



Millennium Cohort Study Participant Engagement Research

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Executive summary

Introduction and methodology

- This report presents findings from research with Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) members and their parents. It was carried out by NCB as part of a broader study of participant engagement being conducted in partnership with Ipsos MORI for the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS).
- The aims of the study were to explore: what has driven or prevented involvement; the dynamics of family decision making about participation; experiences of taking part; and views on respondent communications and preferences for the future.
- The study involved surveys and qualitative work with cohort members and their parents.
- Self-completion questionnaires were designed for parents and children and posted to a stratified random sample of 579 families. Altogether, responses were received from 159 main carers (27%), 58 partners (14%) and 123 children (21%). For the most part, the demographic profile of the achieved sample was similar to the profile of the issued sample, although certain ethnic groups were slightly underrepresented, as were families where all parents worked full time. Responses also came almost exclusively from participants in the last wave of MCS (5).
- Semi-structured depth interviews were conducted with 14 families, selected from a broader stratified random sample provided by CLS. Of these families, 12 were respondents to MCS5. A total of 14 main carers, 13 children and 5 partners took part.
- Questionnaire data was stored and analysed in SPSS v18. Qualitative data was analysed using the Framework method in Excel.
- All participants were fully informed of the purpose of the research. Children and parents were assured that their names would not be used when reporting findings. Children were approached first through parents, before being asked directly if they wished to take part. Interview participants were provided with 'thank you' letters and cinema vouchers from NCB, to the value of £10 each, to show appreciation of their contribution to the research.
- In interpreting the findings, it is important to bear in mind that some of the more hard-to-reach and less enthusiastic members of the cohort may have been less likely to participate. It is possible that views expressed may be somewhat more positive overall than those that may have been generated from a fully representative sample. Nevertheless, we highlight consensus as well as differences among our respondents, and a full range of critical as well as positive view points are represented and explored.

Awareness and perceptions of the purpose and value of the study

- Most parents and children said they have been told very little about the purpose and aims of the study, and even less about ways in which their data are used in practice, and this made it hard for many to say what they thought of its purpose.

- Nevertheless, almost all parents surveyed and interviewed had a belief and trust that the study is worthwhile and or useful in some way and this came across as important for parents' commitment to the study. Some children reported a similar perspective, but for many its purpose is not something they have considered one way or another.
- The value of the study was most likely to be described in terms of generating an understanding of children and families of the current generation; however some participants had a belief that it may be used in some way to help inform policies for children and families.
- When asked to suggest what uses the data might be put to, suggestions varied and were not always accurate; for example, some anticipated findings would be used locally to aid local policy making, and some parents and children believed businesses as well as government could access study data; it may be helpful to communicate more explicitly about this, in case it is a perception which might deter some families from taking part.
- Among families surveyed, partners seem more sceptical than main carers that it is used for research or policy, a factor that may be helpful to address in future engagement approaches; children were more likely than parents to agree that research is probably used to improve things for children, and this may be a useful building block for the engagement of those who are interested and motivated by issues of social impact.
- While most families understand their participation to be useful to the study, at least to some extent, one in five main carers and a similar proportion of children did not think that their dropping out would do any harm. Setting out more clearly the implications of losing numbers – and numbers in any particular group, such as those with disabled children, or 'busy working families' – could potentially make respondents feel more valuable to the study, and more inclined to think twice about opting out.

Overall experience and impact of participation among families

- The majority of both parents and children are happy to be in the study but are split between those who actively gain enjoyment from it, and those who just "do it" because they think it is a good thing to be doing, (or because their parents are involved).
- Although some children are very enthusiastic about the study, children as a whole are less likely to be actively engaged in the study than main carers; some children just "go along with things." Fuller direct engagement will be important to the future participation of this group.
- Around one in twenty parents and children were not very happy to be in the study; these may be at particular risk of drop out in MCS6.
- Mothers and girls are slightly more likely to be positive about the study than fathers and boys; boys seemed especially likely to be "just going along" with participation because of their parents, than to be actively engaged, and a particular focus on developing engagement approaches for boys may be helpful.

- Whereas parents tended to recall quite clearly their experiences in the study over time and have clear perceptions of both the most recent study wave (MC5) and waves when their children were very young, children have limited memories of the study before MCS5, despite normally understanding that they have participated all their lives.
- Perhaps not surprisingly, given activities are largely one-way data collection activities, most parents and children regard the study as having little impact on them. However, a range of benefits are described by some, such as interest, enjoyment and learning (for both parents and children); pleasure in being listened to, or from having the opportunity for simply being part of something "special" or "useful". For children, particularly boys, the immediate experience, is more prominent than it is for parents in determining views of the study compared with other factors.
- By and large parents do not feel particularly "valued" as study members, but also say they don't need to be. A key reward for participation stems from feeling useful. To the extent that the study team succeed in making each wave interesting or enjoyable for them and their children, the visits are also rewarding in themselves. Moreover, having the feedback loop of findings being shared back to them demonstrates the value that the study is delivering, and of the value of their participation, and "squares the circle" in this regard. For some children, being 'chosen' does make them feel valued and important, although like parents, many feel no need for further recognition. The child gift does play a small but useful role for some children and families, in providing recognition for their contributions.

Experience of taking part in previous waves

- On the whole, parents and children tended to have a positive view of their experiences of study visits and many of the study elements, although for many the experience of visits is "OK" rather than actively enjoyable and some activities are viewed more positively than others.
- From among all the activities at the most recent study sweep, the 'fun' computer-based child assessments were what children enjoyed the most. Whether a child enjoyed completing their question booklet was influenced by whether they enjoy writing generally; the move to CAPI interviews for children in MCS6 will help to address concerns of those who dislike writing.
- Height and weight measurement can be sensitive with some participants and therefore it is important to provide any necessary reassurance about the use of the data, and ensure children understand that they can opt out of these elements whilst participating in the rest of a study visit.
- Among families we spoke to, parents' own CAPI interviews have a less important impact on their engagement with the study. A small number of parents mentioned that some of the more sensitive questions make them feel uncomfortable, however, among those interviewed, this has not been significant enough to affect their overall feelings of engagement.
- Parents and children felt that activities in the most recent sweep were explained clearly and were happy with the amount of information they received in advance.

- For the most part, respondents were happy with the amount of time visits took up, although around 15% of main carers were not. Adding too much to the length of study activities could risk deterring some from taking part.
- Interviewers were described positively by both parents and children. They were generally praised as patient, flexible and professional. One parent did raise concerns about confidentiality, highlighting that when an interviewer shared an anecdote about one family with another, the people concerned were easily identifiable in a small community, even if they were not named. This is something which should be raised with interviewers to avoid similar incidents arising in future.
- Parents and children alike appreciated that children were given small gifts after each wave; parents felt that it was an appropriate way to recognise their family's input, and it helped children to feel valued.

Drivers of participation and non-participation

- Most parents who took part in MCS5 felt a sense of commitment to what they saw as a worthwhile study, and this had driven their participation to date. For some, however, their own enjoyment of the experience, or that of their children, was at the forefront of their minds.
- Children were more likely to focus on their own experience and enjoyment, rather than the value of the study, in explaining their motives for taking part, especially boys. This means that among this group, there is no "safety" net of underlying commitment protecting their engagement if activities in a particular study wave are not appealing. For this group it is important to ensure that activities are communicated in ways that hook into factors most likely to appeal; likewise it will be beneficial to work on developing a sense of engagement with the study that goes beyond the experience of activities.
- For some children who were less keen, their parents' facilitation, encouragement and reassurance had been key. In light of children's increasing autonomy, parents' views might hold less way in future. Equally, parents may make less effort to engage teenagers in discussion about whether to take part, and be more inclined to 'just leave it', unless they express a strong desire to participate.
- For parents or children contented with their experience, or committed to the study because of its perceived importance, continued participation could be assumed, as long as the study team made no major increases in the demands they made, and remained flexible regarding scheduling visits. However, their loyalty could potentially be increased through providing more information about the uses and impact of study data.
- For families under stress, enthusiasm or commitment was not necessarily enough to ensure participation in study visits. Two potential responses to this might be: (a) making greater efforts to ensure families understood the importance of representing and understanding their families' exceptional experiences and (b) offering less intrusive or demanding ways to sustain at least a minimal level of input, for example, through having them complete a brief postal or online questionnaire rather than invite an interviewer into their home for the best part of an evening.

- For parents and children who simply were not interested in the study, and felt no sense of obligation or commitment, there also appear to be two options: (a) reducing its demands, as above; or (b) increasing or emphasising the benefits of participation for parents and children.

Keeping in touch

- The keeping in touch materials are recalled and read by the majority of parents and play a clear role in helping families feel connected with the study: at least six in ten agree they make them or their family feel special and help them feel connected to other study participants.
- Overall, the materials are widely read, although with varying degrees of engagement and satisfaction with the depth and range of content. Main carers tended to be more interested than either partners or children, suggesting that more emphasis might be put on finding out what would interest fathers and children.
- Feedback on the design of the leaflets was generally very positive – parents and children felt they looked appealing, and presented content in an accessible way.
- However, the content could be developed to appeal to a wider range of participants. Whilst some families are very pleased with existing content and think no changes necessary, some families are lukewarm about current content, and a core 10% of parents surveyed feel that the keeping in touch materials are neither interesting, nor contain information important to families. Some families are hungry for more material on uses and impact of study data (including children's milk teeth, gathered previously), and more detailed analysis, rather than just snippets.
- Some children were also keen to find out more about how findings have been used. This might increase the proportion of children feeling the study was valuable. Other children felt materials would be more engaging if they pictured and profiled other (real) children taking part in the study.
- However, when developing content it will need to be borne in mind that some families do not want to receive too much information: for this group receiving something short and easy to digest is important to help them feel in touch, but they are never going to have a strong interest in detailed feedback. The challenge is to pitch things to meet the needs of these families as well as those who want more, and also to develop content to increase engagement of those most at risk of drop out (see Chapter 5). One option suggested by families is to make fuller information available on the web-site for those who want it; this could also be communicated via optional email alerts, for example.
- Most parents are happy to receive study communications once a year, as previously, but it may be worth considering more frequent information for children who have a greater interest in receiving feedback once a term.

Anticipating the next sweep

- The vast majority of parents indicated that they would be happy for their families to take part in future waves of the study. Many children also seem amenable but there are significant numbers whose participation is driven by their parents' engagement, rather than their own and who may be at risk of drop out when children's decision making becomes more independent.
- As outlined in previous chapters, many parents felt that, by the time of the next sweep, children would be old enough to decide themselves whether or not to take part. A few anticipated that their children would opt out – including some parents who would themselves prefer to stay engaged in what they saw as a worthwhile and interesting study.
- Although most parents were happy for their children to receive their own communications about the next sweep, they generally felt that post should continue to be sent via parents until children were 18 years old. However, they made clear that they trusted the study team to send appropriate materials; it was more that they wanted to ensure that they knew what was being sent to their child.
- As some parents suggested, it appears likely that more effort will need to be made to engage reluctant teenagers via building fuller direct engagement with them, whether this means providing more feedback on the use of their data, making the activities more enjoyable, or making the personal benefits of the study more prominent.
- In general, children felt that few things needed to change, for the study to be relevant to them at the next wave. They felt that as long as the questions and activities during visits reflected their lives, abilities and interests, that would be fine.
- Doing a variety of activities during study visits was seen as important by children, to maintain the interest of those with different preferences or tendencies to get bored, and to limit the time they spent in activities they disliked. Although doing some things on the computer was seen as fun, to the extent that they were like games, doing everything on the computer was not necessarily a good idea. Interaction with, and attention from, the interviewer was welcomed by many children.
- Just as children's enjoyment of question booklets depended partly on how much they enjoyed writing, the same was true in relation to the idea of completing a diary. Some were very enthusiastic; for others, this risked seeming like homework, and it would be important to make it very easy and quick to complete, if it was to be useful and not deter people from taking part.
- Children also fed back that if an activity monitor is included in MCS6, it will be important for it to be more comfortable and more discrete than the one they have been asked to wear before.
- While not all children personally like to be called a "Child of the New Century", most parents and children we spoke to felt it to be a wholly appropriate – and often ideal – name for the study and no-one felt it made sense to change it.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from research with members of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) and their parents. It was carried out by NCB as part of a broader study of approaches to participant engagement being conducted in partnership with Ipsos MORI for the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS).

1.1 Background and aims

The MCS is an important study which follows the lives of over 19,000 children in the UK born in 2000/1. The cohort has been surveyed on five prior occasions, most recently when the children were 11 years of age. As retention of existing cohort members with the study is crucial, a great deal of importance is placed on maintaining a strong and positive relationship with participants via a participant-focused approach to delivering the study and effective on-going communication, such as via “keep in touch” communication mailings.

The next sweep of the study will take place in 2015, when members are 14 years old. In light of evidence from previous cohort studies that the transition from parents to children as primary respondents can lead to a drop-off in participation, the next sweep will be crucial to the long-term success of MCS.

In this context, NCB was commissioned to carry out a survey and qualitative work with cohort members and their parents, to better understand their views on the meaning and value of MCS, their experiences of the study so far, and their concerns and preferences with respect to taking part in future.

This work was intended to help ensure that the next MCS survey is as appealing as possible to these young people, as well as being acceptable to their parents.

Specifically, the aims of the study were to explore:

- What has driven or prevented involvement
- The dynamics of family decision making about participation
- Experiences of taking part
- Views on respondent communications and preferences for the future.

1.2 Methodology

The research design involved two elements:

- Surveys for children and parents (mainly self-completion)
- Depth interviews (mainly face to face, with some telephone interviews).

1.2.1 Surveys for children and parents

Questionnaire

In order to gather feedback from a broad sample of study members, separate, but closely comparable, paper self-completion questionnaires of four pages in length were designed for parents and children (See appendices A.5 and A.6). Questions were designed to be suitable for all cohort members, regardless of their participation history.

Sample

The survey population was families who had been approached for, but not necessarily participated in, the MCS5 in 2012, which is the most recent sweep of the study when cohort members were aged 11. Specifically both main carers and children, and also partners where relevant, were included in the population for the study. The survey was sent to two samples, a main sample and a supplementary sample that arose from the qualitative research element. Sampling was carried out by the CLS team.

Main sample

The main sample of 360 families was designed to achieve responses from a wide range of types of family. It comprised a stratified random sample, stratified according to country, area strata (disadvantaged, advantaged and ethnic), and whether or the family participated in MCS5. Stratifications were disproportionate in order to boost up low penetration groups and groups less likely to respond. For example, groups that were disproportionately represented relevant to their proportion in the MCS5 sample population were: families from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, disadvantaged areas, and areas with high BME representation, and non-responders to MCS5.

Table 1.1 Main quantitative sample composition ¹

		Issued sample (n)
Country	England	180
	Scotland	60
	Wales	60
	Northern Ireland	60
Area strata	Advantaged	120
	Disadvantaged	180
	Ethnic	60
MCS5 family participation	Participant	261
	Non-participant	99
Total		360

¹ This table shows the original sample, including 3 families who were withdrawn by CLS because the circumstances of the cases meant they were unsuitable for the survey (e.g. recent adoptions where the new adoptive parents have little or no knowledge of MCS).

Supplementary sample

Questionnaires were also sent to 222 families who had been sampled for the purpose of the qualitative research and contacted indicating they may be invited to give feedback, but who were either not needed to meet qualitative quotas, or who wanted to participate in the qualitative research but were unable to do so. They were included in the survey because it was felt important to give these families the opportunity to provide feedback if they so wished.

Survey administration

An advance letter to explain the forthcoming feedback research was sent to all families sampled for qualitative and quantitative study elements by CLS, alongside a Keep in Touch (KIT) mailing. Following this, NCB was responsible for administering the survey to emphasise the independence of the feedback study and to encourage honest feedback.

The main sample received two mailings of the questionnaire, and the supplementary sample received one concurrently with the second main sample mailing. Subsequently, in light of disappointing response rates, Ipsos MORI fieldworkers conducted an additional telephone follow-up exercise with the main sample (excluding MCS5 non-responders), which significantly boosted the achieved sample size. (See Appendices A.7 – A.10 for materials.)

Each questionnaire mailing consisted of an outer envelope and letter addressed to the main carer, an inner envelope and letter addressed to the child, copies of the questionnaire for the child, main carer and partner (if applicable), and stamped addressed envelopes. In the letter for main carers, we requested that they pass on the relevant envelope to their child. The child's envelope was left unsealed, so that parents could read the contents if they wished. Appendices A.1 and A.2 include the letters included with the first mailing, which explained the purpose of the survey, provided reassurances about confidentiality, and included contact details for the study team at NCB.

Achieved sample and response rates

In total, 159 main carers, 58 partners and 123 children returned completed questionnaires.

Table 1.2 shows response rates by family member, across the main sample, qualitative booster sample, and overall. Response rates were substantially higher for main carers and children than for partners. They were also higher for families in the main sample, who received reminder letters (see Appendices A.3 and A.4) and duplicate copies of questionnaires and were targeted through telephone follow-up.

Table 1.2 Response rates by family member and sample

		Sample		
		Main	Booster	Total
Main carers	Issued sample	357	222	579
	Achieved sample	131	28	159
	Response rate (%)	37	13	27
Partners	Issued sample	260	163	421
	Achieved sample	40	18	58
	Response rate (%)	15	11	14
Children	Issued sample	363	224	587
	Achieved sample	94	29	123
	Response rate (%)	26	13	21

As shown in Table 1.3, there was a very small difference in response rates for girls and boys.

Table 1.3 Child response rates by child gender (excludes 2nd twins)

		Male	Female
Children	Issued sample	291	288
	Achieved sample	60	64
	Response rate (%)	20.6	22.2

Profile of the achieved sample

Table 1.4 below sets out key demographic characteristics of the total achieved sample (combining main and supplementary samples) and how it compares to the issued sample, as well as that of non-responders. The table includes child and family characteristics.

For the most part, the profile of the achieved sample was similar to the profile of the issued sample. However, among those who returned questionnaires, those from the ethnic stratum within England were slightly underrepresented, particularly those from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Similarly, a higher proportion of families where all parents were working responded, compared to families where one parent worked. In addition, as shown in the final sets of figures, questionnaires came almost exclusively from those who took part in MCS5 and very few responses were received from the MCS5 non-responders.

Table 1.4 Sample profile by demographic indicators

		Sample		
		N = 579	N = 159	N = 420
		Issued (%)	Achieved (%)	Non-respondents (%)
Ethnicity of Cohort member	White	84.0	88.7	77.1
	Mixed	2.2	2.5	1.8
	Indian	2.6	1.3	4.6
	Pakistani	6.3	4.4	9.2
	Bangladeshi	1.5	0.0	3.7
	Black Caribbean	0.7	1.3	0.0
	Black African	1.9	1.9	1.8
	Other Ethnic group	0.7	0.0	1.8
Stratum within Country	England - Advantaged	28.4	30.8	24.8
	England - Disadvantaged	16.4	15.7	17.4
	England - Ethnic	15.7	11.3	22.0
	Wales - Advantaged	4.5	6.3	1.8
	Wales - Disadvantaged	10.8	9.4	12.8
	Scotland - Advantaged	4.1	3.8	4.6
	Scotland - Disadvantaged	7.5	8.2	6.4
	Northern Ireland - Advantaged	4.9	5.0	4.6
	Northern Ireland - Disadvantaged	7.8	9.4	5.5
Family working status at last sweep interviewed	Not working	14.6	16.4	11.9
	All working	7.8	11.3	2.8
	One of couple working	77.6	72.3	85.3
All in work	Not all in work	92.2	88.7	97.2
	All in work	7.8	11.3	2.8
Socio-economic status	No employed	36.9	34.0	41.3
	National Statistics Socio-economic Classification 1 & 2 (Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations)	21.3	20.8	22.0
	National Statistics Socio-economic Classification 3-7 (Intermediate occupations, small employers, and lower supervisory, lower technical, semi-routine and routine occupations)	41.8	45.3	36.7
MCS5 Outcome	Productive	88.8	97.5	76.1
	Refusal	9.0	1.3	20.2
	No contact	2.2	1.3	3.7

1.2.2 Qualitative research

In order to explore the experiences of cohort members and their families in more depth, and to examine the reasoning behind their opinions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a small sample of families, selected from a broader stratified sample provided by CLS.

Sample

Sample design

The sample was purposively designed to broadly reflect the range of children and families in the sample according to key dimensions likely to differentiate experiences and views of the study and participation.

Sampling involved a two stage process based on (i) geography and (ii) other profile characteristics.

First, a number of areas were purposively chosen to provide representation of all countries in the UK, a range of regions in England, and rural as well as urban areas. For practical reasons, sample selection for face to face interviews in some regions was restricted to postcodes in or near to towns and urban areas. However, good coverage of rural areas was achieved by sampling for telephone interviews in rural locations.

Within each of the selected sample areas, a sample of families was drawn by CLS based on the families' known characteristics at MCS5 according to: MCS5 participation history and socio-economic factors including: child gender; whether or not the family was a one or two parent household; socio-economic classification and parents' work status.

Achieved sample

Interviews were completed with 14 families. Of these families, 12 were respondents to MCS5 and two were not. In each case, except one, the child and one or both parents were interviewed². A total of 14 main carers, 13 children and 5 partners took part.

As shown in Table 1.5, the achieved sample broadly met the target quotas.

² The exception involved one family who were non-respondents to MCS5: while the main carer was happy to talk about her experience over the telephone, she advised against speaking to her child, partly because his Aspergers meant that he was uncomfortable with new people, and partly because she felt he would have little to say about the study, having missed the last two waves.

