



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

# Impact of Childcare Support for Lone Parent Students

Social Justice



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**IMPACT OF CHILDCARE SUPPORT FOR  
LONE PARENT STUDENTS**

**Fiona Ballantyne, Claire Hendry, Ralph Leishman**

**4-consulting ltd**

**Scottish Executive Social Research  
2003**

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# **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

1.1.1 The Child Poverty Package was launched in July 2001. It is designed to help lone parents into further and higher education (FE and HE) through supporting childcare costs, and improving the supply of childcare. This study was commissioned to develop a monitoring framework and also to collect and analyse monitoring data on the first year of operation of two elements of the package. These were the provision of a new £1,000 annual grant towards the costs of formal childcare for lone parents in full time higher education, and the funding that has been made available to further education colleges to widen childcare provision.

1.1.2 The aims of the research were:

- to design a monitoring framework for two elements of the child poverty package initiatives (£1,000 childcare grant to lone parents in full time higher education and widening of childcare support through further education providers);
- to identify and collate existing monitoring data and, where this data did not already exist, to design and undertake fieldwork to collect monitoring data relating to the first year of operation of the initiatives;
- to analyse and present the monitoring data, drawing out key findings emerging in relation to the first year of operation of the initiatives;
- to explore the way in which the initiatives have been implemented in practice, drawing out lessons in order to inform future years of operation of the initiatives;
- to make recommendations for modifications to the monitoring framework and for future collection of monitoring data on the basis of the first year monitoring exercise;
- to record and store the monitoring data in a format that can be retrieved and used for subsequent phases of the monitoring and evaluation process;
- to identify data availability and access issues in relation to monitoring these initiatives and suggest ways to tackle these issues.

1.1.3 The methodology included:

- Meetings with members of Scottish Executive Social Research, the Operational Policy Officer for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland, and the FE Student Support Officer at the Scottish Further Education Funding Council.
- Visits to five FE colleges, which were selected on the basis of the level of their involvement in and provision of childcare facilities, and geographical location.
- A quantitative study of 4,000 lone parent students currently studying on higher education programmes at institutions throughout Scotland. 1,120 questionnaires were completed and returned, giving an overall response rate of 28%.

- Five focus groups: one in Dundee; two in Glasgow; and two in Edinburgh. The research team also held more informal discussion groups with FE and HE lone parent students in Dumfries & Galloway College, Langside College, Lauder College and Motherwell College.

## **1.2 FURTHER EDUCATION SUPPORT**

- 1.2.1 The availability of the FE Childcare Fund has increased provision in some colleges, but at least one college (and others based on anecdotal evidence collected during the survey) has refrained from expansion due to the time-limited nature of the funds made available through the initial announcement.
- 1.2.2 Some colleges are keen to maximise their student numbers and are effectively utilising the new monies to attract lone parents. They are also forming links with community groups to address childcare problems. Others have yet to identify this market.
- 1.2.3 Lone parent students pursuing FE courses often have access to fully funded childcare places in the college itself. Outwith the college, the experience varies geographically, with childcare provision being available and relatively convenient in urban areas, but much less accessible in rural areas.
- 1.2.4 There are differentials between provision for FE and HE students that can affect progression from FE to HE, even within the same institution (see 2.3.1 for details). FE students stay on benefits, and have access to free nursery places in the college. Most HE students lose their benefits once in receipt of the student loan (although students with children can retain Housing Benefit entitlement in some cases), and receive the Lone Parent Childcare Grant (LPCG) towards childcare. Additional discretionary support is also available through the Mature Students' Bursary Fund (MSBF) administered by colleges and universities. According to our calculations on the basis of survey responses, the cost of 'formal' childcare for an under five for one academic year is at least £1,900. Thus, if a lone parent FE student with such a child or children wishes to progress to an HE course, the potential reduction in childcare support can be a major disincentive, compounded by the loss of benefits suffered on enrolling for full time HE study.
- 1.2.5 Guidance given to colleges and universities encourages them to provide at least £1,000 from MSBF to lone parent students for childcare costs. Because MSBF awards are subject to a limit of £2,000, in practice the funds available to lone parent students from MSBF for hardship and rent are reduced (although they may still be able to get such help from the Hardship Funds).
- 1.2.6 Lone parent students attending Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) but who had previous experience of a Further Education (FE) college, informed the research team that they received far less support and guidance at the HEI than at the FE college.

- 1.2.7 In summary, FE support appears to be working well where there is an adequate supply of ‘formal’ childcare available to lone parent FE students, usually where an FE college has made provision in a college nursery available, or in urban areas. In rural areas, where a college does not make available sufficient provision in a college nursery, the supply failure in the market place can result in lone parents being unable to benefit from the support available for childcare. These findings are based on exploratory research with a selection of FE colleges.

### **1.3 HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT**

- 1.3.1 Funding support for HE students is provided mostly through the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS). Lone parents are entitled to certain support in addition to that available to the generality of students – namely the Lone Parents’ Grant (£1,100) and the Lone Parents Childcare Grant (£1,000). Like other students, they have access to students loans, the Mature Students’ Bursary Fund (or Young Students’ Bursary), the Dependants’ Grant, School Meals Grant and Travelling Expenses, where eligible.

### **1.4 LONE PARENT HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT PROFILE**

- 1.4.1 A picture of a typical lone parent who receives the Lone Parents’ Grant can be drawn from the survey respondent. She is female, aged between 25 and 44, most likely divorced or separated, and likely to be living in her own home or in social rented accommodation. If not, she will likely be single and living alone in social rented accommodation.
- 1.4.2 If previously in employment, this will have been in the administrative or service industries, and usually in a support position. A third will have been on Income Support or unemployed immediately prior to studying.
- 1.4.3 Her motivation for studying will very likely be to support the family. Her plans for future employment will tend to focus around teaching, business and the caring professions.
- 1.4.4 On average, lone parents have 1.3 dependent children per adult. The children will likely be under 10 years of age. The lone parent is as likely not to be claiming the LPCG as claiming.
- 1.4.5 Focus groups also showed that being a lone parent HE student is a high stress occupation with the combination of roles as student, lone parent and, in some cases, part-time employee.

## **1.5 CHILDCARE ISSUES FOR LONE PARENT HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS**

- 1.5.1 Friends or relatives provide childcare for 44% of survey respondents. The main reasons for not using ‘formal’ childcare are cost, the lack of availability of registered minders (particularly in rural areas), and the need to book formal childcare places in advance of knowing the actual need.
- 1.5.2 Claimants of the LPCG (half the survey sample) are much more likely to be using ‘formal’ childcare than non-claimants. The use of informal childcare increases with the age of the child and with the age of the parent. Cost and availability issues can mean that another member of the lone parent’s family gives up work to help with childcare.

## **1.6 FINANCIAL ISSUES**

- 1.6.1 The vast majority (96%) of respondents who claimed the LPCG found it “helpful” or “very helpful”.
- 1.6.2 The main reason given for not claiming the LPCG is the fact that the respondent is not using a formal childcare arrangement. Around a fifth of non-claimants, however, said that they did not know about the grant.
- 1.6.3 Childcare costs reduce as the age of the child increases. According to our calculations on the basis of survey responses, the cost of ‘formal’ childcare for an under five for one year is at least £1,900 per academic year. A lone parent in HE in 2001-2002 received one LPCG of £1,000. Lone parents informed us that this did cover the cost of around £1,000 for one child for an academic year at an After School Club. The LPCG is a fixed amount, regardless of the number or age of children.
- 1.6.4 Typical lone parents in the 25 – 44 age groups are most likely to be claiming from the Hardship Funds. The debt levels they are incurring are a cause of stress and concern to lone parent HE students. Worries about rent are one of the main sources of financial concern, and lone parents say they have less flexibility to take part-time jobs whilst studying than other students because of their parenting responsibilities.

## **1.7 COMMUNICATION OF SUPPORT**

- 1.7.1 Personal interaction with an advisor appears to be effective in helping lone parent HE students secure funding.
- 1.7.2 Lone parents towards the younger end of the age spectrum were more likely not to have claimed the LPCG through not knowing about it.
- 1.7.3 The apparent lack of awareness of the grant reinforces the need for good financial advice and support networks for lone parents. Interviews found that lone parents in FE colleges felt better supported and advised than those in universities.

## 1.8 MONITORING FRAMEWORK

1.8.1 The frameworks for data collection set out below were recommended by the consultants.

### HE Monitoring Data Collection Framework

<b>Data</b>	<b>2001-02</b>				
	<b><u>Male</u></b>		<b><u>Female</u></b>		<b><u>Total</u></b>
No. of lone parent students entering HE					
No. progressing to Y2					
No. progressing to Y3					
No. progressing to Y4+					
% studying in	<b><u>FE colleges</u></b>			<b><u>HEIs</u></b>	
% studying for	<b><u>HNC</u></b>		<b><u>HND</u></b>		<b><u>Degree +</u></b>
Age %	<b><u>&lt;24</u></b>	<b><u>25-34</u></b>	<b><u>35-44</u></b>	<b><u>45-54</u></b>	<b><u>55+</u></b>
Marital Status %	<b><u>Married</u></b>	<b><u>Widowed</u></b>	<b><u>Separated</u></b>	<b><u>Divorced</u></b>	<b><u>Single</u></b>
Childcare cost/week %	<b><u>£0</u></b>	<b><u>&lt;£50</u></b>	<b><u>£51-100</u></b>	<b><u>£101-150</u></b>	<b><u>£150+</u></b>

### FE Monitoring Data Collection Framework

<b>Data</b>	<b>2001-02</b>			
Childcare Fund carried fwd from AY 2000-01	£			
Amount allocated in 2001-02	£			
Amount distributed	£			
Amount under spent	£			
No of FE students: applying for assistance assisted	<b><u>P/T</u></b>	<b><u>F/T</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>Lone Parents</u></b>
Amount disbursed	£	£	£	£

1.8.2 Available data for 2001-02 has been collected by the authors of this report. In future years, additional data will become available from SAAS and SFEFC.

