

REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE - 22 MAY 2000

REPORT ON: REVIEW OF LOCAL PLAN POLICY ON DAY NURSERIES AND PRIVATE NURSERY SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

REPORT NO: 232-2000

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report back on the survey of parents whose children attend private nurseries in Dundee.
- 1.2 To review and update Policy SCE4 in the Dundee Local Plan 1998, which guides decisions on planning applications for day nurseries and private nursery schools.
- 1.3 To draft a policy which strikes a balance between allowing nurseries to locate in a range of locations convenient to home and workplace, and securing high quality provision without detriment to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - a approves the proposed changes to Policy SCE4 of the Dundee Local Plan 1998;
 - b have regard to the contents of this Report as a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications;
 - c agrees that the changes to Policy SCE4 will be advanced through the next review of the Dundee Local Plan including the consultation phases;
 - d remits that the contents of this Report, and specifically recommendation (b) be referred to the Development Quality Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2000.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 No financial implications arise for the City Council as a direct result of this Report.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed policy framework reflects the following Dundee 21 key themes:
 - Local needs are met locally;
 - Access to facilities, services, goods and people is not achieved at the expense of the environment and are accessible to all

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The provision of conveniently located, good quality services is a basic requirement for all sectors of the community, including children. The proposed policy framework seeks to ensure that the provision of nursery facilities is directed to the most appropriate locations and types of property to achieve a high standard of provision in

the interests of the families involved, without detriment to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

6 BACKGROUND

6.1 Reference is made to Report 716/1999 (Article IV, Planning and Transportation Committee 22 November 1999), which set out the background to the review of Local plan policy SCE4 and remitted the Director of Planning and Transportation to submit a further report following consultation with other relevant Council Departments, nursery operators and parents of children who use private nurseries.

Parent Survey

6.2 A short questionnaire was distributed to parents whose children attend private nurseries in Dundee. The response rate (32%) was reasonable for a postal survey. The main aims of the survey were to:

- identify the importance of a range of factors in choosing a nursery and examine whether these differ depending on whether the children attend the nursery full time or part time;
- confirm how parents and their children most commonly travel to nursery; and
- analyse the relationship between nursery location and place of work/residence.

6.3 Location of nursery, home and workplace were sorted by (non-denominational) primary and secondary school catchment area to examine the extent to which respondents' choice of nursery was related to the location of home/work place. Notably, the nurseries which participated in the survey were located in only 9 of the 29 primary school catchment areas and 6 of the 7 secondary school catchments (see map).

6.4 The survey results are summarised below:

- The great majority of respondents (90%) had one child attending a private nursery.
- There was an even (50/50) split between children attending full time and part time.
- The majority of respondents (73%) travelled to nursery by car, with another 12% using a car at least part of the time, combined with bus travel (6%) or walking (6%). 8% of respondents travelled by bus or combined this with walking and a further 7% walked (see Figure 1).
- Responses (see Tables 1 & 2 and Figures 2 & 3) confirmed that, in relative terms, concern for the child is at the heart of the nursery choice. Nevertheless, while respondents accorded more importance to "child centred" factors (eg nursery reputation, impression after introductory visit) than "convenience" factors, the location of the nursery in relation to home/work place and convenience for parking/dropping off remain important. For example, only 6% of respondents considered none of the locational factors to be important.