Table 1.5 Qualitative sample characteristics by target groups

Quota category		Target	Achieved
MCS5 status	Respondents	12	12
	Non-respondents	4	2
Children interviewed	Boys	8	7
	Girls	8	6
Lone parent status	Lone parent	6	4
SES	Low	5	6
	Medium	7	3
	High	4	5
All parents working	All parents working	4	1
Region	London (urban)	3	3
	East of England (urban/semi-urban)	1	1
	South East (urban/semi-urban)	2	2
	South West (rural)	1	1
	North of England (rural)	1	1
	North Cities (urban)	2	1
	Birmingham/West Midlands/South West (Urban/semi-urban)	2	1
	Scotland (urban and rural)	1	1
	Northern Ireland (urban and rural)	1	1
	Wales	2	2
Total		16	14

It proved more difficult to recruit MCS5 non-respondents than respondents. However, in addition to the two families we were able to interview, a further five MCS5 non-responders who, while unwilling to take part in full interviews, were happy to share their reasons for not taking part in Child of the New Century at the last sweep, and in some cases for not wishing to do so in future.

Topic guides, fieldwork and participant recruitment

Topic guides, designed in consultation with CLS, are included in Appendix A.13.

For the most part, interviews were conducted in family homes, and consisted of three main sections: one with the child, one with the parents, and finally, one involving joint discussion between the child and parents towards the end. This allowed exploring family dynamics as well as allowing children and their parents to talk separately, in confidence. Telephone interviews were conducted with some families ($N = 5$) in order to avoid the need for overnight travel.

Interviews including all three sections lasted up to 90 minutes, and were recorded with permission.

Telephone recruitment was carried out by NCB researchers from a sample of families who had already received advance warning that they might be contacted in pre-notification letters from CLS. Several attempts were made to contact families, at different times of the day and evening; in the event that a family proved impossible to reach, or refused to take part, the next family within the relevant quota was approached.

1.2.3 Analysis

Questionnaire data was stored and analysed in SPSS v18. Ten per cent of all entries were checked for accuracy of data entry, and additional checks were conducted using frequencies and cross-tabulations.

Analysis of findings from interviews involved systematic charting of data from recordings, using the Framework method in Excel, and debrief and discussion meetings of the research team.

1.2.4 Ethics

Children and parents were assured that they would remain anonymous and that their names would not be used when reporting the findings of the research. All questionnaire and interview participants were fully informed of the purpose of the research. Interviewees were made aware of the topics to be covered before their consent was sought to participate. In each case, children were approached through parents, before being asked directly if they wished to participate. Information sheets for parents and children, provided in advance of their interviews, are included in Appendix 8.12.

Interview participants were provided with 'thank you' letters and cinema vouchers from NCB, to the value of £10 each, to show appreciation of their contribution to the research.

1.3 Report outline and interpretation of findings

The remainder of this report consists of six key chapters, beginning with an overview of respondents' views on 'Child of the New Century', in terms of the value of the study to society, and for them personally. Subsequently, we consider their experiences of activities at previous waves, key drivers of participation or disengagement, and perspectives on study communications. Finally, we review participants' preferences and suggestions for the conduct and content of the next wave. Throughout, we reflect on the implications of the findings for future engagement activities.

In each chapter, we draw on both survey and interview material, using the insights from discussion with families to add depth to the quantitative data. Verbatim quotes are used throughout to illustrate key points.

In interpreting the findings, it is important to bear in mind that both the survey and qualitative samples were purposively designed rather than intended to be fully representative. They were designed to illustrate as full a range of views as possible arising across the different types family that comprise the MCS sample. Survey measures are also intended to provide a strong indication of the overall balance of views across different aspects of study experience and implementation, rather than a strictly representative picture.

In addition, it is worth bearing in mind a certain level of differential non-response across different groups, and that it is likely that some of the more hard-to-reach, and less enthusiastic members of the cohort may have been less likely to participate. It is therefore possible that views expressed may be more somewhat positive overall than those that may have been generated from a fully representative sample. Nevertheless, we highlight consensus as well as differences among our respondents, and a full range of critical as well as positive view points are explored and represented in the research.

2. Awareness and perceptions of the purpose and value of the study

In this chapter, we consider study members' perceptions of Child of the New Century, in terms of its purpose and value for them personally, and for those conducting the study or using its findings.

Key points

- Most parents and children said they have been told very little about the purpose and aims of the study, and even less about ways in which their data are used in practice, and this made it hard for many to say what they thought of its purpose.
- Nevertheless, almost all parents surveyed and interviewed had a belief and trust that the study is worthwhile and or useful in some way and this came across as important for parents' commitment to the study. Some children reported a similar perspective, but for many its purpose is not something they have considered one way or another.
- The value of the study was most likely to be describe in terms of generating an understanding of children and families of the current generation; however some participants had a belief that it may be used in some way to help inform policies for children and families.
- When asked to suggest what uses the data might be put to, suggestions varied and were not always accurate; for example, some anticipated findings would be used locally to aid local policy making, and some parents and children believed businesses as well as government could access study data; it may be helpful to communicate more explicitly about this, in case it is a perception which might deter some families from taking part.
- Among families surveyed, partners seem more sceptical than main carers that it is used for research or policy, a factor that may be helpful to address in future engagement approaches; children were more likely than parents to agree that research is probably used to improve things for children, and this may be a useful building block for the engagement of those who are interested and motivated by issues of social impact.
- While most families understand their participation to be useful to the study, at least to some extent, one in five main carers and a similar proportion of children did not think that their dropping out would do any harm. Setting out more clearly the implications of losing numbers – and numbers in any particular group, such as those with disabled children, or 'busy working families' – could potentially make respondents feel more valuable to the study, and more inclined to think twice about opting out.

2.1 Perceptions of the purpose and value of the study to society

Parents

Most parents interviewed and surveyed had some sense of the study's purpose and believed it was worthwhile. However, few felt confident that they actually knew, as opposed to presumed or imagined, what it was for. In general, interviewees found it quite difficult to describe or imagine any specific practical uses of the data provided by their family and others, and felt they were speculating, rather than recalling what they had been told. Consistently, parents (and children) told us that they had not been informed about what the data was being used for, or at least could not recall this having happened.

The most common perception was that it served a worthwhile research function. As shown in Table 2.1 below, all most all parents surveyed tended to believe "*findings are used by universities to do useful research*", with around six in ten confident enough to say this was "certainly true".

Some had a sense that findings are "*used to improve things for families.*" For example, some qualitative respondents said that even without knowing for certain how the data *would* be used, they could see that it had *potential* to inform policy, and to lead to improvements in services and had a general belief that it served this function somehow. As shown in the Table below, in line with this, the majority of survey respondents (around six in ten) were only confident enough to say this was "a bit true" and minorities of parents actively reported they believed this was not true. Although the numbers involved are fairly small, main carers (typically mothers) appeared more likely than partners (typically fathers) to believe study findings were used to improve things for families.

Table 2.1 Parents' beliefs about use of Child of the New Century data

		Certainly true %	A bit true %	Not true %	N
'Findings are used by universities to do useful research'	Main carers	59.9	40.1	.0	157
	Partners	64.3	32.1	3.6	56
'Findings are used by the Government to improve things for families'	Main carers	29.3	58.6	12.1	157
	Partners	16.4	61.8	21.8	55

Parents interviewed commonly described ways they believed the study to generate useful information about children and families.

Some saw it as helping to paint a picture of children's lives, experiences or abilities in the 21st Century, with a view to comparing different generations over time. These parents highlighted changes since they were young, such as advances in technology, or restrictions on outside play, and saw themselves as playing a part in recording history, or social change.

"I think it's fascinating how life has changed so much for our youngsters, compared with when we were young in the 70s....." (Main carer)

Some referred to differences within the cohort, and in particular to the range of families taking part. They expected that the research was designed to measure the extent of particular phenomena, including family breakup or living in poverty, and the impact of these and other environmental factors on children's learning or wellbeing. For example, one father mentioned 'being forced' to have fluoride in their water, and imagined that the study might be able to compare children in his area with those in others where this was not the case. As another father explained:

"It's medical research as well as statistical research. That sort of thing is ideal, as we need to know what's going on in Britain."

(Partner)

It was striking that some parents we interviewed saw the research as an end in itself, and felt that increasing knowledge - as distinct from applying it - was a laudable aim. However, it should be born in mind that those who participated in this feedback study may be more likely than others to have a strong affinity with, and interest in, research than participants generally.

There were some interviewees, like survey respondents, who felt that the study could potentially inform government spending plans. For example, one interviewee suggested that, in order to plan expenditure on benefits, it was important to measure the growth in the numbers of lone parent families. Other parents thought that social workers, teachers and local authorities could use study data, to better understand the social, educational and health needs of their populations. For example, one mother felt that if families reported a lack of play or exercise facilities, councils might consider building a leisure centre.

Similarly, some parents imagined that information gathered from families could inform public health research which was of personal interest to them. For example, one father of a child with asthma hoped that the study might look at environmental factors associated with the condition, while a mother concerned about the rise of junk food anticipated that MCS might show the impact of diet on growth and development. Another mother imagined that scientists might be analysing the baby teeth collected by the study team. She was not alone in being intrigued about the fate of these teeth. As another mother asked:

"You've got all the teeth - are they in some cupboard somewhere?"

(Main carer)

Notably, one mother we interviewed imagined that businesses might have access to the data, and that retailers could use information about children's hobbies and preferences to inform product development. A child from another family also guessed that companies might use the data; interestingly, she felt that this was fine, as long as the information they received was strictly limited: for example, an IT business might be allowed to know about use of technology, but not about other aspects of children's lives.

It is quite likely that respondents may have given little thought to how their information was used before the topic was raised in their interviews. However, it is possible that other study members may have equally hazy and inaccurate ideas about what the data is used for. In some cases, their fears or suspicions

may deter them from taking part in the study, and it may be advisable to address these issues explicitly in future communications.

Some parents seemed to have a more restricted conception of what the study was for. They tended to associate it with understanding the development of individual children, rather than investigating effects of particular factors on a broader scale. It is likely that language barriers played a part in some of these cases; in their interviews with NCB staff, parents who spoke limited English struggled to express their views and may have found it difficult to understand MCS material.

Overall, even if they are unsure about how study data is used, most parents seemed optimistic about its value. Although questionnaires could not explore respondents' ideas in depth, they included a list of adjectives, positive and negative, which might be applied to MCS. Table 2.2 sets out those which pertained to the value of the study, overall. Parents were asked to indicate which words best described Child of the New Century, from their perspectives.

For the most part, main carers and partners tended to endorse similar words. More than half of each group felt the study was 'useful', 'relevant' and 'worthwhile'. Just one respondent – a father – considered it pointless.

Table 2.2 Descriptors of the value of the study endorsed by parents

	Main carers	Partners
	%	%
Useful	53.5	58.6
Relevant	52.2	62.1
Worthwhile	50.9	63.8
Important	44.7	39.7
Special	35.2	22.4
Meaningful	27.0	41.4
Pointless	.0	1.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>N =159</i>	<i>N =58</i>

As discussed further in Chapter 6, while some parents were satisfied with the brief study information updates they received through the post annually, others were clearly keen to hear more about the study findings, and how they were used. One father expressed an interest in hearing when journal articles were published on the basis of MCS data (Partner). More generally, **future engagement activity might focus more on demonstrating how data from the study informs policy**, given that parents seemed much less confident on this point than that it informed research.

Children

For the most part, children who took part in interviews found it much harder than their parents to articulate what the study involved, or what it was for.

Also, whilst some children did have views about this, a significant number of children interviewed had not particularly considered (and were not particularly

interested in) the extent to which the study had a purpose or value – it was just something they had “done”.

As shown in Table 2.3 below, among children responding to the survey, the majority tended to believe that the study was both used for academic research, and used to improve things for young people – and higher proportions of children thought the latter was true than parents in responding to a similar question (see above). This may be a useful point to build on in engagement work. However, the degree of uncertainty children expressed in the qualitative work indicates a possibility that the great concurrence of children with these statements might also reflect children’s greater tendency to “satisfice” in survey responses and to accept what they are told at face value which could change as they become older.

Table 2.3 Children’s beliefs about use of Child of the New Century data

	Certainly true %	A bit true %	Not true %	N
‘Findings are used by the Government to improve things for young people	40.2	53.0	6.8	117
‘Findings are used by universities to do useful research’	40.2	49.6	10.3	117

A similar gender difference was apparent in children’s as in parents’ data, in that 48.3% of girls, compared to 31.6% of boys believed findings were ‘certainly’ used to improve things for young people.

In the depth interviews, a number of the children communicated a clear idea of the study as enabling comparisons between their experiences and those of people who grew up in the past, when things were different. Extending this idea, one girl also felt it would be interesting for future generations to look back on:

“I think it’s for children in the future to see what things were like for us.”

(Girl)

Some children saw the study as designed to explore their views on different aspects of their lives, and monitoring how their perspectives changed over time.

“It’s a way of finding out what children like and don’t like... They can see how your opinion changes – what you thought before, and what you think now.”

(Girl)

As discussed in Chapter 6, there was also some interest among children in comparing themselves with others, for example, in terms of their preferred activities – implicitly, therefore, they understood that the study would facilitate this. However, none of the children we spoke to seemed aware that it was designed to compare children within the cohort, or to seek explanations for any differences between them. While some knew that thousands of others were

involved, across the country, others had no idea how many were taking part, or whether the research extended beyond their own local area.

Not surprisingly, given that they were very unsure of the study's aims, children who took part in interviews generally claimed to have no idea about how the data were actually used. However, like parents, some saw the findings as *potentially* useful, if the Government – or perhaps parents – paid attention to their views, and used them to help children with any challenges they described.

"If you give the answers, they could actually help you out. Like you could possibly pass it on to the Government and made something actually happen."

(Boy)

"They can see how children are living, and the things they don't like, and like how families should improve from what families used to be like."

(Girl)

Children's questionnaires included a similar list of adjectives to those presented to parents. As set out in Table 2.4., which includes those relating to the value of the study, children were most likely to label it as 'special' and 'useful', with just four children (three boys and one girl) considering it pointless. Again, girls were a little more positive than boys; for example, whereas 54.7% of girls considered it 'useful', just 26.7% of boys chose this descriptor.

Table 2.4 Descriptors of the study's value endorsed by children

	Children %
Special	44.7
Useful	41.5
Worthwhile	38.2
Cool	36.6
Relevant	34.1
Important	30.9
Pointless	3.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>N = 123</i>

The key message from children is that, while their levels of awareness and curiosity vary, generally they have limited understanding of the purpose of the study. There appears to be scope for convincing them, with further information, of the value of the study data and its applications. Furthermore, whilst the current age group have less interest in the studies' purpose (compared with the study "experience" for example), it is likely that the importance of the value of the study may increase as children become older and more aware of social issues, and the potential role of research.

2.2 Perceived importance of the role of individual families' participation

Perceived importance of individual families

As set out in Table 2.5, most parents and children agreed, at least to some extent, that if their families dropped out of the study, this would reduce its effectiveness. However, more than one in five children and a similar proportion of main carers felt this was untrue, believing that the findings would be no less useful.

Table 2.5 Participants' beliefs about use of Child of the New Century data

		Certainly true %	A bit true %	Not true %	N
'If my family/ I (children) stopped taking part findings would be less useful'	Main carers	39.1	39.1	21.8	156
	Partners	31.6	52.6	15.8	57
	Children	28.6	47.9	23.5	119

These results chimed with what we heard during interviews. For the most part, interviewed parents were aware that their families would not be replaced in the study, if they dropped out, although children seemed less confident about this. Parents generally understood that it is *their* child and family who are being 'tracked' and that it would make no sense to substitute others, at this stage, because of the importance of their historic data, and a few children had grasped this too.

While some parents felt it would make little difference if their family stopped taking part, given the size of the study, others pointed out that if others' did too, then the numbers involved could fall below an acceptable level. Similarly, as one girl put it, "*The maths might get messed up*". (Girl)

A number of those we spoke to referred to the scale of the study as key to producing reliable findings. As one father explained:

"If you get enough people, you'll get a fairer.... percentage, picture. If you only do it over 100 people, obviously it's not going to work, but it's thousands, innit?"

(Partner)

Not surprisingly, none of the families we spoke to mentioned representative samples or attrition bias, although one mother (Main carer) recognised that it could 'skew the results' if they left the study. Others clearly recognised the value of including families of different types, in different circumstances, to enable comparisons and to ensure the study reflect their type of family – this included both families who saw themselves as typical and those who saw themselves as atypical. In future, perhaps more stress could be put on the importance of including families in different circumstances – including 'families like theirs', and explaining how attrition can affect the data in ways families can appreciate.

Notably, some parents who expected the study to be investigating differences between family types saw their contribution to the research as providing data from a typical or 'normal' family. In some cases, these families appeared to have a personal interest in the findings, voicing expectations that the study would demonstrate the advantages of families like theirs, whether this meant those with two parents or those which upheld 'traditional' family or religious values and discipline. By extension, they felt that study findings might reinforce their suspicions that some aspects of modern childhood – such as exposure to sexual imagery, or access to social media – were harmful, and that children benefitted from parental restrictions in these areas.

In stark contrast, a number of those we spoke to were keen to be involved in the study because of the particular challenges they faced. For example, one mother had a son with Aspergers syndrome, and felt strongly that the challenges facing families with disabled children or those with special educational needs should be represented.

Understanding of cohort members' potential long-term participation

While interviewees understood that Child of the New Century was tracking children's development, they were unsure what this meant in terms of the duration of the study: during fieldwork, a number of both children and parents asked for clarification of how long the study would last. One parent was adamant that it finished at age 20, and was hoping for a final copy of the full report up to 20 years. (Another child added a similar comment to her questionnaire – asking if she could have a report on her *own* data, up to age 18, to allow her to look back on everything she had said.)

It may be advisable to provide further clarification of what is planned, and what is feasible, in order to avoid parents and children having unrealistic expectations, and feeling disappointed or let down if this type of feedback isn't provided when children reach adulthood. Likewise, perhaps even more importantly, it may be helpful to consider a potential risk of drop out among some families when children reach adulthood if they believe they have delivered the participation they originally promised – i.e. covering the duration of the cohort members' childhood. The parent who believed the study was for 20 years certainly talked in terms of participation post-20 involving a new decision being made.

3. Overall experience and impact of participation among families

In this chapter, we consider study members' perceptions of Child of the New Century, in terms of their experience and recall as participants and the impact of participation on them.

Key Points

- The majority of both parents and children are happy to be in the study but are split between those who actively gain enjoyment from it, and those who just "do it" because they think it is a good thing to be doing, (or because their parents are).
- Although some children are very enthusiastic about the study, children as a whole are less likely to be actively engaged in the study than main carers; some children just "go along with things." Fuller direct engagement will be important to the future participation of this group.
- Around one in twenty parents and children were not very happy to be in the study; these may be at particular risk of drop out in MCS6.
- Mothers and girls are slightly more likely to be positive about the study than fathers and boys; boys seemed especially likely to be "just going along" with participation because of their parents, than to be actively engaged, and a particular focus on developing engagement approaches for boys may be helpful.
- Whereas parents tended to recall quite clearly their experiences in the study over time and have clear perceptions of both the most recent study wave (MC5) and waves when their children were very young, children have limited memories of the study before MCS5, despite normally understanding that they have participated all their lives.
- Perhaps not surprisingly, given activities are largely one-way data collection activities, most parents and children regard the study as having little impact on them. However, a range of benefits are described by some, such as interest, enjoyment and learning (for both parents and children); pleasure in being listened to, or from having the opportunity for simply being part of something "special" or "useful". For children, particularly boys, the immediate experience, is more prominent than it is for parents in determining views of the study compared with other factors.
- By and large parents do not feel particularly "valued" as study members, but also say they don't need to be. A key reward for participation stems from feeling useful. To the extent that the study team succeed in making each wave interesting or enjoyable for them and their children, the visits are also rewarding in themselves. Moreover, having the feedback loop of findings being shared back to them demonstrates the value that the study is delivering, and of the value of their participation, and "squares the circle" in this regard. For some children, being 'chosen' does make them feel valued and important, although like parents, many feel no need for further recognition. The child gift does play a small but useful role for some children and families, in providing recognition for their contributions.

3.1 Overall willingness and enjoyment

The vast majority of parents and children surveyed reported being very happy to participate in Child of the New Century. As shown in Table 3.1, more than 80% in each category – main carers, partners and children – indicated that they were ‘completely’ happy with taking part, or very nearly (selecting either 1 or 2 on a 7 point scale). However, around one in twenty children and main carers said they were not particularly happy (rating 5-7) and these may be at risk of dropping out of the next wave.

Table 3.1 How happy participants feel about being part of Child of the New Century

		Children %	Main carers %	Partners %
Completely happy	1	52.0%	70.3%	58.9%
	2	30.9%	12.0%	28.6%
	3	6.5%	7.6%	3.6%
	4	6.5%	5.1%	5.4%
	5	2.4%	3.8%	3.6%
	6	0.0%	1.3%	.0%
Not at all happy	7	1.6%	.0%	.0%
<i>Total</i>		<i>N =123</i>	<i>N =158</i>	<i>N =56</i>

Children are less likely than main carers to say they are completely happy (52.0% versus 70.3%), reflecting findings in the qualitative work that some children have been “going along” with their parents’ participation rather than feeling actively engaged themselves.

Levels of enthusiasm did appear slightly gendered, with mothers and daughters more emphatic, and partners and sons a little less so; just 38.3% of boys compared to 65.1% of girls said they were ‘completely’ happy with taking part (and as shown above, figures for main carers and partners are 70.3% and 58.9% respectively).

Parents’ enjoyment

Around nine in ten of the parents who responded to the survey agreed that the study was enjoyable for families, and that they felt part of something special as a result. However, parents were more likely to *agree* rather than *strongly agree* that the study is enjoyable and around one in seven main carers actively disagreed with this. This was echoed by feedback from many qualitative respondents who told us that the study is something they do because they think it’s a good thing to be doing, rather than something from which they necessarily derive much active enjoyment.

Table 3.2 Parent attitudes to participation in Child of the New Century

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'The study is enjoyable for families'	Main carers	29.7	55.7	14.6	.0	158
	Partners	20.7	72.4	6.9	.0	58
'By taking part I am part of something special'	Main carers	37.6	52.9	8.9	.6	157
	Partners	31.0	55.2	13.8	.0	58

Again, there was a slight tendency for mothers to be more positive than fathers on all these issues. Lower response rates to the survey among partners compared to main carers may also be an indication of lower levels of engagement (see Section 1.2.1). Indeed, in some of the families we visited, mothers told us that their partners were less interested in the study and its findings than they were themselves. Some of the fathers we spoke to confirmed this.