1.8.3 The consultants recommend that consideration be given to conducting another large scale, quantitative survey of lone parent students, similar to that carried out within this project, after the LPCG has been available for a period of years, e.g. in academic year 2003-04 or 2004-05.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter sets out the policy background to the study, the aims of the research, the methodology and the research programme. It also contains a summary of the support available to lone parent students.

### **2.1 POLICY BACKGROUND**

2.1.1 The Child Poverty Package was launched in July 2001. It is designed to help lone parents into further and higher education through supporting childcare costs, and improving the supply of childcare. The Scottish Executive wished to develop a monitoring framework and also to collect and analyse monitoring data on the first year of operation of two elements of the package: the provision of a £1,000 annual grant towards the costs of formal childcare for lone parents in full time higher education; and the funding that has been made available to further education colleges to widen childcare provision.

2.1.2 The Executive has a commitment to end child poverty within a generation and sees the encouragement of lone parents into education, by making it easier for them to meet childcare costs, as a vital first step towards employment and better incomes.

### **2.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

2.2.1 The aims of the research were:

- to design a monitoring framework for two of the child poverty package initiatives (£1,000 grant to lone parents in full time higher education and widening of childcare support through further education providers);
- to identify and collate existing monitoring data and, where this data did not already exist, to design and undertake fieldwork to collect monitoring data relating to the first year of operation of the initiatives;
- to analyse and present the monitoring data, drawing out key findings emerging in relation to the first year of operation of the initiatives;
- to explore the way in which the initiatives have been implemented in practice, drawing out lessons in order to inform future years of operation of the initiatives;
- to make recommendations for modifications to the monitoring framework and for future collection of monitoring data on the basis of the first year monitoring exercise;
- to record and store the monitoring data in a format that can be retrieved and used for subsequent phases of the monitoring and evaluation process;
- to identify data availability and access issues in relation to monitoring these initiatives and suggest ways to tackle these issues.

## 2.3 OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

2.3.1 Higher Education (HE) is defined as a programme at Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D) level, degree, SVQ level 4 or equivalent qualification. While the majority of HE programmes in Scotland are undertaken by students attending higher education institutions (HEIs), around 28% of HE programmes are undertaken by students attending FE colleges.

2.3.2 Funding support for HE students is provided mostly through the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS). Lone parents are entitled to certain supplementary grants in addition to the support available to the generality of students and to other students with children. The range of potential support for 2002-2003 (increased from that available in 2001-2002, e.g. the LPCG increased from £1,000 to £1,025) is set out in the following table:

**Table 1: Support for Lone Parent HE Students (2002-2003)**

<b>Support for Lone Parent HE Students</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Tuition Fees	up to £1,100
Student Loan in parents' home away from parents' home independent student	max £3,090 max £3,905 max £3,905
Young Students' Bursary (replacing part of Student Loan)	max £2,050
Additional Loan (only available to young students)	max £510
Mature Students' Bursary (administered by HEI or FE college)	max £2,000
Dependants' Grant First Child Children 18 or over Children 16 under 18 Children 11 under 16 Children under 11	£2,225 £1,780 £1,240 £930 £465
School Meals Grant Child 3 to 10 Child 11 to 16	£255 £275
Lone Parents' Grant	£1,100
Lone Parent Childcare Grant	£1,025
Travelling expenses Single student living at home Independent student in own home	max £865 max £1,005

2.3.3 Further Education (FE) is defined as a programme at National Certificate (NC), City and Guilds, Access or SVQ up to and including Level 3. Such programmes are undertaken by students attending FE colleges.

- 2.3.4 Lone parent FE students should be able to retain any benefits they receive at the commencement of their studies. FE colleges may be able to provide additional assistance with travel and study expenses through the bursary system and this will not impact on benefits. Lone parent FE students should also be able to access childcare provision funded through the FE Childcare Fund.
- 2.3.5 Lone parents in receipt of Income Support are eligible for support under the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP). Providing the student's Personal Adviser approves attendance at an FE course lasting one year or less before enrolment, help with childcare costs of up to £135 per week for one child (or £200 per week for two or more children) is available. Lone parents attending college less than five days per week can claim up to £27 per day for one child and £40 per day for two or more children.
- 2.3.6 The LPCG available for HE study can only be used to fund 'formal' childcare. This is defined as including childminders, after school clubs and providers of day care and education. Where the children are eight or under, the child carers must be registered with their local authority. FE colleges use the FE Childcare Fund either to fund provision in college nurseries or to support external 'formal' provision for FE students.

## **2.4 METHODS**

- 2.4.1 In March 2002, 4-consulting Ltd ("4-consulting") was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (now Social Research) to design a monitoring framework for two key elements of the Child Poverty Package, and to undertake collection and analysis of the first year of monitoring data.
- 2.4.2 The project team consisted of Fiona Ballantyne, Ralph Leishman and Claire Hendry.

### **Project Briefings**

- 2.4.3 The project team initially met with members of Scottish Executive Social Research for an overview briefing on the Child Poverty Package. They also met with:
- the Operational Policy Officer for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland to discuss the data held on lone parent students that might be relevant to this study, and to agree a methodology for the study that would meet the provisions of the Data Protection Act.
  - the FE Student Support Officer at the Scottish Further Education Funding Council to understand the monitoring arrangements that are in place.
- 2.4.4 A small sample of Student Welfare Officers was also contacted, to identify the lone parent issues that are brought to them by students.

### **Meetings with FE colleges**

- 2.4.5 Members of the Project Team visited five FE colleges, which were selected on the basis of the level of their involvement in and provision of childcare facilities, and geographical location. In all these factors, the research team sought to achieve a range of involvement and geographical spread. Visits were made to Dumfries and Galloway College, Langside College, Lauder College, Motherwell College and Edinburgh's Telford College. At each college, meetings were held with Student Services staff.

### **Quantitative Research**

- 2.4.6 In May 2002, a quantitative study of 4,000 lone parent students currently studying on higher education programmes at institutions throughout Scotland was undertaken. All respondents were in receipt of the Lone Parents' Grant in the 2001-2002 academic year and were on the SAAS database. Estimates suggested that approximately one third had also claimed the LPCG.
- 2.4.7 The research was based on a self-completion questionnaire, sent by post. A copy of the questionnaire and responses is attached in Appendix 1. All questionnaires were despatched by SAAS, in order to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, and replies (all anonymous) were returned to the consultants using a reply paid envelope.
- 2.4.8 1,120 questionnaires were completed and returned, giving an overall response rate of 28%. This was considered to be a very satisfactory response rate, given that the research was conducted so close to the examination period. The quantitative research has provided data that helped to profile lone parent students.

### **Qualitative Research**

- 2.4.9 In addition to the quantitative research, a series of focus groups were conducted with lone parent students in HE. There may be some overlap between the focus group participants and the postal survey respondents, but as the latter was anonymous it is not possible to assess the extent of any overlap.
- 2.4.10 Five focus groups were conducted: one in Dundee; two in Glasgow; and two in Edinburgh. A randomly selected sample of 300 students was invited to participate by SAAS. Those who responded were asked to complete a form giving permission for 4-consulting to contact them direct to arrange dates and times. An incentive payment of £25 was offered to cover any travel and childcare cost incurred as a result of attending. A total of 33 lone parent students attended the focus groups.
- 2.4.11 The research team also held more informal discussion groups with FE and HE lone parent students in Dumfries & Galloway College, Langside College, Lauder College and Motherwell College. These discussions helped to highlight some of the FE issues, and FE to HE progression issues, experienced by lone parent students. They also assisted with the development of the topic guide for the formal focus groups, and the research team piloted the questionnaire to be used in the quantitative research with the HE students who attended. A total of 30 lone parent students attended these discussion groups.

2.4.12 The qualitative research has helped to paint a picture of the life issues that affect lone parent students.

### **Structure of Report**

2.4.13 The analysis of findings is covered in Chapters 3 to 7. Chapter 3 covers FE support provided through FE colleges.

2.4.14 Chapters 4 to 7 cover the analysis of LPCG claimants and the issues that affect them drawing together the quantitative and qualitative data. Comments and quotations from the focus groups are used to illustrate or expand upon the statistical data collected through the quantitative questionnaire. The focus groups were able to look at student life from the perspective of a lone parent and to explore a range of life style issues that would be difficult to cover in a short questionnaire. These life style issues provide a more rounded picture of the lone parent student.

2.4.15 Chapter 8 sets out the Monitoring Framework and the final Chapter 9 pulls together Recommendations.

2.4.16 The quantitative data has not been weighted. This is because existing data on lone parent students is based on estimates, rather than a known universe. The quantitative data collected is based on a self-selecting sample that responded to the postal questionnaire.

### **3 FURTHER EDUCATION SUPPORT**

This chapter presents the analysis of issues in respect of support provided to lone parent FE students through FE colleges. New money of £3m for each of academic years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, and £1.5m for 2003-2004 has been made available to FE colleges to improve the supply of good quality childcare. The research aimed to look at the way in which the new money had been used during the first year. The findings are based on exploratory research with a selection of FE colleges. Management reporting systems in colleges were unable to produce the required level of monitoring information for 2001-2002. This matter is addressed at Paragraph 8.4.4 below.

#### **3.1 MARKETING OF FURTHER EDUCATION SUPPORT**

- 3.1.1 Our discussion with colleges identified the fact that some are keen to maximise their student numbers and are effectively utilising the new monies to attract lone parents, and are forming links with community groups to address childcare problems (e.g. Lauder College). Others have yet to identify this market.
- 3.1.2 One way of encouraging action in those colleges that have yet to prioritise the lone parent market could be to produce a case study based around the experience of a college that has had success in this market and to circulate it to other colleges.