- Respondents considered the availability of an outdoor play area to be less important than the quality of indoor facilities. Nevertheless, it remained “very important” or “quite important” for 94% of respondents.
- Respondents accorded “child centred” factors more importance than “convenience” factors, regardless of whether their children attended nursery full time or part time. However, convenience of location, in relation to work place and route between home/work assumed greater importance for respondents whose children attended a nursery full time. Availability of outdoor play area was also slightly more important for parents of children attending a nursery full time.
- Relatively small numbers of respondents travelled to nursery by bus or walked, therefore results have to be treated with a degree of caution. Convenience for dropping off/parking naturally assumed far less importance for those travelling by bus or walking, compared with car users. For bus users it was more important for the nursery to be located near to work or on route between home and work, than near to home. This is the same pattern as for car users, but more pronounced. In contrast, for walkers, it was more important for the nursery to be located near to home. While “availability of outdoor play area” assumed much less importance for bus users than for other groups, this can be attributed to the fact that for a high proportion of respondents in this group, their children attended a nursery with no private outdoor play area.
- The most commonly cited “other factors” which respondents considered “very important”, related to quality/attitude of staff and the flexibility of opening hours, which is very important to working parents.
- In areas of the City where workplace coincides with a choice of nurseries a high percentage of respondents chose a nursery within the same area as they work eg 80% of respondents working within the Menzieshill area of the City chose one of the three nurseries available within the same area. Similarly, in areas of the City where a concentration of housing coincides with a choice of nurseries a high percentage of respondents chose a nursery within the same area as they live eg 77% of respondents living within the Grove area of the city chose one of the three nurseries available within the same area or Little Butterflies in the adjacent Craigiebarns area.
- In areas of the City where there is no nursery available, respondents tended to choose a nursery as near to home or workplace as practical. For example, 71% of respondents living in the Baldragon catchment area in the north west of the City, chose one of the three nurseries in the adjacent Lochee and Mill O’Mains areas. Similarly, 75% of those working in the Baldragon area, principally in the industrial estates along the Kingsway, chose to use one of the nurseries in the adjacent Lochee and Mill O’Mains areas.
- Respondents working the City Centre tended to choose a nursery within the Park Place or Rosebank catchments which make up that area of the City or else in/adjacent to the primary school catchment in which they live (71%).

Consultation with Operators

- 6.5 As part of the consultation process, private nursery operators were asked for their comments on the issues raised in Report 716/99. Two from a possible 16 operators provided comments, which have been considered as part of the Report. It is difficult to account, with certainty, for the low response rate. It may simply be the case that the majority of operators are not interested in expanding their business, therefore proposed policy changes are not of immediate concern.

Considerations for Policy Review

- 6.6 The revisions to Local Plan Policy SCE4 proposed in Section 7 of this Report take account of a range of factors including the results of the survey outlined above, comments received from other interested parties and the outcome of recent planning appeals. The following conclusions are based on a balanced consideration of the range of views expressed during the consultation exercise.

a Location:

- While in relative terms, location may not be the **prime** consideration when choosing a nursery, it remains an important factor. Parents tend to choose a nursery which is conveniently located in relation to the home or work place.
- A policy which promotes a range of locations will provide choice for parents. This should not be achieved, however, at the expense of quality and amenity.
- While relatively few people travel to nursery by bus, locations within reasonable walking distance of a bus stop provides the opportunity for this to increase should travel patterns change in the future, in line with Government objectives.
- Nurseries in residential areas provide scope for parents to walk with their children to nursery.
- Alternatively, nurseries located in or adjacent to major centres of employment eg large industrial estates, City Centre, Ninewells Hospital offer the convenience of avoiding lengthy detours to a nursery before and after work. Where nurseries are provided close to a major centre of employment eg Ninewells, they are heavily, although by no means solely, used by employees.
- In locational terms, the City Centre combines the advantages of a public transport hub and a major centre of employment. As such, nurseries located in or adjacent to the City Centre can offer an important service for employees who rely on public transport and for families who live/work in/around the City Centre.

b Amenity:

- Some industrial and commercial areas will offer a very poor environment for a children's' nursery in terms of pollution and children's' safety.

- Amenity issues related to noise and parking are not sufficiently strong to discount nurseries from locating in residential areas in principle. However, there may be a case for limiting the scale and proximity of nurseries in this regard.
- Temporary planning permission can be granted as a means of testing concerns expressed over amenity. However, they create uncertainty for investors and users.

c Outdoor Play Space

- The availability of an outdoor play area would appear to be less important to parents than the quality of indoor facilities. Nevertheless, an outdoor play area is desirable for the provision of a high quality facility and there are no ideal alternatives. The provision of some outdoor play space is therefore preferable to none at all.
- The requirement for outdoor play space should be mandatory and related to the number of children which the nursery can accommodate. There may be a case for making an exception in the city centre, where it is difficult to accommodate nurseries with private outdoor play space, but where there is a wide range of other educational places and facilities for the children to visit.
- It is accepted as good practice that the children are brought out to play in rotation, rather than all at once. However, good practice is difficult to enforce and it remains necessary to have a minimum area as a starting point in the guidelines and bear in mind that the larger the area, the greater the scope for providing a range of surfaces necessary for different types of outdoor play.
- The overall environment (neighbouring uses), situation (in relation to nursery, roads etc), shape and slope (usability) of outdoor play space is also important. In addition, when a play area is well planned, equipped and managed, optimum use will be made of the space available.
- **In exceptional circumstances, the provision of suitably designed indoor play space as a substitute for outdoor play space is a possibility although not ideal - the building would have to provide scope for fresh air to circulate and for the outdoor environment to come indoors and be large enough for physical play. The space would need to be designated for physical and energetic play and additional to existing floor space requirements.**
- Proximity to public open space could be considered as an alternative to private outdoor play space, but there are issues of safety and security and it is unlikely to be used as readily as private space.
- The guidelines for good practice for children in group day care published by the National Children's Bureau, recommend that there should be a minimum of 9 square metres of outdoor private play space per child.