Children's enjoyment

Table 2.4 shows that most children reported enjoying taking part in the study (95.9%) and feeling part of something special (87.0%), but as for parents, they are more inclined to *agree* than to *strongly agree*. However a higher proportion of children strongly agree that they enjoy taking part in the study, than the proportion of main carers who strongly agree the study is enjoyable for families (43.9% and 29.7% respectively).

Table 3.3 Child attitudes to participation in Child of the New Century

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'I enjoy taking part in Child of the New Century'	43.9	52.0	2.4	1.6	123
'By taking part I am part of something special'	33.3	53.7	10.6	2.4	123

This reflects findings from the qualitative interviews that found that immediate enjoyment of the study visits is more central to children's views of the study than it is for parents (see also Section 3.2). It is important to reiterate that some children we spoke to, particularly boys, struggled to remember the study and were barely conscious of being part of it. For them, it was very difficult to say whether they enjoyed it or not, or how it made them feel. This suggests that some of those who responded to questionnaires were completing them on the basis of very limited memories, and/or that, among those who returned their forms, the more enthusiastic and engaged participants were overrepresented.

3.2 Overall recall, perceptions and impact of participation on participants

This section reflects on participants' overall levels of recall of the study, their descriptions of what it is like to be a participant overall, and of the impact that the study has upon them (if any). This provides an important general frame of reference for future engagement that may be helpful for interviewers to be aware of when approaching participants at MCS6.

The parent participant experience

Overall recall and frame of reference

Far more than children, parents had a clear memory and perception of the study as whole. When responding to questions about the study they tended to refer to experiences across study waves, although some key experiences sometimes stood out as being particularly positive, negative or as exemplifying their evaluation of the study overall.

Unsurprisingly, parents recalled the latest wave in the most detail. However, for many parents their most significant memories were of the earliest waves of the study; this perhaps reflects greater sensitivity about their children's development, and intensity of the "parental experience" generally in the early years. Parents could often remember specific activities from these early waves very clearly. For example, one father described how, during an early visit, he felt proud that his son could count in double numbers up to 100. However, likewise, two parents quite vividly recalled aspects of activities that they had disagreed with in the early waves (and they said this had been their only negative experience in the study. In particular one father said he still felt enraged by the memory of one element in the naming vocabulary activity in which his 3 or 5 year old daughter had described something as a canoe, but this was marked wrong because the test said it was a kayak; he had been very indignant that his daughter should have been "marked down" for this).

Parents' views of the current experience were more temperate. As reflected in ratings of enjoyment discussed in the previous section, among parents interviewed in the qualitative work, attitudes varied from active enjoyment and interest among some parents, to more of tolerance and acceptance among others – for the latter group, the study was not necessarily something they actively enjoyed or looked forward to.

A number of parents also recalled the keep in touch materials - information updates, and contact information confirmation/update cards - sent between waves. Whilst parents varied in the degree to which they read these or found them interesting, there was a sense that for most parents that providing these was important for ensuring they remained feeling part of the study and supporting commitment over time.

"I think it's good. I like participating in it. You usually send the 'update to details' forms, and I like to keep you informed on that as well. No, my views haven't changed - I really enjoy taking part." (Main carer)

Perceived level of actual impact

Perhaps not surprisingly given activities are largely one-way data collection activities, most participants felt the study had little actual impact on them on a day to day basis either positive or negative. For some, the study was just a minor diversion, something they tended to forget in between visits, unless reminded.

However, to a greater or less degree, some parents did report disadvantages or benefits to them or their children.

Key impact descriptors

As noted in Section 2.1, to understand more about how they felt about Child of the New Century, survey participants were asked to select words from a list which best described the study. Some of these words – set out in Table 3.4 – related to their experience as study members.

Broadly speaking, main carers and partners selected similar words, with the positive ones consistently chosen far more often. Over three-quarters of main carers and almost two-thirds of partners considered it 'interesting'. Although less than a third of main carers or partners selected 'enjoyable' as a good descriptor, the explicitly negative words were generally selected by no more than one or two respondents in each group.

Table 3.4 Descriptors of overall study experience endorsed by parents

	Main carers	Partners
	%	%
Interesting	77.4	63.8
Enjoyable	31.4	27.6
Varied	13.8	15.5
Boring	3.8	3.4
Inconvenient	3.8	3.4
Tiring	3.1	1.7
Stressful	2.5	1.7
Intrusive	2.5	1.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>N =159</i>	<i>N =58</i>

More detailed feedback on positive and negative impacts reported by qualitative respondents is discussed below.

Negative impacts

In line with survey responses above, feedback from qualitative respondents highlighted that perceived disadvantages tended to be relatively slight – e.g. parents focused on the length of the interviews and “*finding the time to slot it in*” and occasionally the intrusive nature of some questions (e.g. two interviewees referred to questions on parental conflict), the relevance of which was not clear to them, and another highlighted he would always “refuse”

income questions. However, none of the families interviewed found these things to be a significant concern (see Section 4.2 for further details).

Providing an important or special experience

Whilst the study was rarely uppermost in parents' minds day to day, there were some highly engaged, enthusiastic families for whom the study was a special part of their joint family lives, or at least their children's. Being involved in a research study was described as a novel or new experience by both parents and children. Mothers in particular enjoyed it and felt privileged to be involved.

However, others did not particularly regard the study like this. Whilst being willing to help, they were not terribly interested, far less keen for it to absorb more of their time.

"It's not for our benefit - it's for future people's benefit, so it doesn't really affect us. It's not something that you go out of your way to do - it's not a big deal. But if it was a case of not wanting to do it, we'd say no!"

(Partner)

Enjoyment from talking about their children and experiences of being a parent

Some mothers welcomed the chance to talk about their life and family, and so it was a pleasure rather than a chore to sit through an interview on the topic.

This seemed to be less of a factor for fathers, who in some cases seemed to see their own participation in study visits as less essential than mothers'. This may have been reinforced by their being labelled as 'partners' within MCS, but also seemed to reflect fathers' relative lack of enthusiasm for being interviewed.

"Personally, my husband doesn't like participating, but I always answer the questions on his behalf. He's not that type of person - to do talking and studying, things like that - but we all enjoy it, as a whole." (Main carer)

Pleasure in observing children's enjoyment

A benefit of participation described by some parents was pleasure in seeing the enjoyment or stimulation their children received during the visits or from being part of the study generally.

"It makes her feel a bit special"

(Partner)

Many parents were more concerned with their children's enjoyment and experience than their own.

As mentioned above, parents often recalled particular interest and/or enjoyment from watching their children take part in activities in the earliest waves. However, this had also continued as children got older and some referred to examples from MCS5.

"She's a quiet child, always has been, but when it comes to this she's 'Yes, I'll do that on a laptop!'" (Partner)

Learning new things about their children to inform parenting

Mothers and fathers also reported they benefited from gaining insights into their children's development and needs, both in the early years and as the children were getting older. For example, several parents described being able to see what their child 'could do' and chart their development over time, keeping hold of the physical measurement record cards and so on.

In small ways, parents described learning things from interviewers that would be useful for them as parents; taking notice of what was being measured and considering it an indication of what was important at that stage in the child's life:

"It's quite interesting, in that it made us reflect... on the early days, when they first came to see us.... I think we're more aware of the stages he's gone through than if we weren't in the study."

(Main carer)

One mother described how the process of listening to her son being interviewed gave her new insight into her son's thought processes because the interview covered topics they would not usually discuss together;

"I'm not with him when he's in school, I only get a result. I don't see how he does things or how he thinks."

(Main carer)

One or two parents also described specific parenting actions they had taken as a result of being a participant. One mother described taking the child to a rugby match after her interview prompted her to consider a list of possible activities and what her son could be missing out on. Bullying was also uncovered and addressed after a boy disclosed that he was being victimised in his question booklet, which led to it being discussed within the family.

Contributing and feeling part of society

More broadly, regardless of how much they enjoyed it, many parents took satisfaction from helping with what they saw as a worthwhile or important study.

Some also said that they liked how the snippets of information in the leaflets allowed them to see how their child and family compared with others. Some found the experience reassuring – ie to know that they were not dissimilar to others; one family found the comparison a source of pride because they believed that their traditional approach to family life was the best.

The cohort child participant experience

Overall recall and frame of reference

Children generally understood that they had been in the study for their whole lives. However, most had little memory of participating before the latest wave, with the exception of a few positive, negative or “standout” experiences.

The extent to which children could recall MCS5 varied. Some were able to recall how they felt about participating, but struggled to recall detail, while others could recall in detail the processes and feeling they had during most activities. A significant number of children, mostly boys, had only vague memory of the activities, which made it difficult for them to give clear indications of thoughts or feelings.

Children most commonly think of the study in terms of the immediate participant experience, and the degree to which they enjoyed the activities (or not). Overall, the computer based assessments stood out for children and were most frequently recalled, as they were seen as positive and a fun experience. Weight measurements were sometimes spontaneously recalled as something not particularly enjoyable, and a small number recalled wearing an activity monitor to school as for a previous study wave as it was ‘uncomfortable’.

(Views and experiences of individual activities are discussed in more detail in Section 4.2 below).

Overall impact

As among parents, a significant proportion of children regard the study as having no impact on them, positive or negative. These children are frequently unaware or uninterested in the purpose of the study and ambivalent about the activities. For example, they describe it as:

“Just something I’ve done... It’s just something I do to make people happy.” (Boy)

However, many children reported some impacts which are explored further below, and a small number conveyed strong feelings of excitement and enjoyment about the study indicating significant beneficial impact.

Key impact descriptors

Like parents, when presented with a list of possible descriptors of the study, children most frequently selected the word ‘interesting’ (fully two thirds of those completing questionnaires did so). In line with ratings on “enjoyment above”, children were more likely than parents to consider the study ‘enjoyable’, with almost half of them choosing this label for the study.

As with parents, few children selected negative descriptors, but the most frequently chosen negative words were ‘tiring’ – ticked by eight boys (13.3%) and two girls – and ‘boring’ – ticked by five boys as well as two girls. Although more boys than girls selected negative words, in general, girls’ and boys’ choices were very similar.

Table 3.5 Descriptors of overall study experience endorsed by children

	Children %
Interesting	65.9
Enjoyable	47.2
Varied	8.1
Tiring	8.1
Boring	5.7
Inconvenient	2.4
Frustrating	1.6
Intrusive	0.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>N =123</i>

More detailed feedback on positive and negative impacts reported by qualitative respondents is discussed below.

Enjoying the activities

As mentioned above, levels of enjoyment were more central than perceptions of the purpose or value of the study to children's views of it.

As reported on the section on ratings of enjoyment above, views of this varied; some find the activities largely uninteresting or even boring; some find the activities, or perhaps just some aspects somewhat enjoyable; whilst a proportion are very enthusiastic, for instance about the range, content and variety of tasks.

To provide one example, one boy told us that, while the computer activities were fun, and made taking part "worthwhile", the rest of his interview was "a bit boring", and went on too long.

"You just sit there and answer questions" (Boy)

Girls seemed generally more enthusiastic than boys, though there were exceptions.

Feeling special

A small number of children were particularly positive, and although they could not recall the activities in detail, they felt that participating had made them feel important or special.

Some children were excited to have been 'chosen' and this genuinely seemed to make them feel special.

"I've been chosen out of a lot of people – it feels good! It's not like everyone gets picked to do this!" (Girl)

However, not all children were aware (or interested) in the nature of the study sample or of their significance within it, as noted in Section 2.2. Communicating this more fully to children could support fuller engagement.

Educational benefits and encouraging self-reflection

Some children described the study as educational, for example, when it taught them new words, or about the impact of drinking alcohol.

Others felt it provided them with a record of how they had grown – several recalled their excitement at finding out how tall they were for example.

Some described how it provided a reminder of their experiences when they were younger, or a chance to stop and think about what activities they were doing now, or would like to do in future.

"You learn more about yourself" (Girl)

Another said that he felt that being interviewed helped children develop their skill in speaking to adults without being embarrassed or intimidated.

Pleasure in the interest shown in them and the respect shown for their views

For some children, being interviewed was a novel experience: they liked the attention, and the chance to express their feelings or voice their opinions. As one boy said, the best thing about the study was that *"Other people know how I feel"* (Boy).

One was enthused by the experience of an interviewer recalling what career they had wanted, last time they met.

Pride in achievement

Some had been pleased with and proud of their performance, for example on memory tasks, and found that this boosted their confidence or made them feel good. One girl described how she thought she had a poor memory, but that she had done well on the memory task and this made her feel better about this.

3.3 Feeling valued for participating

Parents' views

Parents varied with respect to how valued they felt, as study members. In general, they did feel appreciated, and felt the study team had got the balance right between ignoring them and pestering them, in between waves. When asked if they felt valued as study members, even when they said 'not really', they tended to downplay their contributions, emphasising that what they did was 'not a big deal'. Some gave the impression that they would feel embarrassed or think it silly if too much was made of their role in the research, given that it involved just a few hours of their time, every few years. Essentially, they seemed to feel that the rewards they and their children got for taking part – which varied between families – were proportional to the effort they put in.

"You feel like you've done your bit by taking part – you can feel part of history." (Main carer)

"Our daughter feels a bit special and valued, and that's enough for me!"
(Partner)

Some parents felt that the regular updates provided an appropriate way of recognising their input, and reciprocating their efforts: if the study team were willing to provide more information, or opportunities to engage, then so much the better. As discussed in Chapter 6, a number of parents were keen to be better informed about the ways in which study data was used, and felt this would help them feel more involved.

Some of those we spoke to commented that the study team were clearly trying to make participation enjoyable for families, and they appreciated this. They were pleased, too, that the team were interested in their feedback – for some, this in itself was an indicator of how valuable their contributions were.

For some parents, convinced of the study's value, and aware that relatively few families were involved, the fact that they were part of it and their lives were of such interest was a privilege and made them feel important.

"You've got more information on him than I've got! I know it's 19,000 children, but that's not many."
(Main carer)

"It does make us feel more valued than every Joe Bloggs going."
(Main carer)

Although a few parents suggested motivating reluctant participants with a prize draw and – not entirely seriously – that a few thousand pounds might help them feel more valued, this comment summed up a popular sentiment:

"We don't need a pat on the back- that's not why we do it."
(Partner)

As noted in Chapter 1, less loyal study members may not have endorsed these views. Some of the non-respondents to MCS5 who we spoke to certainly indicated that even the few hours required for a study visit was more than they were prepared to volunteer. They clearly did not feel that participation was its own reward.

A number of parents who completed questionnaires made additional suggestions geared towards making their *children* feel more valued, even if they themselves were perfectly satisfied:

"A bigger incentive would be good, as they get older" (Main carer, questionnaire respondent)

"Acknowledgement of each year's participation – my child feels part of the research and as a child, she would enjoy accruing badges, or something,"
(Main carer, questionnaire respondent)

Children's views

Like parents, children seemed to fall mainly into two groups; those who felt important and lucky to be taking part in what they saw as an important study, and those who didn't feel it was a "big deal", who were not really interested in

any recognition for their contributions. They were generally happy to take part, and didn't particularly want or need more attention or contact from the study team.

Those who did feel valued sometimes referred to the fact that they, and *not other children* were chosen to take part. For some, this distinguished them from their peers or their siblings.

"It's not like everyone gets picked to do this!" (Girl)

"To be chosen out of under 20,000 children in the UK – it makes you feel a bit special, because YOU'RE chosen, not the other person!" (Boy)

As noted previously, in Section 3.2, a number of children relished the attention they received, as a result of being in the study. Having an interviewer come and talk to them about their lives and record what they said was a novel experience which some explicitly said made them feel important. Several children who completed questionnaires actually requested that the team visit more often.

"I would like them to come more often. It's good to read, and I feel special when they come." (Boy, questionnaire respondent)

For some children, receiving study communications in the post added to this sense of being special, or valued. Among the more enthusiastic boys and girls, some felt that hearing a bit more about what was done with their data would help them feel even more valued. Some questionnaire respondents also suggested that they would like to get more feedback about study findings in general, or specifically about their own data.

"Try to send more leaflets that tell information about the person it is sent to." (Boy, questionnaire respondent)

However, none of those we spoke to felt 'neglected' or insufficiently recognised for their contribution at present.

Interestingly, children tended not to mention the gifts they received when explaining how valued they felt, as study members. This may reflect that these are small and of low value. Nevertheless, when asked about the gifts, they were typically positive and quite animated and - it was clear that these were a bonus which added to their enjoyment of study visits – as detailed further in Section 4.3. Even those who were not particularly enthusiastic about taking part said they had been pleased to receive the Top Trumps cards at Wave 5; in a small way, this may have helped to compensate them for their time, if they had participated rather grudgingly. Notably, as with parents, a few children used the final comments box on their questionnaires to suggest improving the gifts:

"Make the thank you gifts better!" (Girl, questionnaire respondent)

"The gifts were nice – if only they could be better!"

(Girl, questionnaire respondent)

Potentially, for those more at risk of dropping out, the 'thank you' gifts – and, as parents suggested – other ways of formally recognising, or accrediting, participation in the study - could play a part in generating interest or goodwill.

4. Experience of taking part in previous waves

In this chapter, we consider participants' views in relation to previous waves of the Child of the New Century study, focusing on individual waves and their experiences of visits over time.

Key points

- On the whole, parents and children tended to have a positive view of their experiences of study visits and many of the study elements, although for many the experience of visits is "OK" rather than actively enjoyable and some activities are viewed more positively than others.
- From among all the activities at the most recent study sweep, the 'fun' computer-based child assessments were what children enjoyed the most. Whether a child enjoyed completing their question booklet was influenced by whether they enjoy writing generally; the move to CAPI interviews for children in MCS6 will help to address concerns of those who dislike writing.
- Height and weight measurement can be sensitive with some participants and therefore it is important to provide any necessary reassurance about the use of the data, and ensure children understand that they can opt out of these elements whilst participating in the rest of a study visit.
- Among families we spoke to, parents' own CAPI interviews have a less important impact on their engagement with the study. A small number of parents mentioned that some of the more sensitive questions make them feel uncomfortable, however, among those interviewed, this has not been significant enough to affect their overall feelings of engagement.
- Parents and children felt that activities in the most recent sweep were explained clearly and were happy with the amount of information they received in advance.
- For the most part, respondents were happy with the amount of time visits took up, although around 15% of main carers were not. Adding too much to the length of study activities could risk deterring some from taking part.
- Interviewers were described positively by both parents and children. They were generally praised as patient, flexible and professional. One parent did raise concerns about confidentiality, highlighting that when an interviewer shared an anecdote about one family with another, the people concerned were easily identifiable in a small community, even if they were not named. This is something which should be raised with interviewers to avoid similar incidents arising in future.
- Parents and children alike appreciated that children were given small gifts after each wave; parents felt that it was an appropriate way to recognise their family's input, and it helped children feel valued.

4.1 The content of study visits

In this section, parents' and children's views of the content of study visits are considered, with an emphasis on MCS5.

Overall views

Overall, as outlined in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, the majority of parents and children surveyed said they liked taking part in the latest study wave at least a bit. However, reflecting mixed views on levels of enjoyment with MCS generally, significant proportions liked it only "a bit", or merely "didn't mind" it, and less than half "liked it a lot."

Table 4.1 Parent and child feedback on taking part in MCS5 overall

		Liked it a lot %	Liked it a bit %	Didn't mind it %	Didn't like it %	N
Taking part overall	Main carer	47.5	22.2	27.8	2.5	158
	Partner	37.9	37.9	24.1	0.0	58
	Children	45.5	36.6	14.6	3.3	123

The majority of parents agreed activities across MCS study waves generally were suitable for children of all abilities and backgrounds, but a significant minority "disagreed" and almost half only "agreed" rather than "strongly agreed". There was no specific feedback from qualitative respondents that explained this – i.e. no parents or children actively reported concerns with suitability of activities for them and their families. However, this may be something that would benefit from further future exploration, perhaps in future piloting activities.

Table 4.2 Parent views of the inclusiveness of Child of the New Century activities generally

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'Study activities are good for children of all abilities and backgrounds'	Main carers	47.8	49.7	2.5	.0	159
	Partners	46.6	48.3	5.2	.0	58

Overall ratings of key study activities

In this section, we report on survey participants views of activities they experienced the most recent wave they had participated in. This was almost always MCS5, but based on main carer profile information, four families had not participated in MCS5 and were referring to an earlier sweep.

Reflecting views of the participation generally, views of all study activities varied. Views ranged from "liking a lot" to "liking a bit" or more neutrally "not minding the activities" and small proportions sometimes "disliked" the activities.

Parents generally liked both the child assessments and child measurements “a lot” (around half of main carers) in each case; they also felt positive, although slightly less so, about their own interviews. As elsewhere, partners ratings of everything were less actively positive than main carers, but the proportions “disliking” activities were no higher.

Children’s views varied much more substantially between activities. Assessments of learning were particularly popular, followed by the question booklet (around half and just under four in ten respectively, liked these a lot).

Far fewer liked height measurements, and weight measurements were most negatively perceived. Whilst a notable 12.3% said they liked this element a lot, weight measurements were most commonly just tolerated (37.7% said they “didn’t mind them) and 13.1% reported active dislike.

Table 4.3 Parent feedback on individual study elements

		Liked it a lot %	Liked it a bit %	Didn’t mind it %	Didn’t like it %	N
Assessments of learning	Main carer	50.9	20.8	26.4	1.9	159
	Partner	43.1	34.5	22.4	0.0	58
Measurement of child weight and height	Main carer	48.1	18.4	29.1	4.4	158
	Partner	31.0	32.8	34.5	1.7	58
The interview	Main carer	42.8	30.2	25.2	1.9	159
	Partner	31.0	36.2	32.8	0.0	58

Table 4.4 Child feedback on individual study elements

	Liked it a lot %	Liked it a bit %	Didn’t mind it %	Didn’t like it %	N
Assessments of learning	53.3	30.3	15.6	0.8	122
The question booklet	37.4	22.8	32.5	7.3	123
‘Having your height measured?’	29.5	34.4	33.6	2.5	122
‘Having your weight measured?’	12.3	36.9	37.7	13.1	122

More detailed feedback about the activities is provided below based on feedback from qualitative respondents.