#### **3.2 URBAN AND RURAL EXPERIENCES COMPARED**

- 3.2.1 The experience of lone parent FE students varies geographically. In urban areas, the student will often have access to a fully funded place or places at a FE college nursery. If no place is available or when the child or children are of primary school age, there will generally be a sufficiency of 'formal' childcare provision within an urban FE college catchment area, for which funding will be available from the FE Childcare Fund. It should be noted, however, that lone parents tend to prefer college-based nurseries as they are more convenient, and the parent is on hand if there is a problem.
- 3.2.2 In rural areas, there is often a dearth of 'formal' childcare according to lone parent students and college Student Services' staff. Even where such provision is available, it can be inaccessible for reasons of practicality. There are two main reasons - firstly because the student has to leave home to travel to college before provision near the student's home opens in the morning (and may not return home until after it shuts in the evening). Secondly, it may not be possible to travel to college, make an additional round trip to the childcare provider (for which students informed the researchers that no travel cost support is given), to arrive at college for the start of lectures and vice versa in the evening.

- 3.2.3 At one rural college, the research team was informed that senior management had refrained from expanding capacity in the college nursery in the face of additional demand because of the time limited nature of the FE Childcare Fund (initially announced for three years). The college did not want to get into a position of increasing its nursery running costs and then possibly seeing specific funding reduce or cease in the light of future policy change. As a result of the lack of capacity in the college nursery and the difficulties experienced by lone parents in finding or accessing external childcare, this college will have materially under spent its FE Childcare Fund allocation for 2001-2002. Anecdotal evidence collected during the survey suggests that other colleges may similarly have refrained from expansion of childcare capacity.

### **3.3 SEPARATION OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT**

- 3.3.1 This year, the college can only carry forward 10% of the under spend and must return the balance to SFEFC. In the past, under previous rules, the college could have vired the money to help HE students. A lone parent can come to college for FE and stay on benefit and so not need to draw on hardship funds to the same extent. The vast majority of full time HE students, however, lose Income Support and Housing Benefit. HE lone parents can still apply, but 95% do not get an award as their income is too high because, unlike FE students, HE students qualify for student loans. As a result, they are only likely to get an award if they have 3 children or more. This issue is discussed further under HE support.
- 3.3.2 FE students can receive support up to whatever level is required to pay for all their childcare costs, providing funds remain available within the college budget. According to our calculations on the basis of survey responses, the cost of 'formal' childcare for an under five for one academic year is a minimum of £1,900. Thus, if a lone parent FE student with such a child or children wishes to progress to an HE course, the potential reduction in childcare support can be a major disincentive, compounded by the loss of benefits suffered on enrolling for full time HE study.

### **3.4 SUMMARY**

- 3.4.1 FE support appears to be working well where there is an adequate supply of 'formal' childcare available to lone parent FE students, usually where an FE college has made provision in a college nursery available, or in urban areas. In rural areas, where a college does not make available sufficient provision in a college nursery, the supply failure can result in lone parents being unable to benefit from the support available for childcare. These findings are based on exploratory research with a selection of FE colleges.

## 4 PROFILE OF LONE PARENT HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

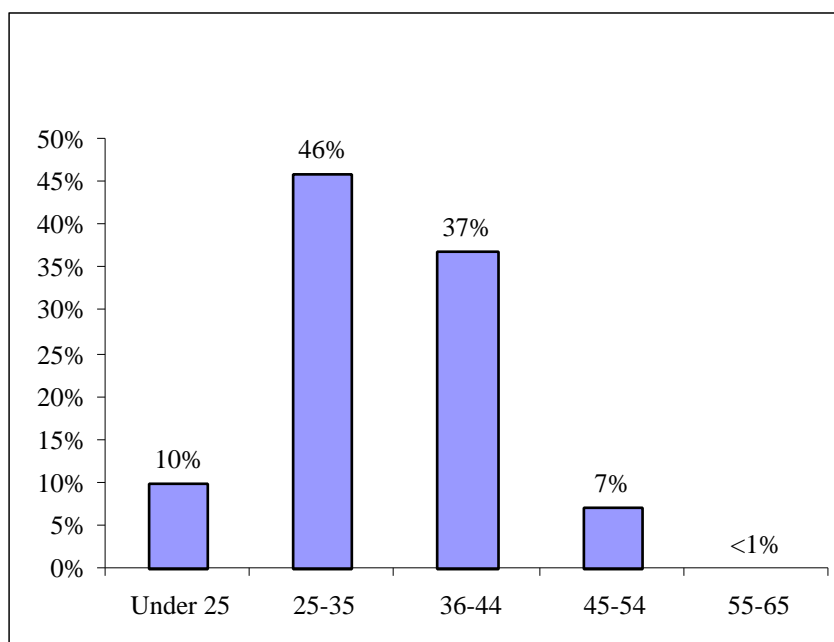
### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 This section sets out a profile of lone parent students studying at HE level who responded to the survey. It also utilises illustrative comments from lone parent students who attended the focus groups. The lone parents who took part in the focus groups ranged in age from young women with a single child, to women in their forties and fifties with up to four children. Some had started their courses as single parents, a small number had had their child during their course, and others had experienced marital break up during their course. All were drawn from the SAAS database, and were lone parent students in receipt of the Lone Parent Grant. The sample split almost equally between LPCG claimants (49%) and non-claimants (51%).

### 4.2 GENDER AND AGE

4.2.1 The lone parents who responded to the survey are overwhelmingly female (96%). Nearly half (46%) are between 25 and 35 years old, and 83% are between 25 and 44 years.

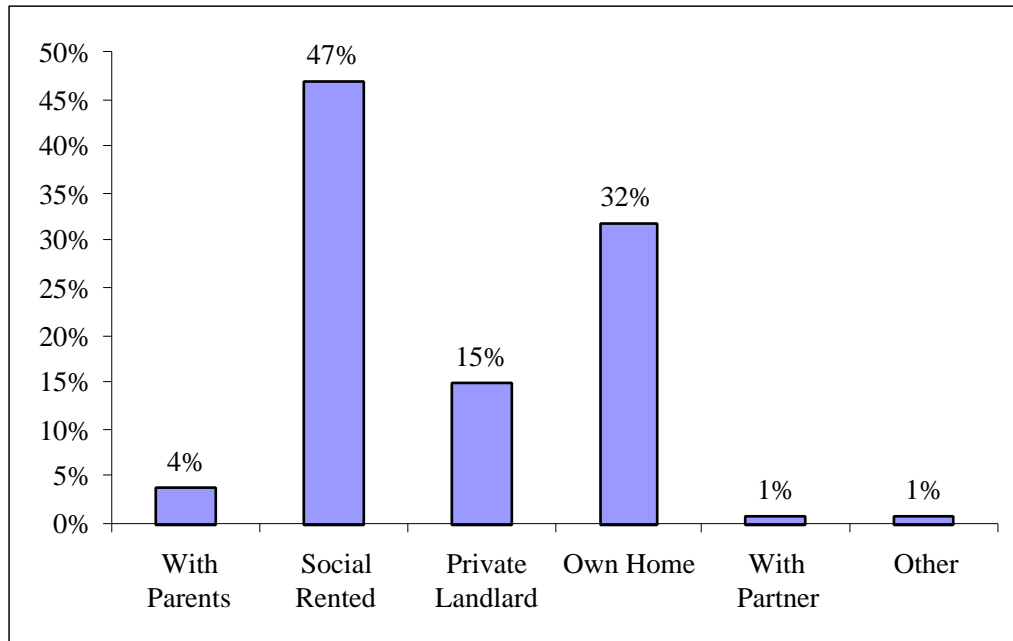
**Figure 1: Age of Respondents**



### 4.3 TERM TIME RESIDENCE

4.3.1 Nearly half the respondents (47%) live in social rented accommodation. (This compares with 69% of the general Scottish population of lone parents living in social rented accommodation.) A further 32% live in their own home during term time and 15% rent from private landlords.

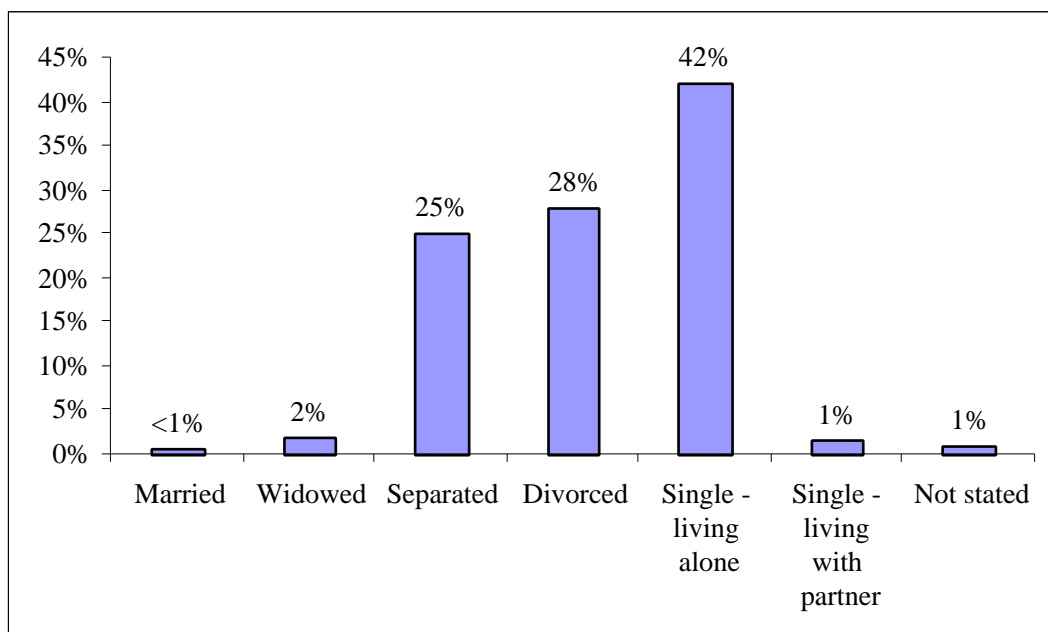
**Figure 2: Residence during term time**



### 4.4 MARITAL STATUS

4.4.1 Just over half the sample (53%) are either divorced or separated, and 42% are single and living alone.

**Figure 3: Marital Status**



4.4.2 Lone parenthood can be a transient state, and the marital status of some lone parents included in the sample changed during their course. The focus groups included two women who had separated or divorced during their period at college or university. In other words they did not take a decision to enter their course of study as a lone parent, and have found themselves facing unexpected financial circumstances. Some are unaware of the availability of additional support, as the following extract from a letter sent in with the questionnaires demonstrates:

*“I separated from my husband halfway through my course and, had SAAS not given me extra support as a lone parent, I would have been unable to continue my studies for lack of financial resources. I had also filled my grant application form in wrongly for two years running (I hadn’t ticked the lone parent box), which they then back-dated for me.” (Female, letter sent with questionnaire)*

#### 4.5 DOMICILE BY MARITAL STATUS

4.5.1 Marital status does not appear to have a particularly significant impact on domicile. Those in the sample who were separated were more likely to be in their own home, and although married respondents appear to have a high use of social rented accommodation, it should be noted that this is a very small sample (4 respondents).