- The Reporter who considered the latest appeals against refusal for nurseries at Clepington Road and East Port works concluded that the requirement of Policy SCE4 for 10 square metres per child (for nurseries of over 24 children) was reasonable, regardless of how many children were allowed out to play at any one time. On the other hand, planning permission has been granted by the Council for proposals which did not meet this standard, on the basis that the quality of the area (eg neighbouring uses, open sunny aspect, shape and slope) was assured.

d Parking and Dropping Off:

- Staff parking requirement contained in Policy SCE4 is excessive in terms of the number of staff who have access to a car. Staff parking requirements could be more flexible in the city centre, given the availability of car parks and bus services.
- The children must be accompanied into the nursery, therefore safe dropping off is important. However, parking related to dropping off will only be for short periods of time and staggered over a longer interval than, for example, schools.
- Nurseries should not be allowed to locate where they would take direct access from a heavily trafficked road.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND REVISED POLICY

- 7.1 Clearly there are merits, in terms of convenience to working parents and the City Council's wider transportation objectives, in allowing children's nurseries to locate in a range of locations convenient to home and work place. In addition, the survey of parents highlighted that the wellbeing of the child and therefore the quality of the nursery provision in terms of facilities provided, staff attitude and training, nursery reputation, is central to the nursery choice. While the factors which planning policy can influence were not the primary concern of parents when choosing a nursery, they contribute to the overall quality and safety of the facilities provided. The Council, at a corporate level, is concerned with developing and extending high quality childcare and nursery provision. In this regard, while the guidelines set out below contain a number of compromises in order that nurseries might be allowed to locate in a range of locations convenient to home and work place, these are not so great as to undermine the objective of achieving high quality provision without detriment to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers or other policy objectives.

Revised Policy SCE4: Proposals for day nurseries and private nursery schools will be permitted where they conform with the guidelines set out below:

Location	Outdoor Play Space*	Staff Parking	Dropping Off	Size and Proximity to other Private Nurseries
City Centre	Outdoor playspace to be provided where possible: up to 10 children -90 sq m; 11-50 children - 9 sq m per child up to at least 200 sq m: Where outdoor play space cannot be provided, dedicated indoor physical play space of an equivalent scale will be considered as an alternative.	No dedicated parking requirement	The number of spaces required will take account of the proximity of car parks and bus stops. Each application will be considered on its merits.	No distance restrictions
Residential Areas	Outdoor playspace to be provided: up to 10 children - 90 sq; 11-50 children - 9 sq m per child up to at least 400 sq m:	One dedicated space per 3 staff members.	Sites with on-street parking restrictions will be acceptable only where parents can pick up and set down children within the curtilage of the premises, where a car can enter and leave the premises in forward gear. Up to 25 children - 3 spaces; more than 25 children - 4 spaces. Sites accessed from cul-de-sacs or residential streets of less than 4.8m width will not be considered suitable.	Not within a radius of 250m from an existing private nursery.
Employment Areas	Outdoor playspace to be provided: up to 10 children - 90 sq m; 11-50 children - 9 sq m/child up to at least 300 sq m : Dedicated indoor physical playspace may be considered to make up a shortfall in outdoor playspace, but will not be regarded as an acceptable substitute for it.	One dedicated space per 3 staff members.	Sites with on-street parking restrictions will be acceptable only where parents can pick up and set down children within the curtilage of the premises, where a car can enter and leave the premises in forward gear. Up to 25 children - 3 spaces; more than 25 children - 4 spaces.	Only one nursery on each industrial estate, unless evidence of significant unmet demand within the particular estate can be demonstrated.

*Outdoor play space must be attractive, usable, safe and enjoy a sunny aspect. Indoor physical playspace should be designated for that purpose and be additional to the ratio per child for indoor space required for Social Work Registration.