4.2 Detailed feedback on specific activities

Main carer and partner (CAPI and CASI) interviews

As shown above, broadly speaking, parents were happy to be interviewed and considered the questions relevant to their understanding of the aims of the study. A small number of parents pointed to positive or negative aspects of the interviews.

One main carer described how interviews over time had lead her to reflect on her own parenting decisions, such as how much pocket money she gives her daughter and she found this interesting and helpful.

Two parents, however, felt aspects of the interview were often too personal and questioned their relevance. One main carer felt questions about her relationship with her partner, including how often they argue, have been 'intrusive' and 'odd'. Her parent felt reluctant to discuss his income. Despite this, both parents were happy to pass over such questions and communicate this to the interviewer. While they felt momentarily uncomfortable, it would seem the interview does not have a significant impact on their engagement with the study or views on participation.

Measurement of children's height and weight

A number of parents said they had very much liked the measurement element of the study, in particular receiving a record of their child's measurements so they can see how they were growing and changing over time. One father recalled how the activity had changed his view of his son's weight. Before participating in the study, he did not believe in 'puppy fat', but felt seeing the change in his son's measurements changed his thinking.

One mother also reported the measurements to be the most actively liked element of the study for the family, recalling how excited her son was to find out how tall he had grown since the last visit. This sentiment was echoed by another parent.

However, while it was seen as relevant and interesting to parents themselves, a number of parents felt it was the activity least enjoyed by their children. One mother said her son 'refused' to have his weight measured, and had opted out of the activity during MCS5. She felt it was important that he have this option as he would decide not to participate in the study at all otherwise.

Another parent discussed considering whether or not to continue with the study, as he was concerned about how the measurement of his daughter's height and weight would impact on her. He felt she already had a 'complex' about her measurements and while she had never said she didn't want to have her them taken, he felt mindful of this over the study visits. While his daughter is more 'secure' now he felt he would still consider their family's involvement if it were ever an issue.

Among children interviewed in the qualitative work, one boy felt it was the most enjoyable activity (Boy) but most children were either neutral, ambivalent or even actively negative about the weight measure in particular.

Very few described the weight measurement as a really horrible experience – they appreciated that they could opt out of it they wanted to; they very much appreciated and felt it was important for children to have this choice. But it was generally regarded as something they would probably prefer not to do, “no one likes it do they?” (Girl) but on balance they decided they would do it because it wasn’t *too* bad and they knew it would be useful.

It is worth noting that a number of even the most enthusiastic and engaged children interviewed - all girls - felt that having their measurements taken was the least enjoyable activity.

“I liked everything - just the height and weight measurement.” (Girl)

It is also worth highlighting that children are much more comfortable with the height than the weight measure, and sometimes actively interested in this even when they are uncomfortable with the weight measurement. One girl mentioned that she would have liked to have had a record of her height measure, but said no to the record card because she thought it would have her weight on it. For future waves it may be helpful to specifically offer the records individually or separately.

Child assessment

As shown by the survey responses above, the assessment of children’s learning was by far the most favoured activity among children and considered to be a highly enjoyable aspect of the study.

Among children interviewed, those who had largely struggled to recall activities in detail from the latest wave recalled the assessments of learning positively. Parents felt their children enjoyed using a computer and genuinely found the activities to be fun. Another boy, who was largely impartial towards his involvement overall, felt the best part about the study visit were the assessments of learning, which he felt was like a ‘quiz’.

The computer-based approach appears to have made these activities particularly memorable and enjoyable for some.

“I enjoyed it because it was more digital rather than talking.” (Boy)

Children tended to refer to the activities as games, and despite the graphics being less high quality and modern than many computer games, children were not put off by this, but tended to say they were comparable.

One girl felt that while she generally enjoys computer games these were particularly fun as she had never played games like them before, “there was a point to them, there was a purpose.” She especially liked the memory game, because it had made her feel good about herself: she had thought she had a bad memory but surprised herself at how well she did.

While these activities are widely considered games, it is not lost on the children that they are being assessed. A number of children discussed the 'difficulty' of the games, some thought they were 'easy' with the odd question being difficult and other another thought they were generally difficult.

"It was good, but some of them were a bit hard!" (Girl)

However, none of the children interviewed reported feeling concerned about being "assessed."

Question booklets

Reflecting survey responses discussed above, among children interviewed, views on the question booklet varied.

Many children interviewed were indifferent to completing the question booklet or struggled to recall it in detail, and one boy felt the booklet was "boring".

However, a number felt they enjoyed the topic areas covered and that it allowed them to think differently.

"The questions I was asked, I had never been asked before. They made me think differently.... Taking drugs and alcohol and smoking cigarettes and asking have you done that before, and I was thinking 'What? Who in their right mind would do this?'" (Girl)

It would seem that whether a child enjoyed the booklet was influenced by whether they enjoy writing generally. For example, while one boy enjoyed the space these questions gave him to consider himself and other issues, he does not generally enjoy writing by hand and felt the best way for the study to find out about his life from his point of view would be to 'chat'. He would prefer this over filling out a diary or booklet. In this context, the move to CAPI and CASI interviews in MCC6 may be welcomed by some.

Compared to other activities, filling in the question booklet was often least discussed or recalled by parents, perhaps reflecting that children often filled this in a separate room during the parents' CAPI/CASI interviews. Those who did were largely happy with the activity, one main carer felt "it's not about us" (Main carer) and her partner agreed, emphasising the importance of the booklet in allowing his son to share his opinions freely.

"As he gets older it will be more about his opinions." (Partner)

One main carer felt the booklet was too long for her child and felt it made the latest study wave less enjoyable for her family.

Teachers' survey

Only a small number of children were aware that their teacher had been asked to give information on them. This was not a concern to most children we spoke to, even if they were not aware they felt it would be 'fine' and 'ok' if their teacher was asked to input.

Those who did recall being asked about their teachers' input felt similarly. One girl said it was fine because she spoke to her teacher about the study and another felt she had been happy for her primary school teacher to input in the most recent wave as her teacher knew her well but didn't think it would work as well in secondary school when she will have many teachers.

4.3 The conduct of study visits

This section discusses views of the length of study visits, conduct of interviewers, how well things were explained, and also views on data security.

Duration of activities

Overall, parents were happy with the duration of activities during MCS5, as outlined in Table 3.6. When interviewed, parents recalled the visit lasting roughly 1.5 hours, which many thought was 'fine' and they had been given plenty of notice to fit the interview into their lives.

A few, however, recalled the visit as having lasted 2 hours or more. Some were again fine with this, but others were less happy.

Children were largely unable to recall how long activities took in the latest wave but many felt they were generally 'ok' with the amount of time and they did not recall it being tiring or too long. One boy commented that activities last, "just the right amount of time."

One girl also described the question booklet as being a very good length: she said if it had been shorter and less substantial she may not have given her answers the same level of thought, whilst if it had been longer it would have been too long for her.

Table 4.5 Parent and child feedback on duration of activities in MCS5

		Very happy %	Happy %	Unhappy %	Very unhappy %	Don't know/ can't remember %	N
'The amount of time that everything took?'	Main carer	26.6	57.0	13.9	2.5	0.0	158
	Partner	29.3	56.9	10.3	1.7	1.7	58
	Child	35.0	43.9	8.9	2.4	9.8	123

Explanation of activities

Broadly speaking, parents felt that activities in MCS5 were explained clearly and that they were happy with the amount of knowledge they had about activities before the study visit. As outlined in Table 4.6, roughly 90% of main carers and partners who completed the survey indicated they were happy with the information leaflets received before the study visit.

Table 4.6 Respondent feedback on the management of Wave 5 visits

		Very happy %	Happy %	Unhappy %	Very unhappy %	Don't know/ can't remember %	N
'How well the activities were explained?'	Main carer	59.1	37.7	0.0	1.3	1.9	159
	Partner	50.0	44.8	0.0	0.0	5.2	58
	Child	44.7	44.5	0.8	0.8	8.1	123
'The information leaflet that told you about the activities?'	Main carer	51.6	42.1	1.3	0.6	4.4	159
	Partner	39.7	50.0	0.0	0.0	10.3	58
	Child	30.1	51.2	0.8	0.0	17.9	123

Parents' views were varied on how important the information leaflets are. Some felt it acted as a comprehensive introduction to the next wave of the study and what was 'expected' of their family and one father also saw it as important to him as a busy parent because it saved time by reducing the amount of information that the interviewer had to explain on the day of the interview (Partner). Other parents felt they did not read them thoroughly and instead relied on the interviewer to explain the activities on the day.

"I don't think it's mattered anyway as the people who have come have made it quite clear what is expected." (Partner)

Three quarters of children reported to being happy with the information leaflets and the vast majority felt happy with how well activities were explained overall. While many children struggled to recall the information leaflet in detail during interviews, a number felt they were good at outlining what children are supposed to do. A number of children felt information leaflets had little impact on how they thought or felt about the study as they were already enthusiastic and looking forward to the study.

As demonstrated previously, a number of parents felt it was the role of the interviewer to explain activities.

The interviewer

During the most recent wave, most parents felt the interviewer was professional, as outlined in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Respondent satisfaction with their Wave 5 interviewer

		Very happy %	Happy %	Unhappy %	Very unhappy %	Don't know/ can't remember %	N
The (professionalism of the) interviewer?	Main carer	59.7	37.1	3.1	0.0	0.0	159
	Partner	60.3	36.2	1.7	0.0	1.7	58
	Child	53.3	41.0	0.8	0.8	4.1	122

Of those interviewed, many felt the interviewers have made study visits enjoyable. One partner felt the last interviewer was "fantastic" and "it has always been a pleasure:"

"They are the type of person you would want in your home." (Partner)

Parents felt interviewers were good with children, with one main carer commenting that she was pleased to see the interviewer speak to her son as a young adult and not a "silly child" (Main carer). A mother whose daughter has learning difficulties relayed a particularly positive experience. She felt the interviewer encouraged her child to feel positively about herself and was understanding of her difficulties. She felt the interviewer put her daughter at ease and had a very positive impact on how her daughter felt about her learning difficulties, especially her concerns when completing the question booklet.

"She was great, she said 'don't worry, we'll manage to decipher it. Not everyone is a perfect writer, you're still little, you're still learning' and it made her [daughter] think, 'oh, oh, I'm not that bad!'...that's what you want, someone coming in to speak to your kid to make them feel comfortable." (Partner)

Interviewers seem to have a positive impact on participation, and reduce any time burden placed on their family, with a number of families commenting that they ensured all activities went 'smoothly'. Families interviewed almost universally described the interviewers as very flexible when setting up interviews. Some families report that this has been key and they wouldn't be able to participate without this. Some praised interviewers for remaining patient with them throughout, even when it has been difficult to arrange a time.

Even a non responder reported this, saying that even though they couldn't participate in the end, the interviewer has been very patient and flexible.

Only one family felt they had a bad experience during the last wave, as they felt the interviewer had not been discreet with their family's interview when interviewing a friend of the main carer. She felt it was important for interviewers to be especially discreet when conducting interviews in small communities as there is a greater chance participants will know each other. In this case, the interviewer had not referred to the other family by name, so may not have been aware that they were divulging anything "attributable". However, because the families knew each other, it was clear to the second parent who the family was that the interviewer had mentioned.

Children also felt very positive about the interviewer during their most recent study sweep. Many children interviewed recalled the interviewer being friendly and that they ensured children understood the activities. One girl, who was reluctant to have her weight measured, felt the interviewer put her at ease, explaining her options clearly, including that she did not have to have the measurements taken.

"She did say I didn't have to do things if I didn't want to, she asked me things nicely. She was nice about the whole thing." (Girl)

Professionalism of the study and data security

Questionnaire findings in relation to the conduct of the study suggested that few of those who responded had real concerns about the professionalism of study conduct or use of sensitive family information.

As shown in Table 4.8, the vast majority of parents and children felt satisfied that their data was stored securely, although a small number of children (three boys and one girl) and one parent had concerns about this. Similarly, around three-quarters of parents who returned questionnaires felt strongly that the entire study was conducted in a professional manner, while just one parent disagreed.

Table 4.8 Parent and Children's feedback on study conduct

		Certainly true %	A bit true %	Not true %	N
'The information my family provides is kept confidential' (parents) / 'safe at all times' (children)	Main carers	89.9	8.9	1.3	158
	Partners	82.5	17.5	0.0	57
	Children	73.7	22.0	4.2	118
'Everything about Child of the New Century is professional'	Main carers	85.4	14.0	0.6	157
	Partners	75.9	22.4	1.7	58

Thank you gifts

Many children had clear memory of the MCS5 thank you gift, a set of Top Trump playing cards. Most were overwhelmingly positive about this, as reflected in survey responses in Table 4.9. Children felt the gifts were fun and interesting, and many discussed choosing the Olympic themed cards with particular enthusiasm. Some children still had them when interviewed. One girl felt it was made even more fun as her friend had also taken part in MCS5, received the same cards, and they could play together.

Despite children enjoying them very much, their participation is not dependent on the gift. A number of children mentioned they did not know they would receive it beforehand and that it would not make a difference; another felt he would be happy to get them as a gift again. Another clarified that it made him feel part of the study and appreciated:

"It was just like, I don't know, something to say 'I'm a part of this', a benefit." (Boy)

Table 4.9 Child feedback on the thank you gift in MCS5

	Liked it a lot %	Liked it a bit %	Didn't mind it %	Didn't like it %	Don't know/can't remember %	N
The thank you gift?	50.4	30.9	3.3	0.0	15.4	123

Most parents interviewed felt their children really enjoyed getting thank you gifts. Most felt it was right they should receive them but some said it wasn't expected, but still very nice to get. Thank you gifts were viewed as a "little reward" to commend children for taking part. Parents felt it makes their children feel appreciated, but was not essential for their children's participation.

"It's just a little token isn't it, making them feel 'you know what, I've got a little something for taking part' which I think everybody likes, don't they?"

(Main carer)

"They don't have to do that, but it's nice, makes them feel appreciated"

(Main carer)

A mother who had not taken part in the last wave felt her son had always enjoyed receiving a thank you gift, as it made him feel special and could share with his brother.

5. Drivers of participation and non-participation

In this chapter, we consider drivers of families' participation in the study, and their reasons for opting out of particular elements, or disengaging altogether.

Key points

- Most parents who took part in MCS5 felt a sense of commitment to what they saw as a worthwhile study, and this had driven their participation to date. For some, however, their own enjoyment of the experience, or that of their children, was at the forefront of their minds.
- Children were more likely to focus on their own experience and enjoyment, rather than the value of the study, in explaining their motives for taking part, especially boys. This means that among this group, there is no "safety" net of underlying commitment protecting their engagement if activities in a particular study wave are not appealing. For this group it is important to ensure that activities are communicated in ways that hook into factors most likely to appeal; likewise it will be beneficial to work on developing a sense of engagement with the study that goes beyond the experience of activities.
- For some children who were less keen, their parents' facilitation, encouragement and reassurance had been key. In light of children's increasing autonomy, parents' views might hold less sway in future. Equally, parents may make less effort to engage teenagers in discussion about whether to take part, and be more inclined to 'just leave it', unless they express a strong desire to participate.
- For parents or children who were contented with their experience, or committed to the study because of its perceived importance, continued participation could be assumed, as long as the study team made no major increases in the demands they made, and remained flexible regarding scheduling visits. However, their loyalty could potentially be increased through providing more information about the uses and impact of study data.
- For families under stress, enthusiasm or commitment was not necessarily enough to ensure participation in study visits. Two potential responses to this might be: (a) making greater efforts to ensure families understood the importance of representing and understanding their families' exceptional experiences and (b) offering less intrusive or demanding ways to sustain at least a minimal level of input, for example, through having them complete a brief postal or online questionnaire rather than invite an interviewer into their home for the best part of an evening.
- For parents and children who simply were not interested in the study, and felt no sense of obligation or commitment, there also appear to be two options: (a) reducing its demands, as above; or (b) increasing or emphasising the benefits of participation for parents and children.

5.1 Drivers of participation

This section focuses on drivers of families' participation in the study, with respect to their input at previous waves and levels of ongoing commitment. For the most part, the two were strongly related, though as children grew older, their own dispositions toward the study were increasingly important.

Drivers of parents' participation

Some of the most enthusiastic parents identified the fact that the study was 'interesting' as the primary reason for taking part. They explained this in various ways, emphasising both the nature of the research overall, and their own experience of the study. As described in Chapter 3, some mothers in particular felt part of something special, and enjoyed answering questions about their children, and reflecting on how their family compared with others. They described looking forward to each wave, eager to find out what they would involve. For these parents, the study team was already doing enough to keep them engaged, even if some parents would welcome the chance to learn more about the study. It may be worth trying to find out what topics might be of more relevance to fathers, given that fewer of them seemed to find the study interesting.

Predominantly, however, parents emphasised that they considered themselves to have made a commitment to the study at the outset, which they intended to fulfil. The study – and therefore contributing to it – was seen as worthwhile, including for some who derived limited enjoyment from taking part, and were not particularly interested in its findings.

"We're in it for 25 years. It's just a waste of time if you drop out – the cost of it so far. For us to go, 'no, we don't want to do it anymore' is just pointless and selfish." (Main carer)

For these parents, like the 'enthusiasts', there was no question about whether they would take part; it was simply a matter of agreeing the appointment date and time. The team would have to introduce something significantly unpleasant to put them off – or substantially increase the demands made upon their time. To date, the opportunity costs of taking part had not been too great. As outlined in Chapter 3, parents felt their data was valued and stored securely, and most importantly, devoting one evening every few years to an important study was not considered unreasonable.

"It's not something I have to do every month, I don't think it's too much. And if someone's going to use it in a good way, I don't mind."

(Main carer)

"It's not a bad thing to do – we've done it from Day 1. There's no reason not to." (Partner)

Overwhelmingly, parents said that, so far, what they had been asked to do was 'manageable'. One important factor was that interviewers had been very flexible in fitting in with their schedules; as long as this continued, so would their willingness to take part.

For these parents, providing further evidence of the study's practical value is likely to reinforce their existing beliefs, and commitment to taking part. As noted in Chapter 2, and discussed further in Chapter 6, although they generally believed the study to be worthwhile, some parents were keen to find out more about how the data was used.

In some cases, parents emphasised their children's interest and enjoyment as much as, or more than, their own. When children were enthusiastic, this provided further motivation for parents. In some cases when children were less keen, parents emphasised that they had 'done their bit' thus far, by making the necessary arrangements for study visits and encouraging their children to take part. However, they stressed that their family's continued involvement was likely to hinge on whether their child remained willing to take part. Some parents said that they would not make a huge effort to persuade a reluctant teenager, old enough to make their own decisions. For these parents in particular, there was a clear need for the MCS team to appeal directly to children as well as their carers in future.

In general, parents felt that the gifts provided for children had not influenced their decisions to take part in previous waves. However, they had been appreciated and – along with the regular updates on findings – contributed to a sense of goodwill which supported families' ongoing commitment to the study.

Drivers of children's participation

For the most part, children we interviewed found it impossible to recall or articulate what was in their minds leading up to their participation in the previous wave. Those who could said either that they enjoyed it, were happy to do it, and looked forward to it, or that they 'just went along with it'. Those who emphasised their own motivations tended to be girls, while boys generally stressed their mothers' encouragement.

In some cases, parents had clearly persuaded reluctant children to take part, and reassured them about any elements they were unsure of. At age 11, even if the prospect of talking to a stranger and answering questions about themselves was far less appealing than their own choice of activity, children had generally been willing to do as they were asked by their parents. As noted above, this might not be the case in future; at least some parents felt that, by age 13, children would be old enough to make up their own minds about taking part, and would be less inclined to comply simply to humour their mother.

In this context, it is notable that, in explaining their motivations, children tended to focus more on their positive or neutral experiences of the study, rather than its worth. That taking part was enjoyable or at least 'OK', rather than unpleasant, was generally what seemed to matter, in terms of their level of engagement. However, some were also motivated by the notion that by describing their experiences and expressing their views, they might help to increase adults' understanding of their needs and potentially help other children.

Given that some children had little understanding of the purpose of the study, it is possible that increasing their awareness of the value of the data, and the uses to which it is put, could provide new motivation. However, the impression

we got from at least some of our 12 year old interviewees – and their parents – was that altruistic reasons played a very minor role in their decision-making. On this basis, continuing to ensure that participation was as enjoyable as possible, and made limited demands on their time, seems key to continued engagement of children who might otherwise drop out.

5.2 Family decision-making

Household and parent participation

In most cases, parents, or at least mothers, told us that they 'were always' going to take part. They explained that, whilst they welcomed advance information about the visits and explanations by the interviewer before or during the visit, their decision had already been made *before* first contact, and *without* even reading the leaflets: for these families, the phone-call with the interviewer simply provided the opportunity to arrange the appointment.

Reflecting this, parents tended to downplay the importance of the information leaflets in the decision making process. However, some did refer to sharing the content of the leaflets with their children, and as discussed further below, it gave them a chance to talk through any elements their son or daughter had concerns about. Parents did not explicitly talk about the leaflets as reassuring *them* about the content of *their* interviews or affecting their decisions either way. However a number of parents clearly appreciated being told that they could refuse to answer any questions which made them uncomfortable – being reminded about *this* in advance may have made others feel happier about taking part.

Likewise, it was useful to have advance confirmation of the expected role for both parents in the household so that they could consider how they wanted to respond to this requirement. As mentioned previously, some partners were less keen than main carers, which meant that they were less willing to make a huge effort to make time for study visits. In a number of cases, particularly if fathers' work demands made participation difficult, parents agreed among themselves that only one of them – invariably the child's mother – would take part.