**Table 2: Domicile by Marital Status**

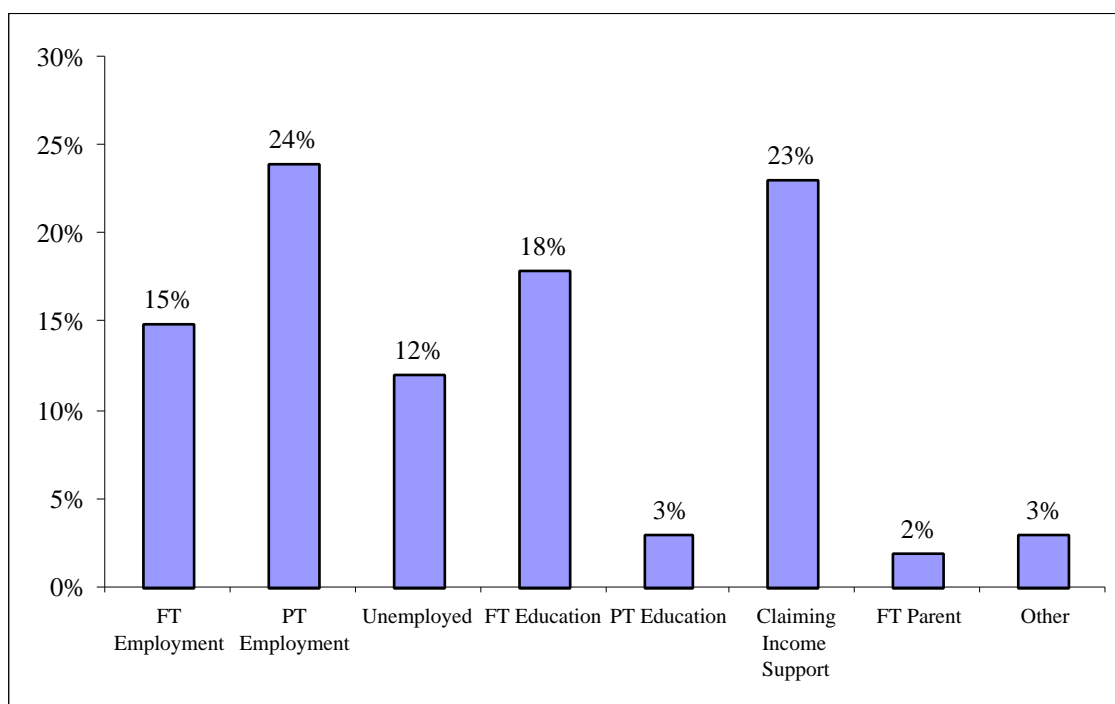
Domicile	Married* %	Widow %	Sep’d %	Div’d %	Single Alone %	Single Partner %	Total %
Living with parents	0	0	2	1	8	6	4
Social Rented	75	47	35	50	53	38	47
Private Landlord	0	16	14	15	17	13	15
Own Home	25	32	47	33	21	25	32
With Partner	0	0	0	1	0	19	1
Other	0	5	2	0	1	0	
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

\*n= 4

## 4.6 PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- 4.6.1 Prior to commencing their current course of studies, 39% of respondents were working in either a full or part-time capacity. A further 26% were in full or part-time education. Approximately a third were outside both the education system and the employment market, with just over a fifth of respondents (23%) on income support, and 12% unemployed.
- 4.6.2 The figures slightly exceed 100% as a small proportion (4%) of respondents had dual status, e.g. part time education and income support.

**Figure 4: Employment Status prior to this particular course**



- 4.6.3 HNC and HND courses attract a higher proportion of lone parent students who were previously Income Support claimants than other courses. Similarly, HNC and HND courses attract a higher proportion of lone parents who were unemployed before becoming students.

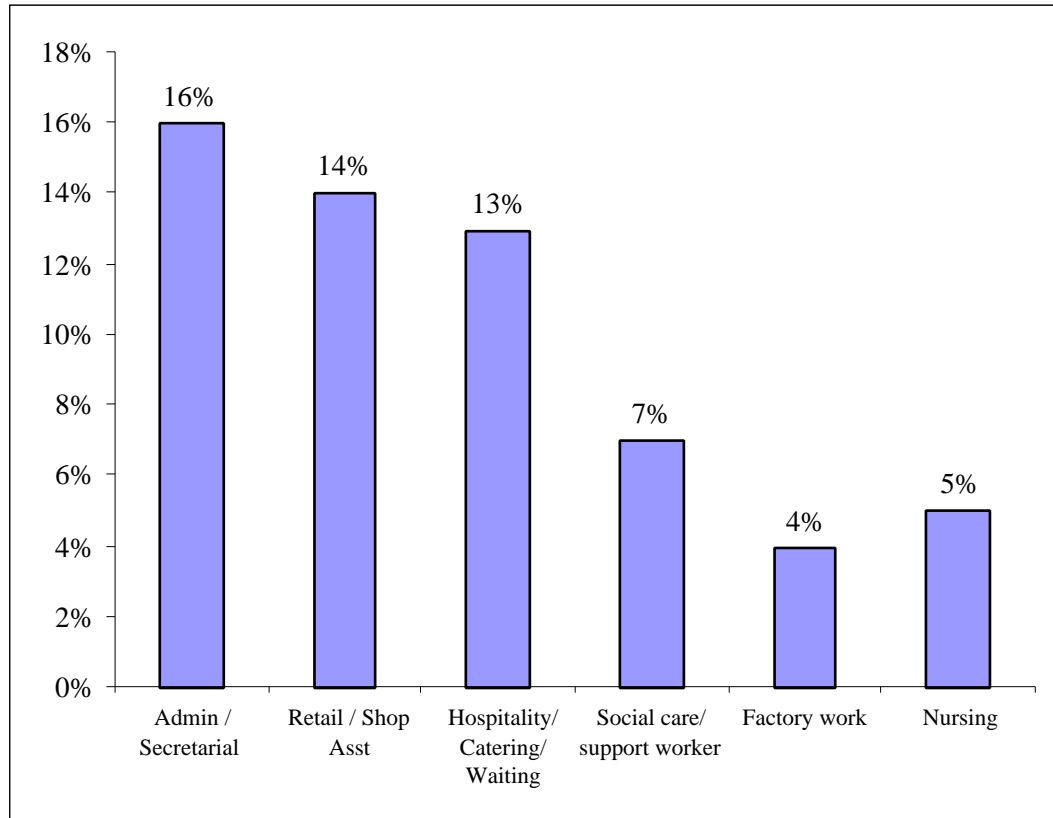
**Table 3: Past Employment Status by Qualification Studied**

Employment	HNC %	HND %	Degree %	Post Grad. %	Other %	Total %
Employed F/T	11	15	16	26	14	15
Employed P/T	28	25	21	24	43	24
Unemployed	15	15	9	8	14	12
P/T Education	-	2	4	2	0	3
F/T Education	13	12	23	24	29	18
Income Support	30	29	20	6	0	23
FT Parent	1	1	2	2	0	2
Other	2	1	5	8	0	3

## 4.7 PAST EMPLOYMENT

4.7.1 Respondents came from a wide range of employment backgrounds prior to embarking on their studies. The chart below shows the jobs most frequently mentioned by respondents.

**Figure 5: Previous Employment**



4.7.2 Past employment tended to be in the administrative or service industries, and usually in a support position.

4.7.3 The analysis of past employment by the qualification studied does not show any great variations by qualification, but degree students show a higher tendency to come from administrative positions.