Regardless of location

Size: Nurseries providing more than 50 full time spaces (or equivalent) will not generally be permitted.

Access: Sites on major or heavily trafficked roads will not be considered suitable.

Noise: Adequate sound insulation, to the satisfaction of the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department, must be provided.

Building Type: Nursery premises should be situated wholly or predominantly on the ground floor and should have ground floor access, including ramped access suitable for pushchairs/wheelchairs. Tenemental buildings/flatted accommodated are not considered suitable for this use.

8 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Support Services, Director of Corporate Planning, Director of Social Work, Director of Education, Director of Economic Development, Director of Environmental & Consumer Protection, Director of Leisure & Parks, Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development, Director of Public Relations, and the Legal Manager have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.
- 8.2 The comments of the Social Work Department regarding revised Policy SCE4 can be summarised as follows:

The Social Work Department intends to dovetail with the Planning and Transportation Department, in relation to outdoor play space requirements, where Planning permission is not required. The only area of concern is in relation to outdoor play space within City Centre facilities. Outdoor play is essential, and any sized attractive space is better than none in the City Centre. Indoor areas are not a substitute for outdoor areas. Therefore, the preference would be to have the exception in the City Centre, with regard to outdoor playspace, removed and any application in the City Centre looked at individually. All other outdoor space requirements in Residential and in Employment areas would be acceptable for Registration and Inspection purposes.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Dundee Local Plan 1998
Report 716/1999 (Article IV, Planning and Transportation Committee, 22 November 1999)

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Location of Private Nurseries Participating in Survey

- Secondary School Catchment Areas
- Primary School Catchment Areas (Named)
- Lochee Catchment where Private Nurseries are located