Child participation

With respect to decision making around the child's participation in the previous wave (MCS5), parents and children presented a similar picture to one another, though children's recollections were hazier. In general, it appeared that parents – essentially mothers – drove the decision-making process, although the extent to which children's views were considered seemed to vary.

Families told us that there was rarely much of a debate within the household regarding whether children would participate. In part, this was because parents tended to know how children felt about the study. Like their parents, enthusiastic children were predisposed to participate. As one mother confirmed,

"When I get the letter, or information, I talk to her, and she's always happy!" (Main carer)

Typically, children recall simply being told what was being planned. Mothers generally reinforced this, describing working out which dates would suit best for the visit, sometimes consulting children on the timing, to ensure it took account of their planned activities. In the few cases where children expressed reservations about taking part, parents would discuss this with them.

Although children generally agreed that they had been shown information leaflets in advance, none felt they played a major role in their decisions. However, in those few cases where they had concerns about being measured, having the information beforehand allowed parents to diffuse the issues. Receiving the leaflets allowed time for parent-child discussion, and for parents to contact the interviewer to discuss how best to reassure the child – without this, the child might have been upset or refused to take part on the day.

Children generally seemed to accept that parents did have a guiding role, in relation to their participation in the study – including in cases where they struggled to remember taking part in the past and relied on parents' firmer recollections of their participation over time.

Among those we interviewed, there were certainly cases in which parents had provided necessary encouragement, feeling that the child would 'come around', or had no real reason to refuse. This scenario appeared to have arisen most often with respect to boys who did not particularly recall or identify with the study, and needed to be persuaded to give up their time to take part, or reassured that they could opt out of elements they disliked. For example, one reluctant boy had been asked to 'see how he felt on the day', and reassured that he did not have to be weighed. Although he went on to take part in all the other activities, in theory, his mother had booked the appointment not knowing if he would actually go through with it.

Some parents stressed more firmly that the choice to take part was their child's, and that they would always be given the option to refuse.

"It's not something we'd ever say 'well you've just got to do this'.... If she didn't want to do it, well the chances of her taking part would be non-existent. You can't force kids!" (Main carer)

Although no-one we interviewed gave us the impression that they had been forced to take part, two boys made negative comments to their questionnaires indicating that they definitely had not wanted to take part; one saying "*I hate it*", the other "*My mum makes me do it.*" As we did not have the opportunity to talk to these families, it is difficult to put these comments in context, and probe whether they were entirely serious. However, at face value, they suggest that some children have taken part unwillingly, and have not felt able to exercise their right to opt out. Moreover, it is likely that they *would* opt out, if they felt it was in their power to do so.

As noted previously, some parents stressed that even if they had cajoled a reluctant child into taking part before, in line with their own commitment to the study, they did not envisage doing this indefinitely: at the next wave, it would be *entirely* up to their son or daughter whether or not they took part.

5.3 Drivers of non-participation

This section considers drivers of non-participation in particular activities, or disengagement from the study.

Non-participation in particular activities

Predominantly, our interviews were with participants in the most recent wave of MCS. For the most part, these families had completed every activity they were invited to take part in, and told us they had never had any concerns about doing so.

In a few cases, however, these parents and children were able to talk about instances in which they or their children had opted out of taking part in particular activities. Specifically, where children had been sensitive about being 'stocky' or 'small', parents had supported them in choosing not to be weighed.

Among those families who had no particular concerns about taking part, some fathers had opted out of being interviewed. For the most part, pressures of work and long hours were cited rather than a wish to avoid providing information. In each case, couples seemed to have agreed between them that the mother was perfectly capable of reporting on all relevant issues, and there was no real need for the father to take part.

Non-participation in particular waves or disengagement overall

During interviews and brief telephone conversations with parents who did not take part in Wave 5, we were able to explore their reasons. As noted previously, some families who *had* consistently taken part considered themselves 'average' and felt they had 'nothing to hide'. In contrast, those who declined to take part in full interviews with us as well as at Wave 5, tended to stress what they saw as their exceptional family circumstances, or in some cases told us that they felt uncomfortable about inviting interviewers into their homes and saw such visits as intrusive.

As outlined in Chapter 3, some parents had found a few of the questions in their MCS5 interviews rather personal, or intrusive. Although in these instances, the interviewers had apparently put them at their ease and made it clear that answering was optional, it is possible that other families may have reacted more strongly to being asked about difficult topics – either declining to answer, or disengaging permanently from the study.

For one group of families, overwhelming life events or stressors were clearly implicated. For example, one couple had been undergoing a trial separation, attributed to the stress relating to their son's difficult behaviour, only later explained by a diagnosis of ADHD/Aspergers syndrome. Not only had they felt unable to cope with invasion of their privacy at that difficult time, they were conscious of their son's distress around unfamiliar people, and felt he would also be unable to cope with the experience. Now that he was on medication which appeared to ease his symptoms, and the family was back together, they hoped very much to be able to take part in the next wave.

Other commitments, including hospital appointments, holidays, caring for ill or elderly relatives, fasting during Ramadan, or 'busyness' more generally, were variously implicated by other families who explained that they *would* have liked to take part, and hoped to do so again, but that it had simply been impossible to find a convenient date within the fieldwork timeframe.

For families under severe stress, or describing themselves as particularly busy, enthusiasm or commitment is not necessarily enough. If these families are to be engaged in the next wave, two approaches might be taken. Firstly, greater efforts might be made to ensure families understand the importance of representing and understanding their families' exceptional experiences, with reference to understanding social change, how families cope with the demands upon them, and perhaps what support they might need. Secondly, it might be fruitful to offer less intrusive or demanding ways to sustain at least a minimal level of input – for example, offering a brief paper or online questionnaire, or telephone interviews rather than a home visit.

Finally, another group of parents who had missed the previous wave appeared to feel no interest in, or commitment to the study. In some cases, they hardly remembered taking part at all. In others, they remembered the study quite well, assured us that they believed it was worthwhile, but said that they knew participation was voluntary and they had other priorities including work and extra-curricular activities for their children. In total, five main carers asked for their families to be withdrawn from MCS, or told us that they had already requested this, when we approached them to take part in interviews for the present feedback study. In a small number of cases, parents hung up after hearing the words 'Child of the New Century': although it proved impossible to explore why, it is likely that they, too, have no interest in taking part in future.

As discussed previously, some children were less keen than others on the experience of taking part in study visits. A number of boys, particularly, felt that elements of the experience – particularly those which involved answering questions – were 'boring'. They were not keen to talk about their lives with a stranger (or even their parents), and neither were they moved by appeals to the importance of the study or its value. In addition, unlike their parents, children had not made a personal commitment to the study, even if they understood that the researchers wished to track them over time. In these circumstances, when parents grant children greater autonomy, this could facilitate disengagement.

Notably, one mother agreed to participate in *our* interviews, only to cancel after consulting her daughter, who had apparently said that, not only did she not wish to provide feedback on Child of the New Century, but that she did not want to take part in the main study in future. While this particular mother thought there was at least a chance that her daughter would change her mind before the next wave, she was perfectly prepared to drop out of the study if she did not. In other cases, too, this might have been the case at Wave 5, with children's refusal driving that of parents.

For parents and children alike who simply are not interested in the study and feel no sense of obligation or commitment, it seems unlikely that they will take part in future waves, unless a new approach is taken, to make it 'worth their

while'. It might be worth offering to reduce the demands on their time, or be more flexible – as for the 'busy' families mentioned above. Alternatively, the most likely way to increase the appeal of the study would be to increase or emphasise the personal benefits of participation for parents and children.

6. Keeping in touch

In this chapter, we consider participants' views in relation to the study between visits, with an emphasis on study communications and the extent to which they are effective in keeping families engaged.

Key points

- The keeping in touch materials are recalled and read by the majority of parents and play a clear role in helping families feel connected with the study: at least six in ten agree they make them or their family feel special and help them feel connected to other study participants.
- Overall, the materials are widely read, although with varying degrees of engagement and satisfaction with the depth and range of content. Main carers tended to be more interested than either partners or children, suggesting that more emphasis might be put on finding out what would interest fathers and children.
- Feedback on the design of the leaflets was generally very positive – parents and children felt they looked appealing, and presented content in an accessible way.
- However, the content could be developed to appeal to a wider range of participants. Whilst some families are very pleased with existing content and think no changes necessary, some families are luke warm about current content, and a core 10% of parents surveys feel that the keeping in touch materials are neither interesting, nor contain information important to families. Some families are hungry for more material on uses and impact of study data (including children's milk teeth, gathered previously), and more detailed analysis, rather than just snippets.
- Some children were also keen to find out more about how findings have been used. This might increase the proportion of children feeling the study was valuable. Other children felt materials would be more engaging if they pictured and profiled other (real) children taking part in the study.
- However, when developing content it will need to be borne in mind that some families do not want to receive too much information: for this group receiving something short and easy to digest is important to help them feel in touch, but they are never going have a strong interest in detailed feedback. The challenge is to pitch things to meet the needs of these families as well as those who want more, and also to develop content to increase engagement of those most at risk of drop out (see Chapter 5). One option suggested by families is to make fuller information available on the web-site for those who want it; this could also be communicated via optional email alerts, for example.
- Most parents are happy to receive study communications once a year, as previously, but it may be worth considering more frequent information for children who have a greater interest in receiving feedback once a term.

- Among main carers, partners and children, the greatest numbers indicated that they preferred to receive study updates by post. Although significant numbers were also keen to access information by email, the strongest feelings expressed were about the value of having printed material through the door. A number of children pointed out that they did not have their own email addresses at this stage.
- Very few respondents had visited the study website in the last two years, and it seems many families are not aware of it. However, the majority of parents and children are keen for there to be useful and engaging web content; some children are keen for this to include games or interactive elements, as well as perhaps profiles of other children in the study, and opportunities to find out more about aspects of the study and its findings. Accordingly, raising awareness of the website and developing its content may be one way to increase engagement and develop children's interest.
- However, the postal communications may remain most important to increase engagement of the least engaged because information is more direct, and there is less reliance on proactivity of individuals to log on to the website, for example. Involving children in co-production of engagement leaflets could be one way of ensuring they are effective in engaging those most at risk of drop out: for example, this is an approach being taken for DH by NCB for a large-scale survey of 15 year olds to measure health outcomes being piloted this year by Ipsos MORI.

6.1 Perceived value of the keep in touch leaflets

The extent and ways in which families read the keep in touch leaflets

Broadly speaking, keep in touch materials are widely read, although with varying degrees of engagement. Around eight in ten main carers and around half of partners surveyed read 'all' or 'most' of the materials. This was reflected within the interviews.

Many children spontaneously recalled the keep in touch materials throughout the interviews, although they struggled to discuss them in detail. Survey responses indicate around six in ten children saying they read 'all' or 'most' of them, and just 13.9% 'none'. Similarly, almost nine in ten children *disagreed* with the statement 'I throw them away without reading them'.

Table 6.1 Extent to which respondents read keeping in touch leaflets

	All %	Most %	Some %	None %	N
Main carer	36.5	44.0	18.2	1.3	159
Partner	28.3	28.1	35.1	10.5	57
Child	20.5	41.8	23.8	13.9	122

Within two parent families interviewed, main carers felt they were most likely to read the materials and pass information on to their partner and child if it was of interest.

A small core group of just 5.7% main carers strongly agree that the family read the leaflets together, but a further four in ten tend to agree indicating that perhaps they are referred to or looked at in passing but not in depth.

Table 6.2 Parent and child feedback on reading keep in touch leaflets

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'We read them as a family'	Main carer	5.7	39.9	50.0	4.4	158
	Partner	5.3	36.8	57.9	0.0	57
'I throw them away without reading them'	Children	1.7	11.7	48.3	38.3	120

Overall views and impact of the keep in touch leaflets

The majority of parents and children survey reported some benefits from the leaflets in terms of making them feel special and connected with other study members at least to some extent. Children are especially likely to feel like this, although views do vary. This may reflect that findings from qualitative interviews that receiving post tends to be a significantly more "novel" experience for children than it is for parents.

Among those surveyed, around eight in ten children, and less than six in ten parents agreed the leaflets made them feel connected with other participants; Likewise seven in ten main carers and children, and around six in ten partners indicated that the materials made them or their family feel special.

The proportions who just *agree* with these things are higher than the proportions who *agree strongly* indicating the level of interest and/or impact isn't always great; however there are core groups who strongly agree they experience these benefits: for example one in six children and one in eight main carers *strongly* agree the leaflets help them feel connected. It is also notable that over one in twenty strongly disagree that the leaflets provide them this benefit.

Table 6.3 Parent feedback on keep in touch leaflets

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'I feel my family is special when I get these'	Main carer	12.0	58.2	27.8	1.9	158
	Partner	8.8	52.6	38.6	0.0	57
'I feel special getting them'	Children	17.5	56.7	20.0	5.8	120
'They make me feel connected to other families in Child of the New Century'	Main carer	8.9	44.9	42.4	3.8	158
	Partner	10.5	43.9	43.9	1.8	57
'They make me feel connected to other young people in Child of the New Century'	Children	16.8	52.9	26.1	4.2	119

Feedback from qualitative interviews reflected this, with feedback varying regarding the degree to which participants felt the leaflets were interesting or important. For example, a number of children interviewed felt very positive and others, while amenable to receiving materials, did not view them as particularly important.

It is also worth noting, that the two mothers we spoke to who did not participate in MCS5 were enthusiastic about receiving materials. One mother felt her son, with Aspergers syndrome, got a 'boost' from these materials and was made feel important. Keep in touch materials may be especially important for those who miss any study waves.

6.2 Content and design of leaflets

Parents' more detailed views on the content of leaflets

Overall the majority of parents surveyed agreed that the content of keep in touch materials has been interesting, and relevant (ie important to families). However, far more just agree, than agree strongly, especially among partners, and round one in ten actively *disagree* indicating potential scope for improvement.

Table 6.4 Parent feedback on keep in touch leaflets

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'They are interesting to read'	Main carer	19.2	69.2	10.3	1.3	156
	Partner	12.7	78.2	9.1	0.0	55
'They cover things important to families'	Main carer	13.4	77.7	8.3	0.6	157
	Partner	8.8	77.2	14.0	0.0	57

Feedback from parents interviewed illustrated the range of views and levels of engagement in the leaflets: Some really engaged with the content and felt they were sufficient; some were very much interested to receive findings but wanted fuller richer feedback; others were not particularly interested and would not want to receive more information through the post. Based on this, there would be clear benefits in making fuller information available, but not "over-doing" any development of postal communication in ways which might alienate those who want lighter touch feedback. One option could be to make wider information more fully available for those who want more, via the website (as suggested by some parents – see further discussion below), or optional email updates and alerts, for example.

Positive engagement with current content:

Many parents interviewed really did seem to engage with the content, often to reflect on how society has changed since when they grew up, or how panel families have changed over time. A number of parents spontaneously spoke about divorce rates, as discussed in a previous leaflet, outlining how many two

parent families has separated since the beginning of the study. One mother felt surprised by this, indicating that she tends to consider the information within leaflets important and has shaped her opinion on this area.

"It just made me think, it's a shame you know, I know that's life but..."

(Main carer)

Her husband was equally engaged and felt materials, "probably have an impact on how you feel about your own personal situation" (Partner), a sentiment echoed by other families.

"It helps backs up that you are part of contemporary society and that you're not doing anything different to anyone else." (Main carer)

Furthermore, some families who engaged with the leaflets felt they were sufficient and didn't need changing.

Interest in fuller more detailed feedback:

However, other parents interviewed, for whom receiving feedback was also important, felt that materials do not go far enough to show how information has been used. Some commented that there was not enough detailed information within the materials, compared to the data which has been collected (Main carer and Partner). Others mentioned one activity in particular, where parents were asked to send the study team their children's milk teeth.

"Because you wanted the teeth - what did you do with them?"

(Main carer)

Another partner felt he would like to see conclusions drawn from the material collected in keep in touch materials, suggesting a comparison between the North and South of England (Partner). Similarly, a few parents suggested materials include a 'summing up' of the study so far rather than 'drip feeding' information. This would act as a record for families to look back at their involvement overall. One main carer suggested, "like a Child of the New Century 20 years on thing." (Main carer).

This was not viewed as essential to their participation, however, with two parents feeling;

"It probably wouldn't matter to us in particular but it would be useful to know that that information is being used effectively." (Partner)

Some families expressed interest in more feedback about their individual child as part of the overall feedback loop. Whilst this may not be possible, it may be helpful to inform parents about the nature of information they are likely to receive over time, to help manage expectations as well as generate interest in forthcoming releases.

"We don't mind doing it, we're not complaining, but to even know the reason why they doing it, what are they gonna do with it, what's it to do with anything for him, is it going to help, will he know all how he has progressed, will he get like from when he started from the end- will he know what is different? Will we get a record?" (Main carer)

Parents who do not want more information than they already receive:

Some parents were not particularly interested in the leaflets. One main carer felt, although she reads the materials, it did not matter to her very much to receive study finding between waves; her family did not think about the study between study visits and was happy not to. Another felt she preferred to skim materials, that they have been 'fine' but would not like any further detail.

Children's more detailed views on the content of leaflets

Among children surveyed, ratings of study content were similar to those among parents, with the majority of children giving positive ratings, but most of them not strongly so, and with six in ten disagreeing leaflets are interesting and relevant to young people.

Table 6.5 Child feedback on keep in touch leaflets

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'They are interesting to read'	24.4	58.8	13.4	3.4	119
'They talk about things important to young people'	24.6	59.3	14.4	1.7	118

Most children interviewed in the qualitative work struggled to recall the content of materials in detail and how it made them feel. Of the few children who did recall them, the extent to which they engaged with the content was also varied.

A few felt the content was interesting overall and one girl in particular enjoyed being able to compare how things are now to when her mum was a child. Others recalled enjoying reading about the different careers study participants said they wanted to have in the future.

A number of children, however, were indifferent to the content of materials and one felt materials focused more on what's interesting for parents.

When asked what would make the content of keep in touch materials more interesting for children, many struggled and others were not enthusiastic about receiving more detail. However, a number felt they would like to receive more information on how findings have been used. Others felt materials would be more engaging if they featured real children and information about the lives of other children in the study, including the activities they liked to do. One girl in particular would like to see more pictures, including of those who took part.

Involving children in developing and designing the content of leaflets could be one way of ensuring they are effect in terms of being appealing and engaging to young people.

Design of communications leaflets

Parents and children alike were happy with the design of materials, overall. Parents felt they have been easy to read with a good balance of graphs and text, which made the content of materials accessible. The vast majority of parents who completed a questionnaire agreed overall that the design was 'great', as outlined in Table 6.6.

"It's clear, it's easy to read, sometimes there's graphs, it's not all text, so there's some graphical depictions which is quite handy." (Main carer)

"It's simple, it's not too complicated - there aren't too many words, it's not like you think - oh god, it's a scientific research paper - it's just ordinary, day to day stuff, which you can comprehend." (Main carer)

Children's were largely positive about the design of materials, as 81.9% agreed with the statement 'The designs are great'. Interviews reflected this. For example, one girl felt they were:

"...easy to read but interesting too.... Just right. Bright but not too bright."
(Girl)

Table 6.6 Feedback on 'keeping in touch' leaflets

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'The designs are great'	Main carer	14.1	76.3	9.6	0.0	156
	Partner	10.5	77.2	12.3	0.0	57
	Children	19.8	62.1	15.5	2.6	116

6.3 Frequency of communications

The majority of parents are happy to receive study keep in touch communications once a year, as is currently the case. As detailed in Table 6.6, 66% of main carers and 62% of partners reported so. This was reflected in interviews, most parents we spoke to felt the frequency of communications is fine as it is and should not change. One in particular felt the frequency has been well timed throughout the study, and appropriate for children's development.

"I think they're spaced about right actually to take into account the changes that they go through, he might even speak the next time!"

(Partner)

Most children interviewed were unable to recall how often they received communications in the past and many were passive about how often they would like to receive them in the future. However, overall there seems a desire from children for more regular communications: "once a term" was selected as the most preferred frequency among survey respondents (55.7%). In the qualitative research two girls also felt strongly that they should receive them more often. One felt that sending more information more frequently would make her feel a greater part of the study, another echoed this sentiment.

"They could send leaflets more often - like just to remind you that you're in Child of the New Century." (Girl)

Table 6.6 Preferred frequency of study communications

	Once a term %	Once a year %	Once every two years %	Less often than every two years %	Never %	<i>N</i>
Main carers	24.4	66.2	4.5	1.3	0.6	157
Partners	25.9	62.1	8.6	3.4	0.0	58
Children	55.7	33.6	5.7	2.5	2.5	122

It is possible that increasing the frequency of communications may be an effective way of generating stronger engagement in the study among some children. However, it needs to be borne in mind that those responding to this feedback survey may be among those most engaged in study communications and that average levels of interest in fuller or additional communication may be lower. Similarly if the amount of communication was increased it would be important to ensure that the content was effective in appealing to young people, otherwise the increase in material could be reacted to negatively.

It may be worth considering including a feedback question on this among a small randomly sampled sub-section of the main MCS6 survey (to gain more representative feedback) to help judge this for future waves going forwards.

6.4 Targeting of communications

Broadly speaking, parents were happy that their children received their own separate communications during the last wave. However, a number implied that they read the materials and communicated the information to their children.

Children's views were varied on this issue. A number recalled that they had received their own communications, read the materials and considered this a positive aspect of the study. Others did not consider this important as they were happy for their parents to communicate any information they needed to know. A more detailed discussion of targeting communications in the next wave can be found in Section 7.4.

6.5 Methods of communications

Survey respondents and interviewees alike felt they preferred receiving study updates by post. This was consistent among children, main carers and partners, as outlined in Table 6.7. A number also felt they would like to receive updates by email, with over half of partners reporting so.

Table 6.7 Preferred formats for receiving study updates¹

	Post %	Email %	Website %	Twitter %	Facebook %	N
Main carers	77.4	42.8	10.1	2.5	8.2	159
Partners	62.1	55.2	10.3	0.0	8.6	58
Children	69.9	35.8	18.7	7.3	26.8	123

¹Respondents were asked to select all that applied from the list of five options

The majority of parents interviewed felt strongly that they enjoy receiving study communications by post and would like to continue to do so.