**Table 4: Past Employment by Qualification Studied**

Employment	HNC %	HND %	Degree %	Post Grad. %	Total %
Admin/secretarial	12	11	20	18	16
Retail/shop asst.	14	15	14	5	14
Hospitality	14	16	12	9	13
Social Care	9	9	7	3	7
Factory Work	5	5	3	5	4
Nursing	1	1	3	2	5

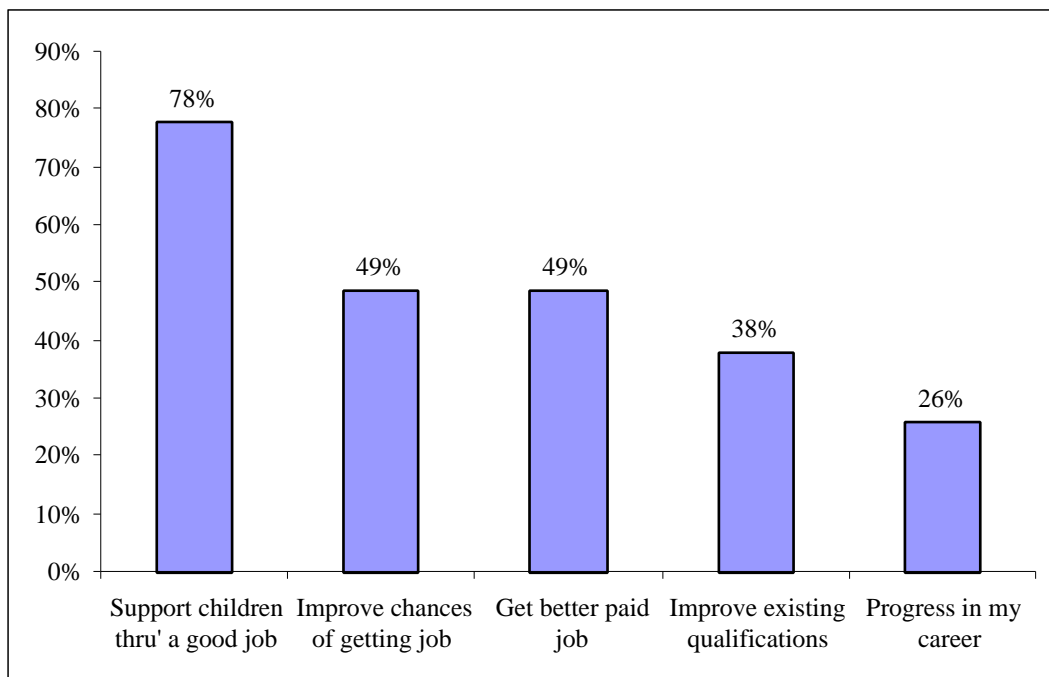
#### 4.8 QUALIFICATIONS - PAST STUDIES AND CURRENT STUDIES

- 4.8.1 The analysis of respondents' existing qualifications shows that 33% already have an HNC, 13% an HND and 11% a degree or MSc.
- 4.8.2 Half the sample (49%) is studying for a degree, and a further 25% for an HND. A fifth (20%) are studying for an HNC – the starting point for Higher Education. 5% are currently undertaking postgraduate study.
- 4.8.3 The fact that nearly half already have an HNC or HND suggests a progression through the Higher Education system by many students. 43% of the sample are new to Higher Education.

#### 4.9 REASONS FOR STUDYING

- 4.9.1 For most respondents, the key incentive to study was the support of their children, either by improving their prospects in the employment market, getting a better job, or a job with a better income.

**Figure 6: Reasons for Studying**



**Table 5: Reasons for Studying by Previous Employment Status**

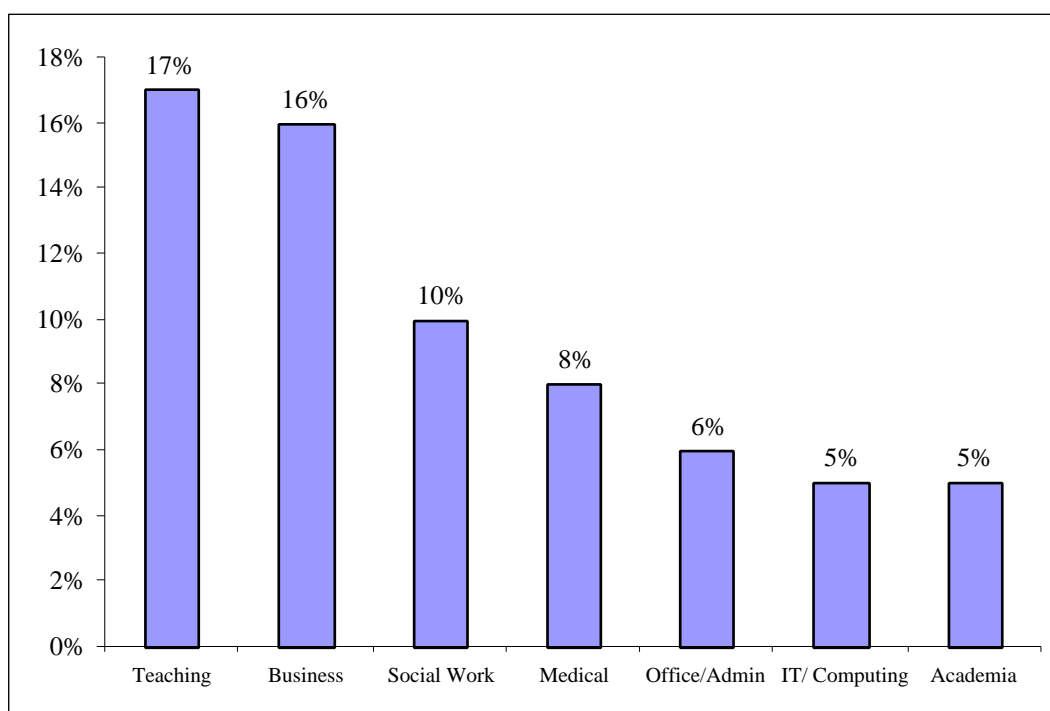
	Employ F/T %	Employ P/T %	Unempl'd %	Educ. P/T %	Educ. F/T %	Income Supp	Total %
Support children through a good job	59	73	78	100	79	89	78
Improve chances of getting job	23	42	57	55	57	62	49
Get a better paid job	54	59	36	48	45	39	49
Improve existing Progress in my career	39	30	13	26	21	21	26

4.9.2 The over-riding motivation for studying is to support the family, with over three-quarters of the sample giving this as a reason. This motivation is particularly strong amongst those who were previously on Income Support, and those in part-time education.

#### 4.10 FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

4.10.1 Plans for future employment tend to focus around teaching, business and the caring professions.

**Figure 7: Future Employment**



4.10.2 Teaching is a popular option for further employment, possibly because of the fit with their own children's term time hours and holidays. Future careers in Social Work and the Medical Profession were identified by 19%. These were also reflected in previous employment patterns, but at a lower, more support-based level. This suggests career progression as a result of their studies.

4.10.3 A career in business is more popular amongst the under 25's, while Social Work appeals more to the older age groups.

**Table 6: Future Employment by Age**

Employment	Age of Parent					Total %
	<25 %	25-35 %	36-44 %	45-54 %	55-65 %	
Teaching	19	13	21	14	0	17
Business	20	13	8	11	0	14
Social Work	4	11	11	16	0	10
Medical	9	12	9	6	0	8
Office/Admin.	7	5	6	8	0	6
IT/Computing	4	7	5	4	0	5
Academia	4	6	5	5	0	5

4.10.4 The analysis of future employment by the qualification studied indicates that a significant proportion of the HNCs are looking to a career in the medical field – the professions allied to medicine – and degree and post-graduates are looking to teaching. Business is the most popular future career for the HNDs in the sample.

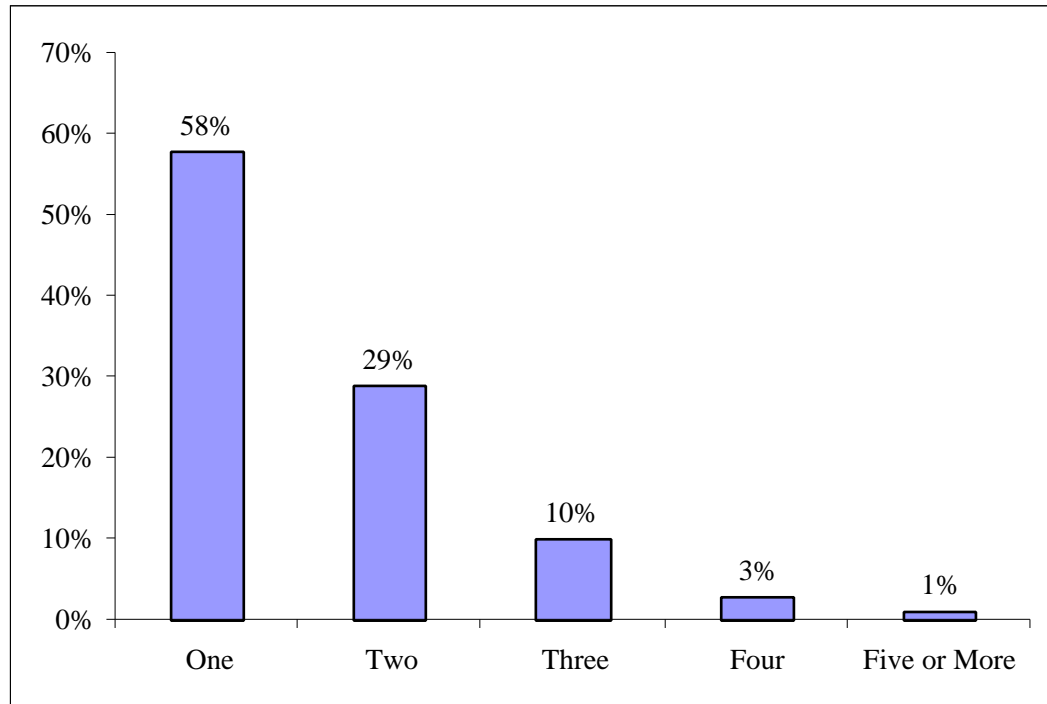
**Table 7: Future Employment by Qualification Studied**

Employment	HNC %	HND %	Degree %	Post Grad. %	Total %
Teaching	9	6	21	58	17
Business	9	18	10	13	14
Social Work	12	5	13	3	10
Medical	17	2	13	5	8
Office/Admin.	12	9	2	2	6
IT/Computing	4	10	3	8	5
Academia	1	4	7	8	5

#### 4.11 NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN

4.11.1 Over half the respondents (58%) have one dependent child, and 29% have two dependent children. On average, lone parents have 1.3 dependent children per adult.