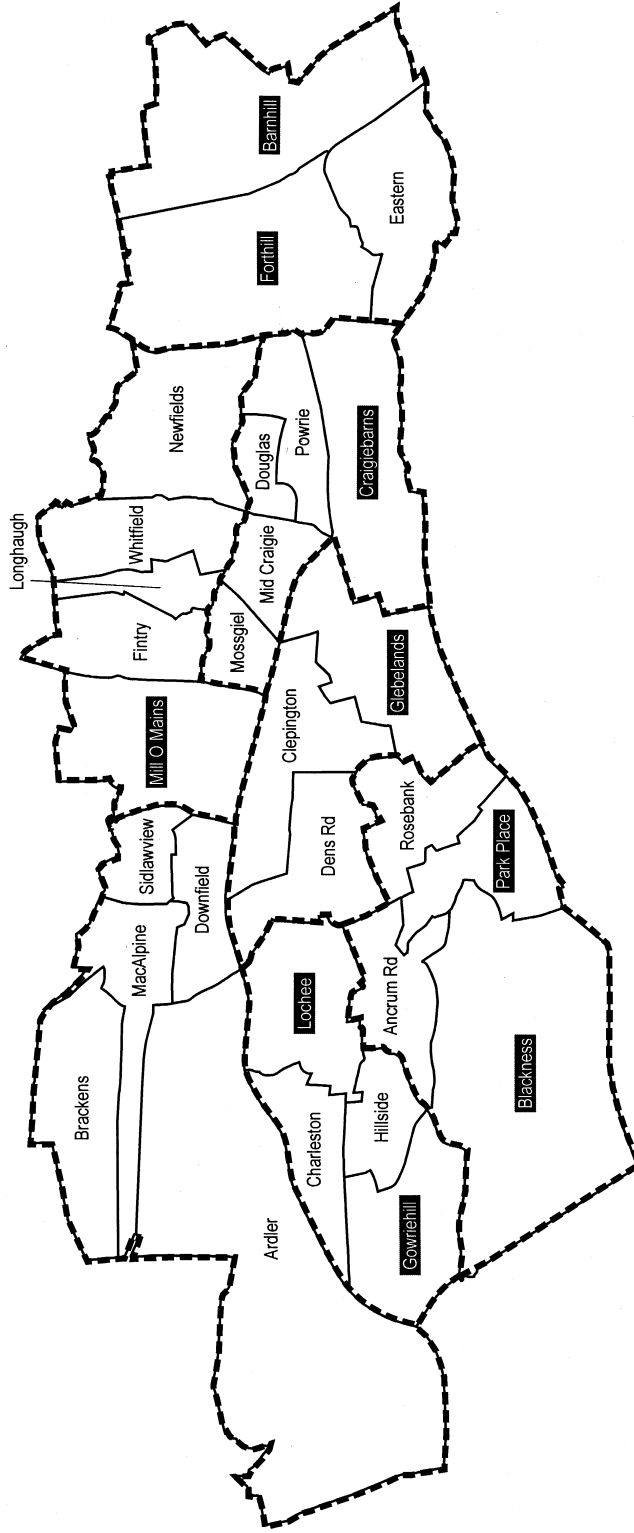
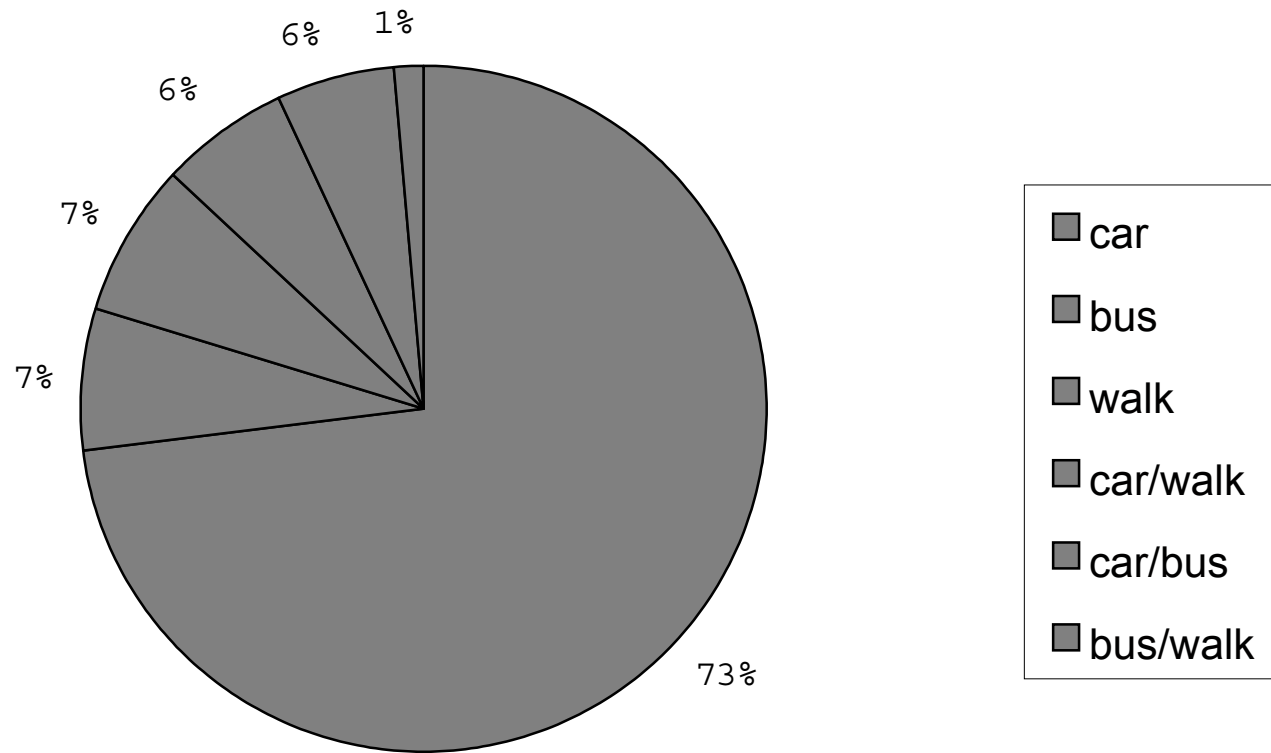


Figure 1: MODE OF TRANSPORT USED TO TRAVEL TO NURSERY



FACTORS - CHOOSING NURSERY

TOTAL RESPONDENTS

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT		QUITE IMPORTANT		NOT IMPORTANT		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
nursery located near to home	84	28.6	109	37.1	101	34.4	294
nursery located near work	83	27.9	123	41.4	91	30.6	297
nursery located on route between home & work	121	41.3	103	35.2	69	23.5	293
convenient for parking/dropping off	102	34.2	133	44.6	63	21.1	298
cost of nursery place	138	45.7	139	46.0	25	8.3	302
reputation of nursery	282	92.8	21	6.9	1	0.3	304
quality of indoor facilities	270	88.5	33	10.8	2	0.7	305
availability of outdoor play area	198	65.3	88	29.0	17	5.6	303
impression after introductory visit	280	92.4	22	7.3	1	0.3	303
vacancy available	203	68.4	87	29.3	7	2.4	297