The exception to this was one partner who felt communication should be all be made electronic, mainly to promote efficiency and bring the study up to date. He also highlighted the additional benefit that email content could be easily filed away and stored for reference, whereas paper documentation might be more easily lost (Partner).

However, many parents spoke about the importance of having something physical 'in your hand', which could not be replaced by an email. One mother said she preferred post to email as she could take it with her while making breakfast, for example, and read it to her son (Main carer).

Post was considered to be more meaningful than email by the majority of parents, who felt they received too much unwanted email, making it less valued as a mode of communication.

"We get enough rubbish on the email, to be blunt! I'm terrible at reading emails."

(Main carer)

A number of parents, mostly mothers, felt they weren't very good with computers, or that they may 'lose' or 'miss' this information among multiple other (e.g junk) emails. One felt she prefers post, rather than email, "Incase I press something and it disappears" (Main carer)

"So I've got something in my hand to read, if it was email chances are it would just end up lost with all the other hundreds of emails"

(Main carer)

A number of children mirrored this, stating that they would prefer post as they would get a leaflet with it, for its design qualities, which wouldn't be the same as getting a document on the computer.

"I prefer to see all the information on a sheet, and I like the leaflets - how they look, yeah." (Girl)

Getting post was considered fun and somewhat novel by children, and seemed to make a number of children feel important (2 girls), given they rarely received letters addressed them personally. Importantly, a number of children emphasized that they don't have their own email address.

Child of the New Century website

As presented in Table 6.8, a small proportion of those who completed a survey had visited the study website in the last two years.

Table 6.8 Use of the study website

	Children (N = 123)	Main carers (N = 159)	Partners (N = 57)
Proportion of respondents who had visited the website in the last two years	7.3%	11.3%	14.0%

Lack of awareness may be a key issue; many of the parents interviewed were not aware of the study website, with only two being saying they had visited it. One of which, notably, was a parent who had not participated in the MCS5, who had a 'quick look' and found it to be very clear and helpful (Main carer).

A number of parents felt they would like to use a Child of the New Century website in the future. Many felt the website could offer the detail they felt was lacking in the keep in touch materials, as outlined in Section 5.2. They described how the website could be used to share additional findings, especially for those who find the keep in touch materials do not give enough detail to meet their needs or interests. One mother from Northern Ireland felt she would like to see more localised findings and suggested comparing Northern Ireland with Scotland, for example (Main carer).

Parents felt the website should not replace the keep in touch materials, however. One father suggested that leaflets could provide "bite size" pieces of information that could serve to "draw you in to the website" where there would be further detail (Partner). Those who really valued the Keep In Touch material felt they would use the website to access copies of paper leaflets they may have lost of the years or just to have one place to look across them together (Main carer). Other than using the website as a source of information, a number of parents suggested it be used in a more interactive manner, by having a separate 'log in' for participants where they could complete 'additional' surveys (2 main carers).

As outlined in Table 6.9, more than three-quarters of children who completed a questionnaire felt they would access a website for young people in the study.

Table 6.9 Likelihood of children accessing study webpages for young people

Likelihood of access	Certainly	Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely	Certain not to
Total % (N = 121)	14.9	24.0	37.2	14.0	6.6	3.3

Although some said they thought it would be good to access further findings or information about the study online, the idea of a more personal and interactive website was one that children seemed to feel more strongly about. Many suggested members could log in and play games. One boy felt he would like if there were interesting surveys where he could get immediate feedback and if they could tell him "what type of person you are" or what job he is likely to have in the future (Boy). A number of children felt this website could act as a community base for members of the study, with a separate section for children and parents. One particularly enthusiastic girl felt she would like to see pictures of other children in the study, and would like for her picture to be on the website too (Girl). Reflecting interest in these more interactive and personalized elements, a quarter of children surveyed selected "facebook" as a means of communication that would interest them for the study (see Table 6.7 above).

7. Anticipating the next sweep

In this chapter, we consider participants' views on the future of Child of the New Century, including participation, changing contexts and suggested modifications to the study.

Key points

- The vast majority of parents indicated that they would be happy for their families to take part in future waves of the study. Many children also seem amenable but there are significant numbers whose participation is driven by their parents' engagement, rather than their own and who may be at risk of drop out when children's decision making becomes more independent.
- As outlined in previous chapters, many parents felt that, by the time of the next sweep, children would be old enough to decide themselves whether or not to take part. A few anticipated that their children would opt out – including some parents who would themselves prefer to stay engaged in what they saw as a worthwhile and interesting study.
- Although most parents were happy for their children to receive their own communications about the next sweep, they generally felt that post should continue to be sent via parents until children were 18 years old. However, they made clear that they trusted the study team to send appropriate materials; it was more that they wanted to ensure that they knew what was being sent to their child.
- As some parents suggested, it appears likely that more effort will need to be made to engage reluctant teenagers via building fuller direct engagement with them, whether this means providing more feedback on the use of their data, making the activities more enjoyable, or making the personal benefits of the study more prominent.
- In general, children felt that few things needed to change, for the study to be relevant to them at the next wave. They felt that as long as the questions and activities during visits reflected their lives, abilities and interests, that would be fine.
- Doing a variety of activities during study visits was seen as important by children, to maintain the interest of those with different preferences or tendencies to get bored, and to limit the time they spent in activities they disliked. Although doing some things on the computer was seen as fun, to the extent that they were like games, doing *everything* on the computer was not necessarily a good idea. Interaction with, and attention from, the interviewer was welcomed by many children.
- Just as children's enjoyment of question booklets depended partly on how much they enjoyed writing, the same was true in relation to the idea of completing a diary. Some were very enthusiastic; for others, this risked seeming like homework, and it would be important to make it very easy and quick to complete, if it was to be useful and not deter people from taking part.

- Children also fed back that if an activity monitor is included in MCS6, it will be important for it to be more comfortable and more discrete than the one they have been asked to wear before.
- While not all children personally like to be called a ‘Child of the New Century’, most parents and children we spoke to felt it to be a wholly appropriate – and often ideal – name for the study and no-one felt it made sense to change it.

7.1 Attitudes towards participation at the next sweep

Parents

Overall, most parents felt they would participate in the next sweep. As discussed in Chapter 4, parents’ drivers for participation tend to fall into a number of categories; those who find the study interesting, those who find it worthwhile, families who feel they have made a commitment to the study and others, while perhaps less interested in the study feel it is a worthwhile thing to do and are happy to take part because they feel study visits have been manageable and do not take up too much of their time. When asked whether they would continue with the study, parents across these categories felt they would be happy for their children to do so. As outlined in Table 6.1, the overwhelming majority of main carers (94%) and partners (97%) agreed that they would be pleased if their children took part in the future.

Table 7.1 Parent attitudes to participation in Child of the New Century

		Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
‘I would be pleased if my child took part again in the future’	Main carers	51.0	43.3	5.1	0.6	157
	Partners	48.3	48.3	3.4	0.0	58

The idea of not participating seemed strange to those who felt they had already made a long term commitment to participate and/or who find the study interesting and worthwhile. Many of these parents are looking forward to the next wave and enjoy receiving the keep in touch materials between waves. Other parents felt it would be a ‘waste’ to not participate in the next wave given how much their family have invested in and contributed to the study so far. One such main carer said she would “hate to start and not finish”.

“I just want to see, because we have been followed from the beginning-for many years now, so we don’t want to stop. We just want to carry on doing it and see how it goes.” (Main carer)

Notably, the two parents we spoke at length who had not participated in MCS5 felt they would like to participate in the next wave. One mother felt her son, with Aspergers syndrome, feels pleased to be part of the study and hoped he would be able to participate in the next wave. Another mother felt the study is still focusing on issues that she finds relevant and would be happy to continue.

In two instances parents we interviewed knew their children were reluctant to continue with the study and had mixed feelings about this. One mother anticipated that her daughter would “come around eventually”. Another family felt they would be led by their son’s decision, even though they very much enjoyed being part of the study.

Children

Children’s attitudes towards participation in the next wave of the study varied. A number felt enthusiastic and looked forward to activities in the next study visit. The study has made them feel genuinely special and they enjoyed learning about themselves in the process. When asked how they would explain the study to a friend who was still undecided about whether to take part in the next wave, one such child emphasised how important the study has made her feel, while another focused on how enjoyable the activities were in MCS5.

“I would say that it’s not everyone who can be picked, and it feels really special to be a part of it.” (Girl)

“I would say you can play fun games and be part of something rare and be important to the country I guess.” (Boy)

Other children, though less enthusiastic, felt they were ‘fine’ to participate in the next wave as it is something they have always done. Although it would seem they do not consider the study between visits, the visits have never been unpleasant or particularly noteworthy either.

“Yeah I’d take part, yeah it would be ok. I like taking part and stuff...it could be interesting.... That’s it.” (Girl)

When asked, a number of children seemed unsure of whether they would participate in the next survey. These children were largely unable to discuss why this was but implied the activities during study visits were ‘boring’.

As discussed in the section on family decision making (see Section 5.2) it is clear that in many families participation to date has been driven by parental engagement, and that whilst some children feel engaged and committed to the study, others do not so much. It seems clear that as children’s decision making becomes autonomous, there will be more risk of drop out from those less interested in the study, unless direct engagement with children is developed successfully.

7.2 Context for the next sweep: children growing older

Parents

While a number of parents joked that their child would be more moody at 14, overall, they could not see how the context of their family life would change enough to have any impact on participation in the next wave of the study. One such mother felt her son would be “grumpy as hell” and probably busier with school, however, *“...he is intelligent and knows that the study has to be done”*.

However, another parent felt that children at 14 would need more information on what the assessment of learning tests are for, and whether they have been 'good' at them. Although she felt they are not 'tests' as such, she felt her own son would need more explanation at the end of the activities to keep him engage. There is a sense that older children will be applying more critical judgement in deciding whether or not to take part in things, and it will therefore be necessary to demonstrate benefits more clearly and fully to achieve their continued co-operation.

Children

Children struggled to consider how their lives would be different at aged 14. Most felt there would be no difference, while others ventured that the change from primary to secondary school would result in having more homework and a greater focus on exams. While they were unable to consider whether this would impact on their future participation in the study, a number felt the study would have to reflect this change in the type of questions asked and the focus of activities. Some children felt it would not be useful to ask their teacher to complete a question booklet about them again as they no longer spent a lot of time with one teacher who knows them well. One girl felt the 'challenges' section of the MCS5 question booklet would be more relevant when she is 14. Another, who did not participate in MCS5, felt questions should focus on out-of-school activities, particularly whether or not young people 'got into trouble' and what their friends were like.

"When you're 14, you're a proper teen, so you could either go around with the right crowd or a bad crowd, so it depends on their friends - you could start stealing and robbing people with your friends and all that." (Boy)

7.3 Suggested modifications to previous activities

Parents

For the next wave, a number of parents felt their children's activities should increase in difficulty to reflect their age. Largely, however, parents were happy, and felt their children would be happy, to do similar activities to those during MCS5. One partner emphasised that the content should remain relevant to the study but activities interactive in order to keep children engaged.

"You've got to be driven by what they're trying to get from you. So, as long as it's interactive and engaging they're going to get the information they want and maintain the interest I think. That's what it's about."

(Partner)

Children

Overall, most children were either happy or amenable to carrying out similar activities to the previous wave. Many felt they enjoyed the range of activities and this would be important in the next wave. One girl felt this mixture would keep her engaged throughout the study visit.

"A mixture of stuff is good, so you'd get bored if you were just getting talked to, or just having to write, or just having your height measured"

(Girl)

Another boy, who had not taken part in MCS5, felt it was important that there was a balance between computer based activities, writing and speaking to the interviewer. He also thought interviewer involvement in administering questionnaires had advantages over self-completion approaches in cases where young people may want to check their understanding of a question.

"With a written question, if you don't understand the question, then you wouldn't be able to help, but in an interview, you can just quickly ask if you don't understand the question." (Boy)

A number of children, especially those who were enthusiastic about the computer based activities during MCS5, felt it would be fun if more activities were on the computer. Other children felt they would like to see more physical activities in the next wave, with one suggesting, "games where you test how quick you are" (Boy).

A number of children recalled that during an earlier wave, they had worn an activity monitor to school for the day. They felt if they were asked to wear something in their day to day life like this again that they would prefer it to be smaller, and more discreet; as one girl said, "more like a pedometer, not a big belt with a bright red thing on it". She had found the previous one somewhat physically uncomfortable and had disliked the attention and questions that wearing it had generated from other children.

As part of the interview, children we asked to consider whether they would enjoy writing a diary about their day to day life in the future. Many children

were happy or at least amenable to doing so. One felt, "it wouldn't be a bad thing". Another said he felt 'ok' about an activity such as this, but seemed reluctant – he explained that it might seem a lot on top of other schoolwork unless if it involved a good deal of writing, and said that it would need to be really simple, for example with 'tick box' questions. A number of children were particularly enthusiastic about this idea, one girl felt 'quite excited', while another felt she would enjoy it as she likes writing. Another felt she would prefer a diary to be a written activity rather than on a computer as she saw this as more authentic and 'nice'.

7.4 Suggested modifications to communications about the next wave

Within this section we consider participants' views on communications about the next wave of the study. This follows from a more detailed discussion of views on communications overall in Section 6.3.

Mode of communication

As previously noted in Section 6.3, parents and children felt post was the preferred format for receiving study updates. The majority of parents who returned a questionnaire felt this should also be continued in the next wave as the best approach for communicating about the next waves of the study.

Table 7.2 Respondents' preferred formats for information about Wave 6¹

	Post %	Email %	Website %	N
Main carers	81.8	40.9	3.8	159
Partners	67.2	53.4	8.6	58

¹Respondents were asked to select all that applied from the three options

Targeting of communications

Regarding the targeting of communications during the next wave, many parents were happy for their children to receive their own communication but felt that post should continue to be sent directly parents until the child is 18 years old. Parents said they generally trusted the study to send appropriate material to their children, with a number emphasising they didn't feel it would 'horrible' or 'inappropriate' (Main carer) - it was simply that they believed it was their role to monitor their child's communications.

"I'm not saying you don't do like what you did this time, there was one for him and one for us, but I think at 14 he would still need something like that. I think as a parent because he's still a minor I would feel more comfortable with that." (Main carer)

"I prefer to see it, because I'm the parent and I have the right to see it. I'm comfortable with that." (Main carer)

A small number of parents were happy for their children to receive post directly about the study, although they felt they would still read it (Main carer).

"She'd open it, and then I'd still read it!" (Main carer)

Children's attitudes to this varied. Many struggled to consider what they would like at age 14 but guessed that they would be happy or at least amenable, as they are now, to receive communications via their parents. A few children were keen to receive their own post directly in the next wave of the study, as they viewed getting their own post as exciting, implying it would make them feel more important (one boy and one girl). However it is important to be aware that children found it hard to image how they would feel at 14 and feedback is unlikely to reflect expectations that 14 year olds may have in practice.

The name of the study

Parents interviewed were fairly unanimous in thinking that Child of the New Century was a good name for the study. When questioned about whether it would remain appropriate as children grew older they tended to say that it was: the name is interpreted as describing the nature of cohort – ie they were children at the start of the new century - and they do not think it is necessarily interpreted as inferring participants' status at later time points and therefore unlikely to be alienating for children as they grow older.

For example, one parent compared this to referring to parents of her generation as "children of the 60's" which she said she wouldn't have a problem with.

A number of parents also made clear that the name of the study was not important to whether or not they took part.

Overall, children also seemed happy with the name, and also did not consider the name of the study to be particularly important in determining their future engagement. Many felt happy to continue receiving communications entitled 'Child of the New Century'. This was also reflected in survey findings, as outlined in Table 7.3 below, with 76% of children agreeing that young people in the study like to be called a 'Child of the New Century'. Many felt it would remain an appropriate name for the study at the next wave. As one boy pointed out, "It's not like I would be 20 or something".

Table 7.3 Child attitudes to being called Children of the New Century

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	N
'Young people in the study like to be called a "Child of the New Century'	23.1	52.9	19.8	4.1	121

Others thought it described the study perfectly. Whilst children did not articulate why directly, it may be the case that, as for parents, the name is generally interpreted by children as describing the nature of the cohort – ie people who were children at the start of the new century - rather than describing the current status of participants.

"It makes perfect sense, it does what you want." (Girl)

"It does what it says on the tin" (Boy)

One girl also saw the name as denoting something special about her cohort of peers and had a strong view that the name should not change in the future.

"It's kind of like a name that says 'New Century'- which is kind of special, because a new century's not going to come along in a long, long time- so it's quite a special name." (Girl)

Based on this feedback, there does not seem any clear reason for changing the name.

Appendices

A.1 Main carer letter to accompany questionnaire



Understanding your family's views and experiences of Child of the New Century

Dear <MainCarer1Namecoverletter>

Who are we and what are we doing?

We are researchers from the National Children's Bureau (NCB) Research Centre. Your child is one of the 19,000 special children born in the UK in 2000/2001 whose lives are being followed by the Child of the New Century study. We have been asked by the Child of the New Century team to find out the views and experiences of a small number of the families who are part of the study to learn whether there is anything they could do better.

What are we asking your family to do?

Along with this letter you have been sent a questionnaire and a pre-paid envelope <cover letter partner1>. The questionnaire asks about your experiences of Child of the New Century so far and asks if CLS should do anything differently leading up to the next survey. There are 13 questions and they should take **around 10 minutes** to complete. We would very much like to hear your <cover letter cover letter partner2> answers to these questions, so that we can advise the Child of the New Century Team on how to make the study better for all families.

You also have an envelope addressed to your child containing a letter explaining the survey, a version of the questionnaire for your child and a pre-paid envelope. If you are happy for your child to take part, please pass this onto them. Once completed please post the questionnaires back to us in the pre-paid envelopes provided.

Is it confidential?

In line with the Data Protection Act (1998) your answers will be kept confidential. The Child of the New Century team will not know who has completed the questionnaires. They will be stored securely and only the NCB research team will be able to access them. NCB will provide the study team with a report of the findings, but individuals will not be identifiable. Taking part is entirely up to you. Whether you do or not will not affect your child being part of Child of the New Century in any way.

If you are happy to continue, please read the instructions on the front page of the questionnaire before you begin. If you have any questions please contact Puja Joshi via telephone 020 7833 6811 or email: pjoshi@ncb.org.uk.

Thank you very much for your help.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Emma Wallace' and the second is 'Puja Joshi'.

Emma Wallace (Assistant Director) and Puja Joshi (Research Officer) NCB.

A.2 Child letter to accompany questionnaire

Research
Centre

Understanding your views and experiences of Child of the New Century

Dear <Child1Namecoverletter>

Who are we?

We are Emma and Puja and we are researchers from the National Children's Bureau (NCB). NCB is a national children's charity working to improve children's and young people's lives.

What are we doing?

You are one of the 19,000 special children born in the UK in 2000/2001 whose lives are being followed by the Child of the New Century. We have been asked by the Child of the New Century team to find out the views of a small number of the young people in the study. You may remember taking part at around age 11, 7 or 5. Before that you might have taken part when you were 3 years old or a baby. The Child of the New Century team wants us to find out what you think about the study, and whether they could do anything better.

What are we asking you to do?

With this letter we have sent you a questionnaire and an envelope. The questionnaire is about your experiences of the study so far. It asks if the Child of the New Century team should do anything differently leading up to the next survey. The questionnaire has 13 questions and takes **about 10-15 minutes** to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to hear your views, so that we can advise the Child of the New Century team how to make the study better for all the young people. Once you are done, you can post it back to us in the envelope provided (we have paid for the stamp already so you can just pop it in the post).

Is it confidential?

Your name is not written anywhere on the questionnaire so no one will know that these are your answers. All the questionnaires we receive will be stored securely. No one from the Child of the New Century team will know what you have said. Only the NCB research team will be able to see your answers. Taking part is entirely up to you. Whether you do or not will not affect your being a part of Child of the New Century in any way.

If you are happy to continue please read the instructions on the front page of the questionnaire before you begin. We hope you enjoy taking part!

If you have any questions you can call Puja on 020 7833 6811 or email her on pjoshi@ncb.org.uk.

Thank you very much for your help.

Emma Wallace (Assistant Director) and Puja Joshi (Research Officer) NCB.

A.3 NCB reminder letter to main carer

Research
Centre

Understanding your family's views and experiences of Child of the New Century

Dear <MainCarer1Namecoverletter>

You may remember that a couple of weeks ago we sent you a letter inviting you to complete a questionnaire about the Child of the New Century study.

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who completed the questionnaires and sent them back to us.

If you and your family have not yet had a chance to complete the questionnaires and sent them back to us then this letter is just a quick reminder. If you have sent them back then please ignore this letter. We have sent copies of the questionnaires with this letter, along with pre-paid envelopes.

The questionnaire asks about your experiences of Child of the New Century so far and asks if the Child of the New Century team should do anything differently leading up to the next survey. There are 14 questions and they should take **around 10 minutes** to complete.

In line with the Data Protection Act (1998) your answers will be kept confidential. The Child of the New Century team will not know who has completed the questionnaires. They will be stored securely and only the NCB research team will be able to access them. NCB will provide the study team with a report of the findings, but individuals will not be identifiable. Taking part is entirely up to you. Whether you do or not will not affect your child being part of Child of the New Century in any way.

If you are happy to continue, please read the instructions on the front page of the questionnaire before you begin. If you are happy for your child to take part, please pass the enclosed envelope to them. Once completed please post the questionnaires back to us in the pre-paid envelopes provided.

If you have any questions please contact Puja Joshi via telephone 020 7833 6811 or email: pjoshi@ncb.org.uk. **Thank you very much for your help.**

Emma Wallace (Assistant Director) and Puja Joshi (Research Officer) NCB.

A.4 NCB reminder letter to child

Research
Centre

Understanding your views and experiences of Child of the New Century

Dear <Child1Namecoverletter>

You might remember that a couple weeks ago we sent you a letter asking you to complete a questionnaire about the Child of the New Century study.

