was interesting to find that the childcare manger and childcare professionals were divided in their views of the inspection process. The responses showed that some of the participants felt that the inspection process was too long while the other participants felt that the inspector does not spend enough time in the childcare facilities to get a good insight. It was generally the mangers that felt that the inspection was too long that it was a dragged out process while on the other hand the childcare professionals would like to see the inspector spend more time seeing the work they carry out on the ground with the children in their care.

The study found that childcare mangers and childcare professionals are not pleased with the current method of HSE inspections taking place in childcare facilities. Each manager to a varying degree acknowledged that there is no transparency to the current inspection process being used by inspectors in childcare facilities.

One of the biggest changes that the participants in the study would like to see is the standardisation of the inspection process. The participants would like to see one system introduced for all childcare facilities in Ireland. The mangers and childcare professionals alike would like to see the shift away from the tick box system of compliance and non-compliance which is the current method of inspection. The childcare professionals would like to see the inspector to provide them with more support and to provide them with a liaisons service so the fear is eliminated from inspection process. In the participants opinion there is a need to introduce a standardised system for all childcare facilities in Ireland. This will help to ensure that the best quality of care is provided in all childcare services in Ireland. It will also allow for a fairer system and all childcare facilities working to achieve the same level of quality delivery.

The results from the interviews carried out with the childcare manger and professionals match those of the research carried out by Early Childhood Ireland (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012). In the Early Childhood Ireland 2012 survey only 5% reported that they were informed of the inspection in advance. While in this study the author found that none of the participants reviewed that they received any official notification they all could gauge a general consensus

of when the inspector was due to call. This could be revealed due to the inspector keeping to a pattern of calling at the same time each year and also other childcare facilities passing on information that the inspector is in the area. It would seem that it is best practice for the HSE inspection visit is random with no notification given. If childcare facilities are aware that the HSE inspector is due to visit they will be extra prepared and therefore the inspector may not get the true insight into the care been provided in the childcare facilities.

The time in which the inspector spent in the sample group from this study was similar to the results find in the Early Childhood Ireland 2012 survey (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012). The Early Childhood Study 2012 revealed that the inspection lasted between thirty minutes to three days. While the author found that in her sample group with the managers and childcare professionals their inspections lasted between ten minutes and three days. This result brought with it mixed reaction. Some of the managers found that three days was too long that the inspector could easily get her inspection done in a shorter period of time, whereas the childcare professionals found that the inspector only spent a few hours in their room inspecting which they felt was too short. It is the authors view that three days could be too long to spend in one facility but the inspectors tend to spend too much time in the office looking at paperwork, instead of focusing on the care that is been provided to the children. Which should take priority over the paperwork.

Another area in which there was similarities between the 2012 Early Childhood Study and the author's study was in the inspection reports. The 2012 Early Childhood Study found that the providers would like more relevant comments in the inspection reports instead of tick boxes and negative comments. Likewise these results match those of the childcare professionals and managers in this study. Although the participants welcomed the reports from the inspector they also would like to see more positive feedback and a new system introduced instead of the two tier system that is current in place, that the facility is either compliant or non-compliant. In the authors view it would be useful if a system was introduced that gave each childcare facility a grade for their efforts they put in to provide the best quality of care for the children. This system would help to identify all the efforts that the childcare professionals and staff are putting in and it will give a clearer picture of how well each childcare facility is working.

The majority of the participants in this study agreed that they would like to have a full time member of staff employed to carry out the paperwork and also to be present during the

inspection so the room leaders could spend time with the inspector without effecting the ratios. Similar the 2012 Early Childhood Study found the same results that they would like an indication of when the inspection is to take place so that extra staff could be arranged and to have the paperwork update (Early Childhood Ireland, 2012).

In the Early Childhood 2012 survey the respondents complained there was inconsistencies between the different health service executive areas. Which was echoed in the author's study that found that there is no standardisation between any of the inspections in their childcare facilities. Another concern that was echoed in both the 2012 Early Childhood Study and the authors study is the question of the HSE inspector's qualifications. The childcare professionals and managers have to continue their professional development and training while some of the inspector's do not even have a childcare background. This has led to the present circumstances that inspectors have been carrying out their work for a number of years and as a result have implemented their own styles of inspections that is not occurring to the regulations. The authors believes that if recruitment of inspection is to take place they should have to up skill ever few years and people should be employed that have some qualification and/or experience in childcare.