RESPONDENTS (FULL-TIME CHILDREN)

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT		QUITE IMPORTANT		NOT IMPORTANT		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
nursery located near to home	38	25.7	59	39.9	51	34.5	148
nursery located near work	52	34.9	62	41.6	35	23.5	149
nursery located on route between home & work	61	41.2	56	37.8	31	20.9	148
convenient for parking/dropping off	47	31.8	62	41.9	39	26.4	148
cost of nursery place	72	48.0	65	43.3	13	8.7	150
reputation of nursery	134	89.3	15	10.0	1	0.7	150
quality of indoor facilities	136	90.1	15	9.9	0	0.0	151
availability of outdoor play area	103	69.1	38	25.5	8	5.4	149
impression after introductory visit	136	91.3	12	8.1	1	0.7	149
vacancy available	102	69.9	38	26.0	6	4.1	146

RESPONDENTS (PART-TIME CHILDREN)

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT		QUITE IMPORTANT		NOT IMPORTANT		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
nursery located near to home	44	31.2	49	34.8	48	34.0	141
nursery located near work	31	21.7	59	41.3	53	37.1	143
nursery located on route between home & work	59	42.1	45	32.1	36	25.7	140
convenient for parking/dropping off	53	36.6	69	47.6	23	15.9	145
cost of nursery place	63	42.9	72	49.0	12	8.2	147
reputation of nursery	144	96.6	5	3.4	0	0.0	149
quality of indoor facilities	129	86.6	18	12.1	2	1.3	149
availability of outdoor play area	93	62.4	47	31.5	9	6.0	149
impression after introductory visit	140	94.0	9	6.0	0	0.0	149
vacancy available	96	65.8	49	33.6	1	0.7	146

FACTORS - CHOOSING NURSERY

RESPONDENTS (TRAVEL BY CAR)

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT		QUITE IMPORTANT		NOT IMPORTANT		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
nursery located near to home	49	22.9	85	39.7	80	37.4	214
nursery located near work	64	29.4	89	40.8	65	29.8	218
nursery located on route between home & work	87	40.8	75	35.2	51	23.9	213
convenient for parking/dropping off	80	36.4	106	48.2	34	15.5	220
cost of nursery place	94	42.3	109	49.1	19	8.6	222
reputation of nursery	210	94.2	13	5.8	0	0.0	223
quality of indoor facilities	194	87.0	27	12.1	2	0.9	223
availability of outdoor play area	148	66.7	61	27.5	13	5.9	222
impression after introductory visit	209	93.7	13	5.8	1	0.4	223
vacancy available	150	67.9	64	29.0	7	3.2	221

RESPONDENTS (TRAVEL BY BUS)

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT		QUITE IMPORTANT		NOT IMPORTANT		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
nursery located near to home	3	15.8	6	31.6	10	52.6	19
nursery located near work	8	40.0	7	35.0	5	25.0	20
nursery located on route between home & work	7	36.8	8	42.1	4	21.1	19
convenient for parking/dropping off	3	15.8	3	15.8	13	68.4	19
cost of nursery place	12	60.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	20
reputation of nursery	16	80.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	20
quality of indoor facilities	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0	20
availability of outdoor play area	7	35.0	10	50.0	3	15.0	20
impression after introductory visit	18	90.0	2	10.0	0	0.0	20
vacancy available	14	70.0	6	30.0	0	0.0	20

RESPONDENTS (WALK)

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT		QUITE IMPORTANT		NOT IMPORTANT		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
nursery located near to home	17	77.3	5	22.7	0	0.0	22
nursery located near work	6	27.3	11	50.0	5	22.7	22
nursery located on route between home & work	11	50.0	7	31.8	4	18.2	22
convenient for parking/dropping off	7	31.8	7	31.8	8	36.4	22
cost of nursery place	11	50.0	9	40.9	2	9.1	22
reputation of nursery	20	90.9	2	9.1	0	0.0	22
quality of indoor facilities	21	95.5	1	4.5	0	0.0	22
availability of outdoor play area	16	72.7	5	22.7	1	4.5	22
impression after introductory visit	21	95.5	1	4.5	0	0.0	22
vacancy available	17	81.0	4	19.0	0	0.0	21