**We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who
completed the questionnaires and sent them back to us!**

If you haven't already completed the questionnaire and sent it back to us then this letter is a quick reminder for you. We have sent you another copy of the questionnaire with this letter.

The questionnaire asks about your experiences of Child of the New Century so far and asks if the Child of the New Century team should do anything differently leading up to the next survey. There are 13 questions and they should take **around 10 minutes** to complete.

Your name is not written anywhere on the questionnaire so no one will know that these are your answers. All the questionnaires we receive will be stored securely. No one from the Child of the New Century team will know what you have said. Only the NCB research team will be able to see your answers. Taking part is entirely up to you. Whether you do or not will not affect your being a part of Child of the New Century in any way.



If you are happy to continue please read the instructions on the front page of the questionnaire before you begin. We hope you enjoy taking part and once you have completed the questionnaire please post it back to us in the pre-paid envelope provided.

If you have any questions you can call Puja on 020 7833 6811 or email her on pjoshi@ncb.org.uk.

Thank you very much for your help.

Emma Wallace (Assistant Director) and Puja Joshi (Research Officer) NCB.

A.5 Parent questionnaire (self-completion)

Child of the New Century Parents' Feedback Questionnaire

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST:

- Do **NOT** write your name on this questionnaire
- You can skip any questions you do not want to answer
- The majority of questions can be answered by putting a tick ✓ in the box ☐ next to your answer
- Some questions ask you to tick as many boxes as apply. These questions will tell you to: **TICK ALL THAT APPLY ✓**
- The last question gives you the opportunity to write anything that you wish to tell us about your views and experiences of being part of Child of the New Century
- When you have finished please post this questionnaire back to us in the envelope provided

Q1 Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7 where '1' means completely happy and '7' means not at all happy, how do you feel about being a part of Child of the New Century?

Completely happy	2	3	4	5	6	Not at all happy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2 Which of the following words best describe what you think and feel about Child of the New Century? **TICK ALL THAT APPLY ✓**

Relevant <input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting <input type="checkbox"/>	Useful <input type="checkbox"/>
Pointless <input type="checkbox"/>	Boring <input type="checkbox"/>	Intrusive <input type="checkbox"/>
Varied <input type="checkbox"/>	Meaningful <input type="checkbox"/>	Important <input type="checkbox"/>
Worthwhile <input type="checkbox"/>	Tiring <input type="checkbox"/>	Inconvenient <input type="checkbox"/>
Stressful <input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoyable <input type="checkbox"/>	Special <input type="checkbox"/>

Q3 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	I would be pleased if my child took part again in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	By taking part I am part of something special	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Study activities are good for children of all abilities and backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The study is enjoyable for families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4 How true do you think the following statements are about Child of the New Century?		Certainly true	A bit true	Not true
a)	Findings are used by the Government to improve things for families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Findings are used by universities to do useful research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Everything about Child of the New Century is professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The information my families provides is kept confidential	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	If my family stopped taking part findings would be less useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q5 Please think back to when you last took part in Child of the New Century. How much, if at all, did you like...		Liked it a lot	Liked it a bit	Didn't mind it	Didn't like it
a)	Taking part overall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Your interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The measurement of your child's weight and height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The assessments your child was asked to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 When you last took part how happy or unhappy were you with...		Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy	Don't know/Can't remember
a)	How well the activities were explained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	The information leaflet that explained the study to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The amount of time that everything took?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The professionalism of the interviewer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 The Child of the New Century team has been sending families leaflets with findings and other information from the study most years since it started. How much, if any, of the information in the leaflets do you usually read?

All ☐ Most ☐ Some ☐ None ☐

Q8 How much do you agree or disagree with the following things about the leaflets?		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	The designs are great	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	We read them as a family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	They are interesting to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	I feel my family is special when I get these	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	They make me feel connected to other families in Child of the New Century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	They cover things important to families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q9 Have you visited the Child of the New Century website in the last two years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q10 How would you prefer to get information about recent findings and other general updates about Child of the New Century? **TICK ALL THAT APPLY** ✓

Post ☐ Email ☐ Website ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐

Q11 Roughly how often would you prefer to get information and updates about Child of the New Century?

Once a term ☐

Once a year ☐

Once every two years ☐

Less often than every two years ☐

Never ☐

Q12 How would you prefer to receive the advance information about the details of next Child of the New Century survey? **TICK ALL THAT APPLY** ✓

Post ☐

Email ☐

Website ☐

Q13 Are you the study child's...

Mother <input type="checkbox"/>	Step-mother <input type="checkbox"/>	Other female carer <input type="checkbox"/>
Father <input type="checkbox"/>	Step-father <input type="checkbox"/>	Other male carer <input type="checkbox"/>



Q14 Please tell us anything else about Child of the New Century or any suggestions you'd like to make here:

NCB would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Please post this questionnaire back to us in the envelope we sent you.

Alternatively you can post it to:
Puja Joshi, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley St, London, EC1V 7QE

<NCBID_MainCarer><NCBID_Partner>

A.6 Child questionnaire (self-completion)

Child of the New Century Young Person's Feedback Questionnaire

PLEASE READ THIS FIRST:

- Do **NOT** write your name on this questionnaire
- You can skip any questions you don't want to answer
- The majority of questions can be answered by putting a tick ✓ in the box ☐ next to your answer
- Some questions ask you to tick as many boxes as apply. These questions will tell you to: **TICK ALL THAT APPLY ✓**
- If there are no special instructions just tick **ONE** box next to your answer
- At the end you can write in anything extra that you want to tell us about your views and experiences of Child of the New Century
- When you are finished please post this questionnaire back to us in the envelope it came with

Now start here!

Q1 Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7 where '1' means completely happy and '7' means not at all happy, how do you feel about being a part of Child of the New Century?

Completely happy	2	3	4	5	6	Not at all happy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2 Which of the following words best describe what you think and feel about Child of the New Century? **TICK ALL THAT APPLY ✓**

Relevant <input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting <input type="checkbox"/>	Useful <input type="checkbox"/>
Pointless <input type="checkbox"/>	Boring <input type="checkbox"/>	Intrusive <input type="checkbox"/>
Varied <input type="checkbox"/>	Cool <input type="checkbox"/>	Important <input type="checkbox"/>
Worthwhile <input type="checkbox"/>	Tiring <input type="checkbox"/>	Inconvenient <input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrating <input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoyable <input type="checkbox"/>	Special <input type="checkbox"/>

Q3 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	I enjoy taking part in Child of the New Century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	By taking part I am part of something special	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Young people in the study like to be called a "Child of the New Century"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4 How true do you think the following statements are about Child of the New Century?		Certainly true	A bit true	Not true
a)	Findings are used by the Government to improve things for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Findings are used by universities to do useful research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The information I provide is kept safe at all times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	If I stopped taking part findings would be less useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q5 Please think back to when you last took part in Child of the New Century, how much, if at all, did you like...		Liked it a lot	Liked it a bit	Didn't mind it	Didn't like it
a)	Taking part overall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Having your weight measured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Having your height measured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Doing the activities that find out how you think?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	Filling in the question booklet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 When you last took part how happy or unhappy were you with...

	Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy	Don't know/ Can't remember
a) How well the activities were explained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) The information leaflet that told you about the activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) The amount of time that everything took?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) The interviewer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) The thank you gift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 Since you were about 8 years old, the Child of the New Century team has been sending you leaflets in the post with findings and other information about the study. How much, if any, of the information in the leaflets do you usually read?

All ☐ Most ☐ Some ☐ None ☐

Q8 How much do you agree or disagree with the following things about the leaflets?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I throw them away without reading them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) I feel special getting them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) They are interesting to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) They make me feel connected to other young people in Child of the New Century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) They talk about things important to young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) The designs are great	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q9 Have you visited the Child of the New Century website in the last two years?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q10 If the website had pages just for young people, how likely would you be to visit them?

Certainly ☐ Very likely ☐ Likely ☐ Unlikely ☐ Very unlikely ☐ Certain not to ☐

Q11 How would you prefer to get information about recent findings and other general updates about Child of the New Century? **TICK ALL THAT APPLY** ✓

Post ☐ Email ☐ Website ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐

Q12 Roughly how often would you prefer to get information and updates about Child of the New Century?

Once a term ☐
Once a year ☐
Once every two years ☐
Less often than every two years ☐
Never ☐

Q13 Please tell us anything else about Child of the New Century or any suggestions you'd like to make here:



NCB would like to say a big thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Now you can post it back to us in the envelope it came with.

You can also post this questionnaire to:
Puja Joshi, National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley St, London, EC1V 7QE

<NCBID_C>

A.7 Parent questionnaire (telephone version)

Child of the New Century Parents' Feedback Questionnaire

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE:

Interviewer name _____

Date of interview _____ August 2013

Family ID Number

Maincarer or Partner ID Number

Q1 Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7 where '1' means completely happy and '7' means not at all happy, how do you feel about being a part of Child of the New Century?
TICK ONE BOX

Completely happy	2	3	4	5	6	Not at all happy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2 Which of the following words best describe what you think and feel about Child of the New Century? READ OUT EACH WORD IN TURN AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Relevant <input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting <input type="checkbox"/>	Useful <input type="checkbox"/>
Pointless <input type="checkbox"/>	Boring <input type="checkbox"/>	Intrusive <input type="checkbox"/>
Varied <input type="checkbox"/>	Meaningful <input type="checkbox"/>	Important <input type="checkbox"/>
Worthwhile <input type="checkbox"/>	Tiring <input type="checkbox"/>	Inconvenient <input type="checkbox"/>
Stressful <input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoyable <input type="checkbox"/>	Special <input type="checkbox"/>

Q3	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (PROBE: Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree) REACH OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	I would be pleased if my child took part again in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	By taking part I am part of something special	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Study activities are good for children of all abilities and backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The study is enjoyable for families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4	I am going to read out a few statements about the Child of the New Century. For each one, please tell me how true you think they are: certainly true, a bit true or not true. READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE	Certainly true	A bit true	Not true
a)	Findings are used by the Government to improve things for families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Findings are used by universities to do useful research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Everything about Child of the New Century is professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The information my families provides is kept confidential	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	If my family stopped taking part findings would be less useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q5 Please think back to when you last took part in Child of the New Century. For the following aspects please tell me how much, if at all, you liked it:

(For each aspect, please tell me if you liked it a bit, liked it a lot, if you didn't mind it, or if you didn't like it...)

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Liked it a lot	Liked it a bit	Didn't mind it	Didn't like it
a)	Taking part overall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Your interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The measurement of your child's weight and height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The assessments your child was asked to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 When you last took part how happy or unhappy were you with the following? (PROBE: Is that Very (un)happy or just (un)happy?)

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy	Don't know/Can't remember
a)	How well the activities were explained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	The information leaflet that explained the study to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The amount of time that everything took?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The professionalism of the interviewer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 The Child of the New Century team has been sending families leaflets with findings and other information from the study most years since it started. How much, if any, of the information in the leaflets do you usually read? (PROBE Was that all, most, some or none?)

TICK ONE BOX

All ☐ Most ☐ Some ☐ None ☐

Q8 How much do you agree or disagree with the following things about the leaflets?
(PROBE: Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree)

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) The designs are great	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) We read them as a family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) They are interesting to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) I feel my family is special when I get these	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) They make me feel connected to other families in Child of the New Century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) They cover things important to families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q9 Have you visited the Child of the New Century website in the last two years?

TICK ONE BOX

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q10 In which of the following ways would you prefer to get information about recent findings and other general updates about Child of the New Century?
READ OUT AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Post ☐ Email ☐ Website ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐

Q11 Roughly how often would you prefer to get information and updates about Child of the New Century? READ OUT AND TICK ONE BOX

Once a term ☐

Once a year ☐

Once every two years ☐

Less often than every two years ☐

Never ☐

Q12 How would you prefer to receive the advance information about the details of next Child of the New Century survey? READ OUT AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Post ☐

Email ☐

Website ☐

Q13 What is your relationship to the study child?...

PROMPT IF NECESSARY AND TICK ONE BOX

Mother ☐

Step-mother ☐

Other female carer ☐

Father ☐

Step-father ☐


Other male carer ☐

Q14 Finally is there anything else you would like to feedback, or suggestions you would like to make about Child of the New Century?

READ OUT:

NCB would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Puja Joshi, Research Officer at NCB on, T: 020 7833 6811, E: pjoshi@ncb.org

A.8 Child questionnaire (telephone version)



Child of the New Century Young Person's Feedback Questionnaire

INTERVIEWER COMPLETE:

Interviewer name _____

Date of interview _____ August 2013

Family ID Number

Child ID Number

Q1 Overall, on a scale of 1 to 7 where '1' means completely happy and '7' means not at all happy, how do you feel about being a part of Child of the New Century?

TICK ONE BOX

Completely happy	2	3	4	5	6	Not at all happy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2 Which of the following words best describe what you think and feel about Child of the New Century? READ OUT EACH WORD IN TURN AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Relevant <input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting <input type="checkbox"/>	Useful <input type="checkbox"/>
Pointless <input type="checkbox"/>	Boring <input type="checkbox"/>	Intrusive <input type="checkbox"/>
Varied <input type="checkbox"/>	Cool <input type="checkbox"/>	Important <input type="checkbox"/>
Worthwhile <input type="checkbox"/>	Tiring <input type="checkbox"/>	Inconvenient <input type="checkbox"/>
Frustrating <input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoyable <input type="checkbox"/>	Special <input type="checkbox"/>

Q3 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(PROBE: Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree)
READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	I enjoy taking part in Child of the New Century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	By taking part I am part of something special	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Young people in the study like to be called a "Child of the New Century"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4 I am going to read out a few statements about the Child of the New Century. For each one, please tell me how true you think they are: certainly true, a bit true or not true.

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Certainly true	A bit true	Not true
a)	Findings are used by the Government to improve things for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Findings are used by universities to do useful research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The information I provide is kept safe at all times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	If I stopped taking part findings would be less useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q5 Please think back to when you last took part in Child of the New Century. For the following aspects please tell me how much, if at all, you liked it:

(For each aspect, please tell me if you liked it a bit, liked it a lot, if you didn't mind it, or if you didn't like it...)

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Liked it a lot	Liked it a bit	Didn't mind it	Didn't like it
a)	Taking part overall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	Having your weight measured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	Having your height measured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	Doing the activities that find out how you think?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	Filling in the question booklet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 When you last took part how happy or unhappy were you with the following? (PROBE: Is that Very (un)happy or just (un)happy?)

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Very happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very unhappy	Don't know/ Can't remember
a)	How well the activities were explained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	The information leaflet that told you about the activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The amount of time that everything took?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The interviewer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	The thank you gift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 Since you were about 8 years old, the Child of the New Century team has been sending you leaflets in the post with findings and other information about the study. How much, if any, of the information in the leaflets do you usually read? (PROBE Was that all, most, some or none?)

TICK ONE BOX

All ☐ Most ☐ Some ☐ None ☐

Q8 How much do you agree or disagree with the following things about the leaflets? (PROBE: Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree)

READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND TICK ONE BOX ON EACH LINE

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	I throw them away without reading them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	I feel special getting them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	They are interesting to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	They make me feel connected to other young people in Child of the New Century	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	They talk about things important to young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	The designs are great	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q9 Have you visited the Child of the New Century website in the last two years?

TICK ONE BOX

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q10 If the website had pages just for young people, how likely would you be to visit them?

READ OUT AND TICK ONE BOX

Certainly ☐ Very likely ☐ Likely ☐ Unlikely ☐ Very unlikely ☐ Certain not to ☐

Q11 How would you prefer to get information about recent findings and other general updates about Child of the New Century? READ OUT AND TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Post ☐ Email ☐ Website ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐

Q12 Roughly how often would you prefer to get information and updates about Child of the New Century? READ OUT AND TICK ONE BOX

Once a term ☐

Once a year ☐

Once every two years ☐

Less often than every two years ☐

Never ☐

Q13 Finally is there anything else you would like to feedback, or suggestions you would like to make about Child of the New Century?

READ OUT:

NCB would like to thank you very much for helping us by doing this survey.
Is there anything you'd like to ask before we go?

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Puja Joshi, Research Officer at NCB on, T: 020 7833 6811, E: pjoshi@ncb.org

A.9 Ipsos MORI telephone script

Cohort Engagement Research Parent Contact and Consent Script

Instructions for the interviewer in red; black text to be read out verbatim

Ask to speak to **NAMED MAIN CARER**, (or **PARTNER** if not available)

Hello. My name is XXX, I am from Ipsos MORI and calling on behalf of the Research Centre at the children's charity, the National Children's Bureau.

I am calling to ask if **YOU** and **CHILDS NAME** might be willing to answer a short questionnaire over the phone to give feedback about the Child of the New Century study. (Child of the New Century is the study that follows children born in 2000/1 and their families as the children grow up).

The Child of the New Century team would like to gather your feedback about the study. The questionnaire asks about you and **CHILDS NAME** views and experiences so far and will help find out if they could do anything better for families involved, looking forward to the next survey.

You should have received questionnaires for you and your family through the post already but if you like, I can complete it with **YOU** and **CHILDS NAME** over the phone now or over the next few days.

It will take around 10-15 minutes with each of you.

Is this something you might be able to help us with?

If yes, key information to communicate:

- Your participation will be confidential to the National Children's Bureau and Ipsos MORI. The Child of the New Century team will not know which families have spoken to us or what you as an individual has said. Findings will be reported back about families and children overall.
- Your involvement will in no way impact your participation in the Child of the New Century
- Nothing you say will affect your future participation in Child of the New Century in anyway.
- Any info you provide will stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act, used only for this research, and destroyed when we've given our report to the Child of the New Century team. We will not use your details for anything else.

IF YES THEN YOU MUST GAIN CONSENT BY ASKING THE QUESTIONS BELOW. ONCE YOU HAVE DONE THIS, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU RECORD THAT CONSENT HAS BEEN GAINED.

Do you have any questions?

Are you happy to participate in the questionnaire?

Are you happy for me to speak to **CHILDS NAME** also?

If yes, begin questionnaire or call back at the time agreed

Child telephone contact and consent script

My name is<XXX>. I am a researcher from Ipsos MORI and calling on behalf of the Research Centre at the children's charity, the National Children's Bureau. (NCB are a national children's charity and we work to improve children's and young people's lives).

You may remember that you are part of the Child of the New Century, which is the study that follows children born in 2000/1 and their families as the children grow up. An interviewer last came and visited you when you were 11.

The Child of the New Century team wants us to find out what you think about the study, and whether they could do anything better. I am calling to ask if we could ask you a few questions over the phone to tell us what you think.

A paper survey questionnaire for you was posted to your mum/dad and they may have passed it on to you; but if you like, I can complete it with you on the phone.

This will help us make sure the study is a good experience for all the children and young people in it. However, you don't have to take part if you don't want to, it is totally up to you.

The questions will just take around 10-15 minutes.
It doesn't matter if you can't remember much about it and there are no right and wrong answers.

Is this something you might be able to help us with?

If yes, key information to communicate:

- You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to
- You can stop at any time without giving a reason.
- The Child of the New Century team will not know who we have spoken to or what you have told us individually.
- We won't use your names when we write up our findings.
- We will not use what you say for anything else.
- Whether you do or not will not affect your being a part of CNC in any way.

Further info about the content if helpful:

In the interview I would like to talk to you about:

- being in Child of the New Century
- what you thought of the different activities
- what you liked so far; what you liked less
- how you'd like information from the study in the future

Consent: THIS MUST BE ASKED EXPLICITLY BEFORE PROCEEDING, AND RECORDED IN THE CONTACT SPREADSHEET

- Do you have any questions?
- Are you happy to participate in the questionnaire?

If yes, begin questionnaire or call back if necessary

A.11 Script for qualitative sample recruitment

MCS Cohort Engagement Research Qualitative participant recruitment script

Ask to speak to **MAIN CARER**

Hello. My name is XXX, I am calling from the Research Centre at the children's charity, the National Children's Bureau. **I am calling to ask if you and your family might be willing to take part in an interview to give feedback about the Child of the New Century.** (Child of the New Century is the study you are part of that follows children born in 2000/1 and their families as the children grow up).

You should have **received a letter** from the Child of the New Century team explaining that you may be contacted by us? (This was sent from Lucinda Platt from the Centre for Longitudinal Studies who is the Study Director for the project).

The **National Children's Bureau Research Centre** specialise in carrying out research with children and families to improve children's and young people's lives.

The Child of the New Century team has **asked us to carry out some interviews with families independently and confidentially**, to get your detailed feedback about the study. This will help **find out if they could do anything better** for families involved, looking forward to the next survey.

We would like to ask you, (your partner if applicable) and your child some questions about your views and experiences of being a part of Child of the New Century. We can arrange this at a time convenient to you over the next couple of weeks (EXPLAIN IN HOME OR TELEPHONE AS APPROPRIATE). It would take around 90 minutes in total across <both> <all three> of you. Is this something your family might be able to help us with? If it's OK with you shall we book in a time? I can then send you some information in the post which confirms the time and date of when I can visit you (*offer email if preferred*). (*they may want to speak to family first in this case arrange a time to call them back as soon as possible and continue with this script*). (*If they say no to participation thank them for their time and move on to the next family in the sample*).

May I double check that you are <CHILD'S NAME> mum(/dad)?

Other key information to communicate at this stage:

- IF IN HOME: We'd like to ask some questions to you as a family altogether, and also to speak to you separately about the activities each of you have been involved in. We can be flexible about how this works to fit in with you. May I double check the address with you?
- We'd like to do this in a quiet room.
- I am an experienced social researcher and have an approved CRB check.
- **As with all similar interviews that NCB conducts, we would like to give your family a small gift as a token of our appreciation of your help with this research.** This will be three (or two if no partner) cinema vouchers
- **Your participation will be confidential to NCB.** The Child of the New Century team will not know which families have spoken to us or what you as an individual has said. Findings will be reported back about families and children overall. Nothing you say will affect your future participation in Child of the New Century in anyway.
- **Any info you provide will stored securely in line with the Data Protection Act**, used only for this research, and destroyed when we've given our report to the Child of the New Century team. We will not use your details for anything else.