The second survey carried out by Early Childhood Ireland in 2013 regarding the HSE inspection reports been published online did not show similar results to the authors results (Early Childhood Ireland, 2013). The Early Childhood Ireland study showed that the professionals felt that the reports been published online are outdated and inconsistent. Some of the comments in the Early Childhood Ireland 2013 survey showed that the professionals would welcome the reports going online if the inspections process and reporting system included a right to reply and the opportunity to have the reports amended. Whereas the author found in her interviews that the childcare managers and childcare workers welcomed the reports been published online as it makes the inspection system more transparent. It provides more information for parents when chosen their child's childcare. In the participants opinions it is a positive move that the reports are now available for everyone to read online. It gives parents an opportunity to review the childcare options in their area before chosen the type of care they would like for their child.

Some interesting findings from the authors study was that the childcare professionals and managers do not find the inspector to be supportive or helpful and also there is a lot of fear

associated with the HSE inspection. The inspections role is to provide support and liaisons to all childcare professionals and managers. It was disappointing to find that in times of stress and need, during an outbreak of an infectious illness that an inspector was not on hand to provide support. This area needs to be further investigated and policies put in place to ensure that the inspector provides more support to all childcare facilities. It would seem that the inspector should provide information to all childcare facilities with dealing with crisis situations. Another interesting finding from the study was that there is a lot of fear associated with the HSE inspection. The results from the interviews showed that it is especially nerve wrecking the inspection process for new members of staff. The author believes that work should be completed with all childcare staff in HSE inspectors to eliminate the fear associated with the inspection process. Childcare professionals and managers should be confident in their work that there are providing that it is the best possible care and not to feel imitated by HSE inspectors.

The author used qualitative method for this research and this method was beneficial as it allowed the author to collect the information in the relatively short period of time. Also it allowed the author to gather in-depth information and discuss any issues that arose that may not have been possible if another research method was used. This study used a relatively small sample and therefore is a limited representative of the entire childcare population.

Summary

The results from the interviews showed that there is no standardisation of the inspection process. That no two inspections are the same, that the inspection is dependable on the inspector own style. That the inspector can find something complaint on one visit and then on another visit they might find something non-complaint. The participants also discussed their frustration with the recommendations that the inspector come up with that are not according to the Child Care Act 1991 regulations. The length of time that the inspection takes was another area that brought up mixed views between the participants. Some of the participants felt that the inspection is too short and the inspector does not get a clear picture of the work in the short period of time that she spends. While some of the other participants felt that the inspection goes on too long and that the inspector could get his/her work done in a shorter timeframe. All the participants welcomed the change to the HSE publication of the reports online. The change does not affect the services that took part in this research as they already have the reports widely available in their facilities for the parents to read. The most

prominent change that the childcare professionals and managers would like to see is a more standardised system to the inspection process. That all childcare facilities would be inspected in the same way.

Conclusion

Overall this study brought up interesting results. There was a strong sense from the participants that they are not pleased with the current system of inspection. As there is no standardisation to the current system of HSE inspection. All the participants would welcome change to the inspection process. Funding is a key issue that the childcare managers would like to see invested in the childcare area. The managers would like to see this funding used towards staff training and the employment of extra staff. Also the participants in this study would like to see the inspections to be more focused on the care of the children and less on the cleanliness of the facilities. As the care provided to the children should be the primary focus in any childcare setting. The participants would also like to see the paperwork been reduced as it is taking away from level of care that they can provide to the children. Untimely the participants would like to see all childcare setting inspected in the same way and that all childcare managers and professionals could know what to expect from a HSE inspection.

Recommendations

Children attending childcare in Ireland are aged between zero and six years and therefore require the voice of adults advocated to speak up on their behalf.

An area that needs to be looked at is the qualification level and experience of the HSE inspectors. Currently there are inspectors employed that have no experience of working in the childcare area or any qualifications in childcare. These inspectors have been carrying out their role for a number of years and have implemented their own styles of inspections. As a result they can not relate to the work that the childcare managers and childcare professionals are trying to carry out in the childcare facilities. Some inspectors come up with recommendations that are unrealistic and that would not work in the childcare facilities. In the authors view more inspectors should be employed that have experience and qualifications in the childcare sector.

One of the major changes that needs to be implemented to the HSE inspection process is that a standardised system is introduced for all childcare facilities in Ireland. This study revealed

that there is definitely not the one system to inspecting childcare facilities, the inspectors seem to implement their own style in every childcare facility that they visit. A new system needs to be introduced whereby the inspectors look for the required criteria and the inspector focuses on this criteria. As it was suggested by the participants in this study a new system should be introduced instead of the current two tier system of compliant and non-compliant.

Another recommendation is that funding is designated towards the childcare sector, for the employment of extra staff to carry out the paperwork. These staff members could also be present during the inspection so that room leaders have the opportunity to discuss issues with the inspector.

Reference List