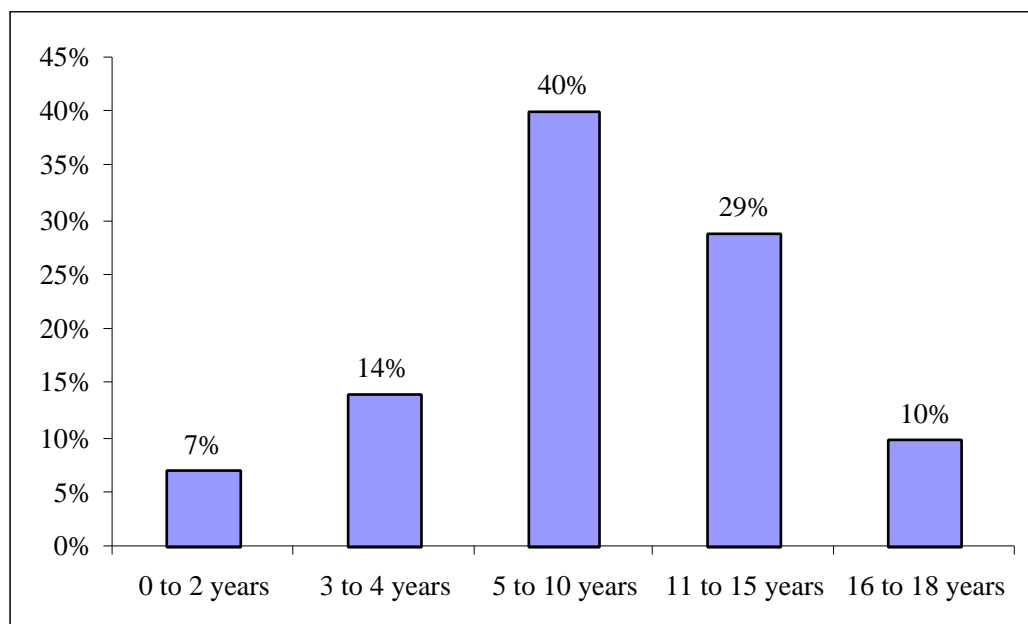
**Figure 8: Number of Dependent Children**



#### 4.12 AGE OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN

4.12.1 A fifth (21%) of the children covered by the research are below school age, 40% are of Primary school age, and 39% are of Secondary age.

**Figure 9: Age Ranges of Children**



4.12.2 Twenty-nine % of the children covered by the survey are between 11 – 15 years, and an important issue for lone parents is the lack of formal provision for this age group. After school clubs cease at age 14, and there is limited provision beyond primary school. This presents a problem for many parents who do not have friends or relatives who can help. It also presents a problem in that informal care does not qualify for the LPCG. Comments made during the Focus Groups included:

*“One of the things I find most frustrating is when does a child stop being a child? You cannot get any care after the age of 12 for children; if I leave them on their own and something happens then I am (considered) incompetent. A child is still a child at school age.” (Female, Edinburgh, HE in FE college)*

4.12.3 The position in Scotland is not clear cut as there is no formal legal minimum age after which children can be left unattended by an adult. Such cases are assessed on an individual basis and hinge around the maturity and capabilities of the individual child, e.g. a mature 11-year-old may be assessed as being capable of being left alone whereas an immature 14-year-old may not.

#### **4.13 AGE OF PARENT BY NUMBER AND AGE OF CHILDREN**

4.13.1 Some life-cycle issues emerge from the analysis of lone parents and the age and number of their dependent children.

4.13.2 Twenty-one % of the children in the sample are below school age and, as expected, when the age of the parent and the age of the child are correlated, it is apparent that the younger lone parents are most likely to require pre-school childcare.

**Table 8: Age of Child by Age of Parent**

Age of Child	Age of Parent					Total %
	<25 %	25-35 %	36-44 %	45-54 %	55-65 %	
0-2	35	6	3	0	0	6
3-4	43	16	4	0	0	12
5-10	22	52	37	18	0	42
11-15	0	23	38	48	0	30
16-18	0	2	17	34	100	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

4.13.3 Pre-school childcare is the most expensive form of formal care, and particularly for the under two’s, where a ratio of 1 carer to 2 children is required. Clearly the concentration of need in this respect is amongst lone parents under the age of 25, three quarters (78%) of whom have children under 4, and 35% have children under 2.

*“As your children get older, the childcare gets cheaper, because there is after school club. If your child is under 3, then you are hammered, because you need a one to two person care. (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

4.13.4 Lone parents in the 25 - 44 age groups are most likely to have children of between 5 and 10 years, who will require after school care. Lone parents over 36 (44% of the total sample) are most likely to be facing the 'gap' in childcare provision for Secondary age children.

**Table 9: Number of Children by Age of Parent**

No. of Children	Age of Parent					Total %
	<25 %	25-35 %	36-44 %	45-54 %	55-65 %	
1	95	61	43	55	100	58
2	5	29	33	38	0	29
3	0	7	17	5	0	10
3+	0	3	7	2	0	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.0	1.3

4.13.5 Older parents are less likely to have to pay the high nursery care costs, but they are more likely to have more than one child, and therefore face additional costs to secure care.

4.13.6 Whilst 95% of the under 25's have only one child, the ratio of children per parent rises steadily with age. This means that 39% of parents in the 25 - 35 group, and 57% of 36 - 44 year old parents, have more than one child. Some 7% of the latter group have more than 3 children.

#### 4.14 PROFILE OF LONE PARENT CHILDCARE GRANT CLAIMANTS

4.14.1 Table 10 shows that it is the younger lone parents who are most likely to be claiming the LPCG, and this reflects the fact that older parents are more likely to be making use of informal arrangements.

**Table 10: Lone Parent Childcare Grant Claimants by Age**

Grant Claimed	Age of Parent					Total %
	<25 %	25-35 %	36-44 %	45-54 %	55-65 %	
Yes	61	56	40	24	0	49
No	38	43	59	75	100	50
N/A	1	1	1	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

4.14.2 Those who are single and living alone are also more likely to claim the grant as opposed to those that are separated, widowed or divorced.

**Table 11: Lone Parent Childcare Grant Claimants by Marital Status**

	Widowed %	Sep'd %	Divorced %	Single Alone %	Single Partner %	Total Sample %
Grant Claimant	32	45	45	55	31	49
Non Claimant	63	53	54	45	69	51
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

- 4.14.3 Grant claimants who were in receipt of Income Support (28%) prior to taking up their course of study are more likely to claim than those who were previously unemployed (12%).

#### **4.15 THE DEMANDS OF BEING A LONE PARENT HE STUDENT**

- 4.15.1 The qualitative research identified a number of lifestyle issues for lone parent students, and these have been included in the report in appropriate sections. In terms of profile, one issue that emerged strongly from the focus groups is that being a lone parent HE student is a high stress occupation. They cope with a high level of uncertainty, both financially and in terms of constantly juggling the demands of parenting, student life and - sometimes - part time employment. Plans are subject to change at the last moment – particularly for those with young children who may fall ill.
- 4.15.2 They are constantly under time pressures – e.g. to drop children off at school/nursery for 9 a.m. and to attend a 9 a.m. lecture as well, and to find study time. Their evenings tend to be occupied with parenting, and typically studying is done late at night or in the early hours.

*“Most people go to college and that is all they do. Whereas us, it is only a bit of our life, we have so much else to do - we have an additional life to live, kids to look after, our house to run, money to get in from somewhere to fund it all.”*  
(Female, Glasgow, HEI)

*“I think it is all the things that revolve around the children that other people do not realise that you have to do. Like different things they go to like Scouts, Brownies, swimming. All these things that you have to go to in the evening that other people don't. They just have to go home and do their study.”* (Female, Dundee, HEI)

*“I find it very difficult. Personally I couldn't manage without working, and it is horrific trying to juggle everything.”* (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)

*“These worries are on top of the workload. For me that means an 18hr day, and even then I am still not doing anywhere near the work I should be doing.”*  
(Female, Edinburgh, HEI)

*“It is difficult to budget because of the costs which crop up, such as if your child is ill and you need (extra) childcare, or if there is an in-service day.”*  
(Female, Edinburgh HEI).

## **4.16 SUMMARY**

4.16.1 The picture of a typical lone parent that can be drawn from the survey respondents is female, aged between 25 and 44. She is most likely divorced or separated, and likely to be living in her own home or in social rented accommodation. If not, she will likely be single and living alone in social rented accommodation. If previously in employment, this will have been in the administrative or service industries, and usually in a support position. A third will have been on Income Support or unemployed immediately prior to studying. Her motivation for studying will very likely be to support the family. Her plans for future employment will tend to focus around teaching, business and the caring professions. On average, lone parents have 1.3 dependent children per adult. The children are likely to be under 10 years of age. The lone parent is as likely not to be claiming the LPCG as claiming, but claimants were more likely to have received Income Support previously than non-claimants. This means that the LPCG is reaching the more vulnerable lone parents. Being a lone parent HE student is a high stress occupation with the combination of roles as student, lone parent and, in some cases, part-time employee.

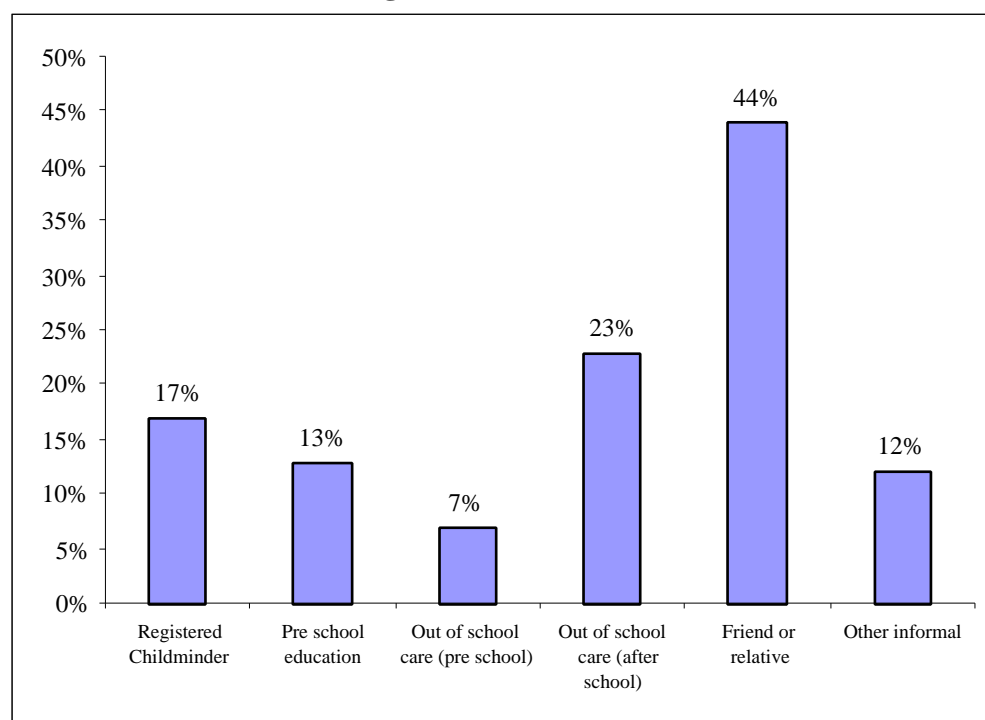
## 5 CHILDCARE ISSUES

This section describes the range of childcare issues arising from survey responses and the focus groups.