**Figure 2: NURSERY CHOICE:
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO RATED FACTORS AS "VERY IMPORTANT"**

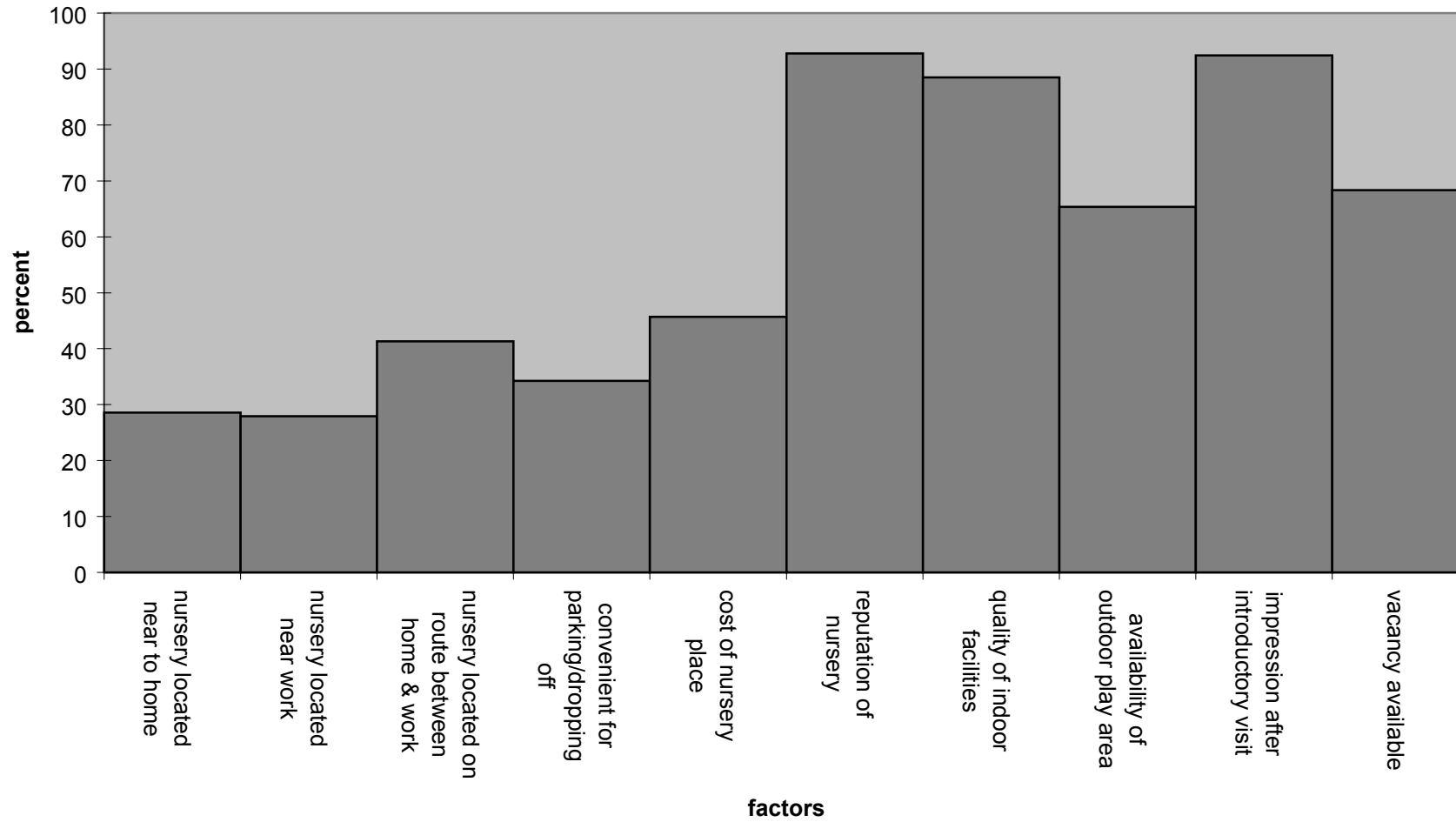


Figure 3: NURSERY CHOICE: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO RATED FACTORS AS "VERY IMPORTANT" OR "IMPORTANT"