A.12 Information sheets (qualitative sample)

Parent information sheet



Understanding your family's views and experiences of Child of the New Century

Who are we?

We are researchers from The National Children's Bureau (NCB) Research Centre. We specialise in carrying out research with children and families and work to improve all aspects of children's and young people's lives. You can visit our website at www.ncb.org.uk.

What are we doing?

Your child is one of the 19,000 special children born in the UK in 2000/2001 whose lives are being followed by the Child of the New Century study. NCB have been asked by the Child of the New Century team to find out the views and experiences of a small number of the families who are part of the study. The Child of the New Century team want to know whether they could do anything better. NCB are independent of the Child of the New Century team which means we can report back your views without saying who they came from.

Thank you for speaking with me and booking a time for me to visit you at home.
I will be visiting you on: <DATE HERE> at <TIME HERE>.

If you need to change the time of the interview or cancel for any reason please contact me on <Vanessa 07528 381447> <Jen 07528 381533>. I will confirm that you are still happy to take part and that this time is still convenient shortly beforehand.

What are the interviews about?

In these interviews, we want to learn about how your experience of Child of the New Century has been so far. We'd like to hear:

- what you and your family think of Child of the New Century and how you feel being a part of it
- what you liked so far
- what you liked less
- what the best ways to keep in touch with you and your child are

How long will it take?

We expect the interviewing to last no longer than 90 minutes, including speaking with you <and your partner> and your child each separately for a short while, and with you together. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to, and you can stop at any time without giving a reason.

What will the findings of this research be used for?

The Child of the New Century team values your family's contribution to the study. They want to know what you like about the study and what they might do better in the future. They will use the feedback that we provide to make things as good as possible for the next survey.

Is it confidential?

In line with the Data Protection Act (1998) everything you and your family say to us during the interview will be kept confidential. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission and typed up. The recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete. Any information we collect will be stored securely and only the NCB research team will have access to it. We will not use your details or findings for anything else.

The Child of the New Century team will not know which families we have spoken to or what you or your family has told us individually. We will only report back what families' views and experiences are as a whole. Taking part is entirely up to you. Whether you do or not will not affect your being a part of Child of the New Century in any way.

NCB will provide you <,your partner> and your child with a **cinema voucher each, as a special thank you for taking part.**

Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you soon.

[Signature here]

[Jen Gibb or Vanessa Greene], NCB Research Officer
E: xxx T: xxx

Child information sheet



Understanding your views and experiences of 'Child of the New Century'

Who am I?

My name is <Jen><Vanessa> and I am a researcher from the National Children's Bureau (NCB). NCB are a national children's charity and we work to improve children's and young people's lives. You can visit our website if you want to learn more about us at www.youngncb.org.uk

What are we doing?

You are one of the 19,000 special children born in the UK in 2000/2001 whose lives are being followed by the Child of the New Century study. NCB have been asked by the Child of the New Century team to find out the views of a small number of the young people in the study. You may remember taking part at around age 11, 7 or 5. Before that you might have taken part when you were 3 years old or a baby. The Child of the New Century team wants us to find out what you think about the study, and whether they could do anything better.

I have spoken to <you and> your parent(s) and I will be visiting you on
<DATE HERE> at <TIME HERE>.

I will contact your parent<s> beforehand to make sure that time is still OK for my visit. If it's not, please let your parent<s> know.

What are the interviews about?

In the interview I would like to talk to you about:

- being in Child of the New Century
- what you thought of the different activities
- what you liked so far
- what you liked less
- how you'd like information from the study in the future

I will talk with you for about half an hour, then to your parent<s> and then to you together as a family. There are no right or wrong answers to our questions. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to, and you can stop at any time without giving a reason.

Is it confidential?

The interview will be audio recorded if you are OK with that, and typed up. We will destroy the recordings after we have finished our research. We won't use your names when we write up our findings. We will not use what you say for anything else. The Child of the New Century team will not know who we have spoken to or what you have told us individually. Taking part is entirely up to you. Whether you do or not will not affect your being a part of Child of the New Century in any way.

What will I get for taking part?

As a special thank you for taking the time to participate in our research NCB will provide you and your parent<s> with a **cinema voucher each**.

Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you soon!

[Signature here] [Jen Gibb or Vanessa Greene], NCB Research Officer
E: xxx T: xxx

A.13 Interview topic guide

MCS Cohort Participant Engagement Research

SECTION 1: PARENTS (35 min for joint interview; 30 min for individual)

Before you start: Introduction, information sheets and consent		
Section 1: Overall views of the study		
Question number	Question	Timings
1.1	Tell me what you think of Child of the New Century (probe what they think the main purpose/aim of it is - do you agree with the aims of CNC? Why/why not?	5 min
1.2	What is good about the study overall? What is bad about it overall? (Best thing/least best thing)	
1.3	What is it like to be a family that is part of CNC? (Best thing/least best thing - for parent, child, and family as a whole?)	
1.4	<i>If helpful draw on sort cards – ask them which words reflect their views/feelings about the study and explore why (see quant questionnaire word association question).</i>	
Section 2: Knowledge and perceived value of the study/value of participation		
2.1	What do you think how is the information used in practice? Who uses it? What is it used for? What do you feel about this (e.g. is it important, who will it benefit, is it a good use of money?) Do you think it is used to develop policy or understand the needs of any particular groups? Will that change at all, over time?	
2.2	<i>(If not covered above)</i> How do you think CNC affects people in Britain?	
2.3	What makes taking part worth your while?	
2.4	How important is your /your family’s role in the study? How would it affect the study if you weren’t involved?	
2.5	Your on-going involvement is very important to the CNC team. Do you feel valued as a study member in this way? <i>(If yes, what does the team do to make you feel valued? If not, what would make you feel more valued?)</i>	
Section 3: Overall experience of taking part over time		
3.1	What has it been like to take part in the study overtime? (Clarify at which waves did they participate?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Has your views of the study changed in any way over time?- Is there any particular experience, study visit, or study activity that stands out as good for you?- Or, anything particular experience, study visit, or study activity that you didn’t like, or was a problem for you?	10-12 min

3.2	<p><i>Thinking again about the last time you took part (clarify when)</i></p> <p>Tell me about your experience of taking part last time? Was it a good experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was good about it? - What was less good or the least best thing about it? <p><i>(ask for parents/children/whole family)</i></p>	
3.3	<p><i>(if not covered in 3.3) How did you find the different elements of CNC? (Explore what was good/bad about different element and why – for parents/child/whole family, which did their child like the best/least and why)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Your interview b) The measurement of your child's height and weight c) The assessments of learning your child was asked d) The question booklet your child was asked to complete 	
3.4	<p><i>Explore views of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What were your overall impressions of the interviewer? (Were they flexible at fitting in with your family, professional, competence, friendly?) b) What did you think of the information leaflets that explained CNC to parents? And those for children? c) What did you think of the thank you gift given to your child when you last took part? <p><i>(for the interviewers information:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 11 = Top Trumps (and certificate of participation) • Age 7 – fridge magnet, sticker packs and puzzle tray • Age 5 – Fun packs for children and pencil case, • Age 3 - Colouring books, crayons and height charts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Do you remember how long the CNC activities took? e) Overall how would you sum up the whole experience so far? 	
Section 4: Drivers of participation (and non-participation)		
4.1	<p><i>Generate participants detailed explanation of the process/drivers that lead to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their participation in their most recent wave - Non-participation in any individual elements in that wave (if relevant) - Non-participation in MCS5 (non-responders only) <p>INTERVIEWER: CLARIFY WHAT WAVES OF CNC THE FAMILY HAS PARTICIPATED IN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You last took part in wave xxxx • Can you tell me a bit about why you chose to take part then? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What convinced you take part? E.g. being part of something exciting, fun/interesting for family/parent/child, worthwhile/impact on society; trust organisation. Good experiences of previous wave etc What was most important to you? 	10-12 mins

4.2	<p>We are interested in finding out how/when families in Child of the New Century choose to take part in each wave; did you know you were going to take part from when you got the letter from CLS telling you an interviewer was going to visit you for the age X survey? or did you opt to take part at a later stage – e.g. when the interviewer wrote to you, when they called you or knocked on your door etc.? <i>(If necessary recap on process - they were sent a pre-notification mailing, then advance letters/leaflets, then interviewer came to the house to explain things and provided more written info)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When in that process did you choose to take part? - Who was involved in that decision and how? <i>(Probe roles of individuals: each parent and child) Was everyone happy to take part?</i> - At what stage did you talk to [the child] about it? How did you go about it? <i>(Probe whether they discussed it when the child had looked at the info leaflet, or beforehand; whether the child was interested in the leaflet/ ignored it, whether they had had to persuade the child, and if so, how – what was the deciding factor?)</i> 	
4.3	<p>Did you have any concerns about taking part? Did your child have any concerns? <i>PROMPTS: not having time; too much for the child, child not interested, concerns about specific elements of the data collection, not liking the interviewer, not trusting the process)</i></p>	
4.4	<p>Can you remember if there were activities that you or your family didn't take part in then?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>If so: Why didn't you/your family take part in that?</i> - <i>What would have needed to be different for you to have taken part?</i> 	
4.5	<p><i>If MCS5 non participant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You just told me you didn't take part in the age 11 survey last year. Can you tell me a bit more about this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the interviewer not get hold of you? - Or did you choose not to take part this time? Why was that? <p><i>PROBE: Didn't like some of the activities? Too long/didn't have time? Not interested? Too busy? Other things going on/ Worried about impact on child or family? Worried what will happen to info? Have already done our bit in the past? Sceptical about whether useful etc., My child was not happy at taking part)</i></p>	
4.6	<p>What would have had to have been different for you to have taken part then? <i>(probe as much as possible)</i></p>	

Child's topic guide

(Before you start: Intro and consent form)

Section 5: Overall knowledge, perceptions and experience of being a CNC member

5.1	Can you tell me about Child of the New Century (CNC)? <i>(What is it? What is it for? Is it a good thing? Why?)</i>	15 mins
5.2	What is it like for you to be part of CNC? <i>(What is good about it? What is bad about it?)</i>	

5.3	If you had to think of three words to tell me what you think of CNC, what would they be? Why? (For face to face interviews, use sort cards if helpful – explore reasons for selections and non-selection)
5.4	How many times have you taken part in activities? How old were you? - PROBE MEMORY OF: , 3, 5, 7, 11
5.5	What has it been like to take part at different ages? - Which time did you like the most? Why? - Which time did you like the least? Why?
5.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell me more about when you last took part: (Check age participated and adjust prompts accordingly) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you liked about it? Why? What made that really good? What didn't you like about it? Why? What made that not so good?
5.7	<p>(only cover what is not picked up in 7.6) Explore views of the different activities involved:</p> <p>FOR EACH ONE EXPLORE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did it make you feel? Was the experience good or not so good? Why? If not so good what could have made it better or more enjoyable? a) Having your weight measured? b) Having your height measured c) The assessments of learning you did d) Filling in the question booklet (age 7 and 11 only) Would you be happy to do [each element] again? If not, is there anything they could change about it, so you'd be happy to do it? What would make most difference to how much you enjoyed it – e.g. what topics were covered, the format of the questions, how long it lasted, whether it was on the computer etc? (Explore why) What would be the <u>best</u> way (or the most interesting/easiest – depending on their previous feedback) to gather information from you, or other young people, about [what you do in your free time; your views about things; how school is going; your home life; your health and wellbeing...etc] Would you prefer to answer questions on a laptop, or just talk to an interviewer? What about filling in something on paper, compared to on a computer? Why is that? Is it easiest to do all the activities/ answer all the questions when the interviewer visits your house, or would you prefer to complete some of them in advance, by yourself? Would it make any difference? Why? Have you taken part in any other research, or filled in any questionnaires, other than for CNC? If so, what was that like, compared to the interview for CNC? If you were in charge of planning the interviews for CNC, what would you change about them to make them better for young people?

5.8	How did you feel about us asking your teacher to fill in a question booklet?	
5.9	<p><i>Explore views of the following</i></p> <p>a) Do you remember the interviewer at the last wave? What were they like?</p> <p>b) Did you like them? (<i>probe friendliness, fun, professionalism, warmth</i>). How well were the study activities explained?</p> <p>c) What did you think of the information leaflet that told you about the activities (<i>only if they took part in MCS5</i>)</p> <p>d) The last time you took part how long did the activities last? Was this OK? Was it too long or too short at all?</p> <p>e) Do you remember what gift you were given as a thank you for taking part last time? (<i>remind them if not</i>) Did you like getting it?</p> <p>(Interviewer note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Age 11 = Top Trumps, and certificate of participation▪ Age 7 – fridge magnet, sticker packs and puzzle tray▪ Age 5 – Fun packs for children and pencil case,▪ Age 3 - Colouring books, crayons and height charts) <p>Did you know you were going to get the Top Trumps cards before you did the interview? How much difference did it make to whether you took part or not? (NB. Return to this later, and compare the gift with other reasons for taking part in 7.4.)</p>	
5.10	Overall how would you sum up the all of the CNC experience so far out of ten (that includes all the waves)? (<i>Ten being the best, zero being the worst and five is in the middle – why, what can be done to get that score higher</i>) (e.g. <i>make it more fun/interesting? (How), give you more information?</i>)	
Section 6: Knowledge about CNC , perceived value of CNC		
6.1	How do you think the information collected by CNC is used? What is it used for?	5 mins
6.2	Do you know anything about how it is used to improve things for other children and families?	
6.3	Did you know that it is really good for the study if the same young people and families stay in the study over time? What do you know about that? Did you know that they don't/can't replace families with new ones if they stop taking part?	
6.4	<p><i>IF NECESSARY STRESS THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO CONTINUE TAKING PART IF THEY DON'T WANT AND THAT THEY'LL ALWAYS BE ABLE TO CHOOSE WHICH ACTIVITIES THEY DO OR DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does CNC make you feel special? How, Why?	
Section 7: Generate participants' detailed explanation of the process/drivers that led to their participation of the most recent wave		
7.1	Can you remember much about how you came to take part last time?	

7.2	<p>Who chose to take part? You or your parents? How did that work?</p> <p>Did you talk to your parents about taking part?</p> <p>How far before the interview did you agree to take part?</p> <p>Did you decide straight away that you wanted to take part, or did you ever say you didn't want to?</p> <p>If you weren't sure, or didn't want to, did your parents persuade you? (If so, how?)</p> <p>(And were you happy that you'd taken part afterwards? Or not? Why?)</p>	
7.3	<p>What did you think of the leaflet? (If applicable)</p> <p>Did you look at the leaflet yourself, or did your mum or dad show it to you?</p> <p>What was on it? Can you remember anything it said?</p> <p>Did you look at the leaflet BEFORE you decided to take part, or had you already decided?</p> <p>Did the leaflet make you MORE happy to take part, or less happy? Why?</p>	
7.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did the interviewer say anything that made a difference, or help you make up your mind? ○ What was most important for you when deciding if you'd take part last time? <i>What made you say 'yes'?</i> ○ PROMPTS: Whether you had time, helping with something/improving things for children and families, being part of something exciting, fun for the family, fun for the child, excited about taking part, good experience of previous waves, my parents told me I should take part, my parents said it was a good idea? The interviewer? The leaflets? The 'thank you' present (TT cards)? 	
7.5	<p>Did you have any worries beforehand? What were they?</p> <p><i>PROMPTS: not having time, not being interested, concerns about specific elements of the data collection, not liking the interviewer, not liking the activities,</i></p>	
7.6	<p>What would have made a difference?</p> <p><i>PROBE POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS: More/better information; more time to speak to the interviewer? More time to make up your mind? Time to speak to your parents?</i></p>	
Section 8: Barriers and enablers to participation		
8.1	<p>Can you remember if there were activities that you didn't take part in then?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>If so:</i> Why didn't you take part in that? - What would have needed to be different for you to have taken part? 	8 mins
8.2	<p>Non responders only) I understand you didn't take part in the age 11 survey. That's not a problem, but can I ask why that was? Would you have liked to? How could the CNC team have helped you/encouraged you to take part?</p>	
8.3	<p>What type of things might stop you being able to take part?</p>	

8.4	Do you think you would take part again? (If no, what would make it better for you?) If you were in charge of the study, and it was your job to make the study interesting and a good experience for all the young people, what one thing would you change about it? Anything else?	
8.5	Imagine a friend of yours was also part of CNC, but hadn't taken part since they were really young, and couldn't remember it. Would you encourage them to take part in the next interview or not? Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What would you say are the good points of the study? - And the less good points? 	

PARENTS AND CHILD TOGETHER WHERE POSSIBLE (30 MINS, or 20 separate)
 FOR THIS SECTION, THE INTERVIEWER SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO SPEAK FIRST, AND ALSO ENSURE THE SECOND PARENT IS INPUTTING FULLY

Section 9: Thinking forward to the next wave:

9.1	For the rest of the visit, it will be helpful to talk to you all of you together. I've just found out a bit from each of you about how you have found the study so far and what you think about being part of it. Just to fill you in, you each thoughts....INTERVIEWER TO PARAPHRASE PARENTS AND CHILD THOUGHTS AND CHECK UNDERSTANDING How do you feel about the age 14 sweep and taking part then?	5-10 mins
9.2	Next time, will include some similar activities, like interviews and assessments of learning and measures of height and weight, and possibly some new activities, like doing a diary of how young person spends their time. How will you feel about that? Will similar activities be OK when you're 14? Anything that the study team should do differently, or bear in mind when you are 14?	
9.3	<i>What do you think will be different at 14 (for parent and child)?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>E.g. more exams? More time spent in afterschool clubs, having own mobile, own email address, etc</i> 	
9.4	Family decision making about taking part Can you remember much about how you came to take part last time?	
9.5	How do you think that would work next time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last time we sent the advance information to the parent, and also spoke to the parent first. - Should we do the same at age 14? Or would it be better to write to the child? How should it work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o WITH CHILD: Explore what they'd prefer o WITH PARENT: Explore what they'd feel comfortable with <p>ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION/DEVELOPMENT OF CONSENSUS</p>	

Section 10: Wider engagement over time		
10.1	<p>Membership</p> <p>As a participant in CNC, do you feel like you're a part of something special: - 'Or do you more just go along with it when it comes up?' Ask for: child and wider family?</p> <p>If yes, how has CNC made you feel like you belong to CNC?</p> <p>If no, is there something CNC can do to make you feel more like a member of CNC? (<i>probe solutions: information leaflets between waves? Should there be a website for you as participants??</i>)</p>	
10.2	Is feeling part of something important to whether or not you take part? <i>Why, Why not</i> How	
10.3	<p><u>Child only:</u></p> <p>Are you a member of any of clubs? <i>How do they make you feel like a member?</i></p>	
10.4	<p><u>Child only:</u></p> <p>As a member of CNC, would you be pleased to be thought of as "A Child of the New Century" Why? Why not?</p>	
10.5	<p>Everyone:</p> <p>Is "Child of the New Century" good name for the study and its members? Why/why not? Should they keep it the same, or change it? Why?</p>	
10.6	<p>Leaflets</p> <p>Every year, and for the children every year since they were aged around 8. You will just have received the last one; the CNC team send you information – e.g. leaflets or updates from CNC. What do you think about this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do these leaflets make a difference to what you think or feel about CNC? How? - Do they make you happier about taking part? How? (<i>probe for views on Frequency, Content, Design</i>) - What do you do with the leaflets? (<i>Keep/throw away, ever look at them again?</i>) <p>Do you think they focus on things that are important to young people? What about things that are important to parents? (<i>ask for examples, reasons – lead into next section....</i>)</p>	
10.7	<p>What information would you like to hear about in future leaflets?</p> <p>(<i>Prompt if necessary</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Findings from CNC about children and their families - How the Findings from CNC are being used. - Changes achieved for children and families as a result of CNC - Activities behind the scenes like what the CNC team are involved in - Activities coming up that families may be asked to take part in <p>If you think about all the information you give the study, and think about all the other families providing information about the same things.... what do you think would be the most interesting topics the study team could focus on, in their updates for young people? What about for parents? [discuss why]</p>	

Section 11: Methods of providing keeping in touch Information		
11.1	CNC tends to keep in touch with information between study waves, by sending you things in the post. Is this the best way for you?	10-15 mins
11.2	Would you like to get things by email? Why? Why not?	
11.3	What things would you like to see on a CNC website? Why might you use it?	
11.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever used the current CNC website? If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of things were you looking for? Would you use the website between waves? What would you use it for, if anything? What should be on it? If not, why not? (<i>optional if time</i>) 	
11.5	Other/Social media Have you ever had any questions about CNC or your involvement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If so where do you go for help/information? How easy or difficult was this? Are there any other ways that CNC team should be in touch with you about the study? Or make information available? How would you most like to be able to be in touch with the Child of the New Century Team, or receive responses, clarifications from them? (If they talk about specific social media site/s then ask about the disadvantages and advantages of it/them - don't bring up specific sites - However, if they don't mention social media at all ASK you haven't mentioned social media at all - is there a reason for that?) 	
Section 12: Views towards communications for upcoming waves		
12.1	The next sections explore future communications In regards to the next wave, how would you like to be communicated with – (e.g. <i>receive advanced notice, be emailed as well as a letter in the post? Or some other way –e.g. Social media updates?</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what format should you get communications? (e.g.: <i>postal, email, or text?</i>) Who in the family should get each type of communications at age 14? (<i>probe: What should you as the parents get? What should the child get? Would you want separate communications?</i>) IF NOT ALREADY COVERED EARLIER CHECK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would you feel comfortable if CNC were sending post to the young person? What about email? 	5 mins
FINAL THOUGHTS That's the end of the topics we have to discuss. Thank you for all your helpful feedback today. Can I ask, from everything we have discussed what is most important for us to feed back to the CNC team to ensure that CNC is well received by parents and children at the next wave, and as many young people and families as possible take part?		