### 5.1 MAIN CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1.1 Friends or relatives provide childcare for 44% of respondents. Only 17% use a registered childminder. (The figures exceed 100% as some parents gave more than one answer – i.e. where they are using a combination of different arrangements, particularly where respondents have more than one child.)
- 5.1.2 The findings of the focus groups suggest that the main reasons for not using ‘formal’ childcare are cost, the lack of availability of registered minders (particularly in rural areas), and the need to book formal childcare places in advance of knowing the actual need.

**Figure 10: Main Childcare Arrangement**



- 5.1.3 Childcare places have to be booked, and often taken up, before the lone parent’s grant allocation has been notified, and sometimes before they know their timetable. HE students in FE colleges start in late August or early September, but the grants are geared to an October start. After School Clubs are geared to the school term and places have to be taken up from August.

*“You don’t get your timetable until the week that you start, so you cannot organise childcare. School starts in August, then you get your timetable when Uni. starts. By the time you know what you need, all the after school places have already gone.” (Female, Dundee, HE in FE college)*

*“After school clubs - I find you have to pay for a whole week, whereas you might only need it for three days, but you have to pay for the full whack, and that is really frustrating.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

*“People living in small villages experience childcare problems (of availability) when attending college.....While the grant is very good, it does not help some people.” (Female, Dundee, HEI)*

*“It took me a while to find a childminder, and then you have to pay them upfront. It’s unbelievable the amount of money you have to pay them – it’s £100 per week.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

5.1.4 The issues of cost and availability of formal care means that there can be an impact on the wider family. Several participants in the focus groups reported that their own mothers had given up work, or reduced their working hours, in order to help their daughters with childcare. This constitutes a negative impact on the job market.

*“My mum gave up her job so that I could go to College.” (Female, Dundee, HE in FE)*

*“I would like to see the childcare grant available for non-registered carers - you still have to pay something. Grandparents are giving up jobs to help out.” (Female, Dundee, HE)*

## 5.2 CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS OF LONE PARENT CHILDCARE GRANT CLAIMANTS AND NON CLAIMANTS

5.2.1 There is a markedly different pattern of usage of the different types of childcare arrangement between claimants and non-claimants of the LPCG.

**Table 12: Main Childcare Arrangement by Lone Parent Childcare Grant Claimant Status**

<b>Child Care</b>	<b>Add. Grant Claimant %</b>	<b>Non Claimant %</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Registered Minder	31	2	17
Pre School Education	23	5	13
After Pre School Care	11	2	7
After School Care	39	8	23
Friend or Relative	19	68	44
Other Informal	4	19	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>116</b>

*Figures add to more than 100% because respondents gave more than one answer.*

5.2.2 Some 87% of Non Claimants are using informal arrangements as their main form of childcare, and only 17% are using formal arrangements.

5.2.3 23% of Claimants say they are using informal arrangements. Such arrangements are not eligible for the grant, but as the responses to the question exceeded 100%, this means that LPCG Claimants gave more than one answer to the question “What is your main childcare arrangement?” This may be because they are using a combination of formal and informal arrangements, or because they have more than one child.

### 5.3 AGE OF CHILD BY MAIN CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENT

5.3.1 Children under the age of 2 are most likely to be in a formal childcare arrangement (66% compared to 30% of the total sample), while the use of informal arrangements increases with the age of the child.

**Table 13: Age of Child by Parent’s Main Childcare Arrangement <sup>1</sup>**

Child Care	Age of Child					Total %
	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-10 %	11-15 %	16-18 %	
Registered Minder	39	23	17	12	11	17
Pre School Education	27	52	11	0	0	13
After Pre School	10	12	9	0	0	7
After School Care	12	9	37	25	14	23
Friend or Relative	28	26	48	55	51	44
Other Informal	8	5	6	18	31	12
Total	113	127	128	110	107	116

*Percentages exceed 100% because respondents gave more than one answer.*

5.3.2 Approximately a third of under 5s are in informal care arrangements, compared to over half the 5 – 10 year olds, and nearly three-quarters (73%) of 11-15 year olds.

5.3.3 The use of informal care over the age of 11 is driven by the lack of formal facilities, which was highlighted by lone parents who took part in the focus groups.

5.3.4 There are some apparent inconsistencies in this table in terms of the age of the child and the childcare arrangement. Pre School Education covers state nurseries and private nurseries. Whilst state nurseries do not take children below the age of 3, private nurseries do accept them (this helps to explain the 27% of under 2s that attend Pre School Education). After School Care (Pre School) again includes private nurseries who offer this facility. (See also Footnote 1.)

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<sup>1</sup> In order to keep this self-completion questionnaire as brief as possible and to maximise returns, lone parents were asked firstly how many children they have in each age group, and then for their main childcare arrangement. This means that where parents have more than one child, there may not be a direct link between the age of the child and the main arrangement.

## 5.4 AGE OF PARENT AND MAIN CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENT

5.4.1 Younger parents are most likely to use a Registered Minder and Pre-School Education. The use of Informal Care (Friends and Relatives or Other Informal Care) rises with the age of the parent. Only 36% of parents under 25 utilise a form of Informal Care, compared to 65% of 36-44 year olds, and 73% of 45-54 year old parents.

**Table 14: Age of Parent by Main Childcare Arrangement and Instance of Claiming Grant**

Child Care	Age of Parent					Total %
	<25 %	25-35 %	36-44 %	45-54 %	55-65 %	
Registered Minder	25	19	13	1	0	17
Pre School Education	32	17	6	0	0	13
After Nursery Care	9	8	4	3	0	7
After School Care	9	29	21	21	0	23
Friend or Relative	33	41	50	44	0	44
Other Informal	3	8	15	30	100	12
	111	122	109	99	100	116
LPCG Claimant	60	56	40	23	0	49
Non Claimant	40	44	60	77	100	51

*Where figures exceed 100%, respondents gave more than one answer.*

5.4.2 Whilst the sample splits almost exactly into LPCG Claimants and Non-Claimants, when the figures are analysed by age, it is apparent that the younger parents are the most likely to claim the LPCG. This is in line with their pattern of greater use of formal childcare arrangements, as highlighted in the table above.

## 5.5 SUMMARY

5.5.1 Friends or relatives provide childcare for 44% of survey respondents. The main reasons for not using 'formal' childcare are cost, the lack of availability of registered minders (particularly in rural areas), and the need to book formal childcare places in advance of knowing the actual need. Claimants of the LPCG are much more likely to be using 'formal' childcare than non-claimants. The use of informal childcare increases with the age of the child and with the age of the parent. Cost and availability issues can mean that another member of the lone parent's family gives up work to help with childcare.

## 6 FINANCIAL ISSUES

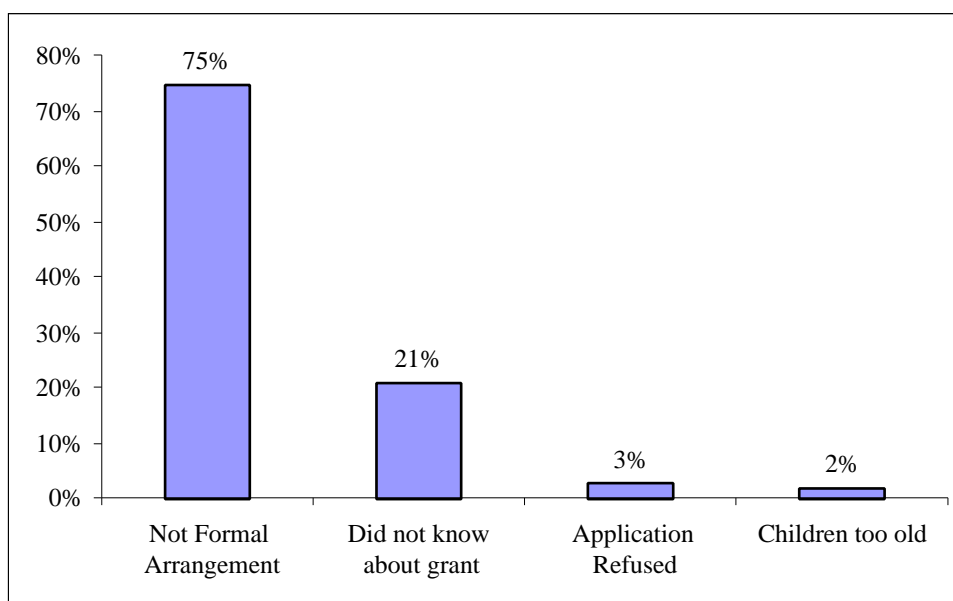
This section describes the range of financial issues arising from survey responses and the focus groups.

### 6.1 INSTANCE OF CLAIMING LONE PARENT CHILDCARE GRANT

6.1.1 All survey respondents receive the Lone Parents Grant. Almost half the sample claimed the LPCG of £1,000 in 2001-02, with 49% Grant Claimants and 51% Non-Claimants. SAAS figures estimate that approximately one third of the Lone Parent Grant recipients took up the LPCG. This suggests that those in receipt of the LPCG have been more likely to respond to the survey than non-claimants.

6.1.2 The main reason given for not claiming the LPCG is the fact that the respondent is not using a 'formal' childcare arrangement. Three quarters of the non-claimants gave this as the reason for not claiming the LPCG. A further 21%, however, said that they did not know about the grant. Other reasons given by students for not taking up the grant include the lack of 'formal' childcare in an area and a preference for informal arrangements, as these are more flexible and usually able to take children if they are ill.

**Figure 11: Reasons for Not Claiming the Lone Parent Childcare Grant**



*Base: Non-Claimants of the LPCG*

6.1.3 Interestingly, the lone parents towards the younger end of the age spectrum were more likely not to have claimed through not knowing about the grant than their older counter parts. The younger lone parents also have the highest use of formal care, because they are more likely to have children under school age.

**Table 15: Reasons for Not Claiming by Age of Parent**

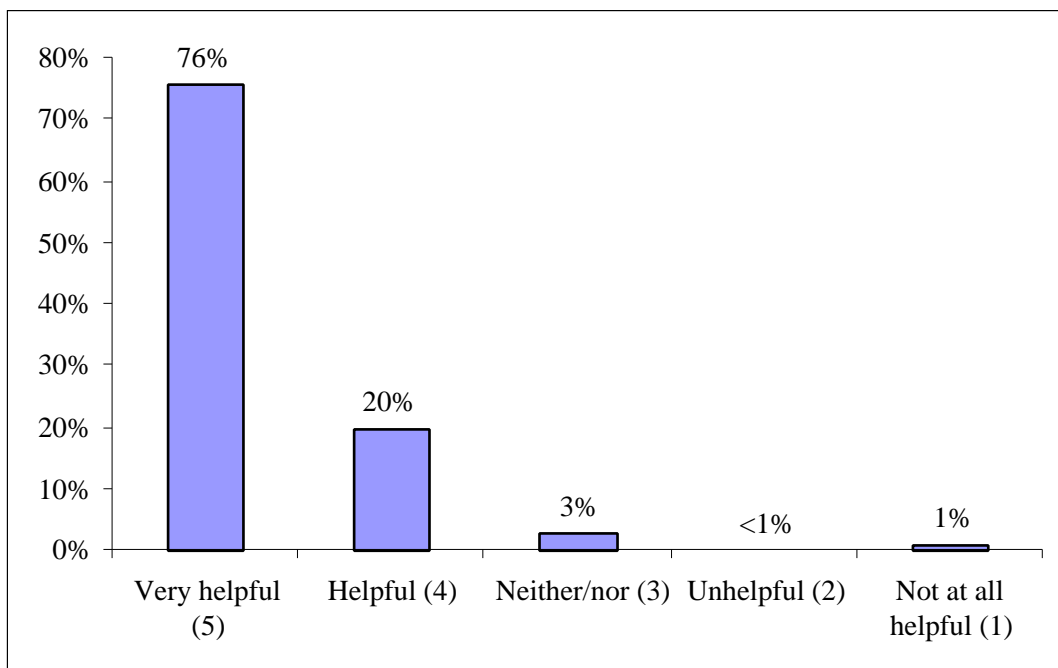
Reason	Age of Parent%					Total %
	<25	25-35	36-44	45-54	55-65	
Not formal care	65	71	78	80	100	75
Unaware of grant	28	25	18	18	0	21
Applic. refused	2	4	3	2	0	3
Children too old	0	1	3	4	0	2

Base: LPCG Non-Claimants

## 6.2 HELPFULNESS OF LONE PARENT CHILDCARE GRANT

6.2.1 Respondents who received the grant were asked how helpful they found the additional money.

**Figure 12: Helpfulness of the Lone Parent Childcare Grant**



Base: LPCG Claimants

6.2.2 For most respondents (96%), the LPCG was seen to be either “helpful” or “very helpful”. The reasons given for their answers are identified below in verbatim comments taken from the (anonymous) questionnaires:

*“It would be very difficult to manage financially without it.”*

*“Now it means I have just enough money to live on.”*

*“Because without the additional childcare cost, I would not have anyone to look after my child, therefore I would not be able to attend college.”*

### 6.2.3 Additional comments written on the questionnaire included:

*“The university subtracted the £1,000 from the help that they provide.”*

*(This is a reference to the fact that the LPCG is taken into account by FE colleges and HEIs when calculating payments from the Mature Students’ Bursary Fund.)*

*“It covered all childcare cost, but I think it’s unfair that they (childminders) have to be registered as they are more expensive and generally don’t care about the child.”*

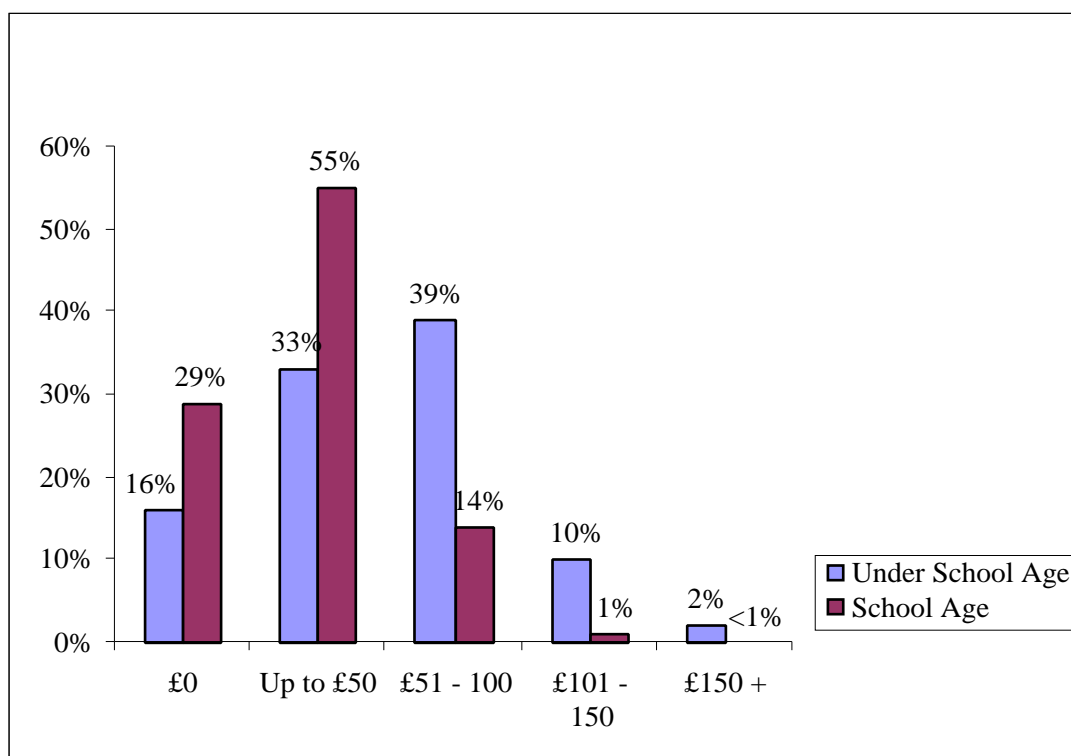
*“Having 2 children that require childcare can get expensive. The grant and loan together are not enough to live on for a year.”*

6.2.4 In 2001-2002, the LPCG was paid in one lump sum. Lone parent students would prefer to receive stage payments, as is the case with other SAAS grants, to assist their personal budgeting. SAAS has changed the system for 2002-2003 to allow the LPCG to go out in three instalments over the academic year.

## 6.3 CHILDCARE COSTS PAID BY RESPONDENTS

6.3.1 Childcare costs for children of both school age and for those under school age are shown below.

**Figure 13: Cost of Childcare**



*Base: All respondents with children in each age group*

6.3.2 The chart demonstrates the additional cost of younger children.

- 6.3.3 Over a quarter (29%) of lone parents with school age children manage to avoid childcare costs altogether, and over half (55%) pay less than £50 per week. This compares with only 16% of those with children under school age who avoid costs, and a third (33%) who pay less than £50 per week.
- 6.3.4 Half (51%) of those with children under school age are paying over £50, and 12% are paying in excess of £100 per week. The respective figures for those with school age children are 15% and 1%.

#### 6.4 COST OF CHILDCARE BY MAIN ARRANGEMENT

- 6.4.1 The type of childcare used is a major factor in the cost of childcare and, as has been shown above, the younger the child, the more likely it is to be in a more expensive arrangement.
- 6.4.2 The tables below look at the cost of childcare for lone parents by childcare arrangement for both pre-school children and those of school age.

**Table 16: Cost of Childcare by Main Arrangement (Pre-School Children Under 5)**

Cost of Child Care	Reg. Minder %	Pre School Ed %	After Nurser Care	After School Care %	Friend or Rel. %	Other Informal %	Total %
£0	0	5	3	10	38	39	16
Up to £50	22	35	29	36	40	35	33
£51 – 100	63	41	52	50	19	22	39
£101 – 150	13	14	13	4	3	0	10
+£150	2	5	3	0	0	4	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
% using type of childcare	26	39	10	14	28	6	

**Table 17: Cost of Childcare by Main Arrangement (Children 5 Years and Over)**

Cost of Child Care	Reg Minder %	Pre School Ed %	After Nurser Care	After School Care %	Friend Or Rel. %	Other Informal %	Total
£0	0	16	2	0.5	39	56	29
Up to £50	68	68	70	75	51	30	55
£51 – 100	28	16	24	21	9	13	14
£101 – 150	3	0	4	3	0	0	1
+£150	1	0	0	0.5	0	1	<1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	10
% using type of childcare	14	5	6	30	51	13	

- 6.4.3 The tables show the impact of the cost of formal care – particularly Registered Minders - for under school age children. Over three-quarters (78%) of lone parents with under 5s, and who use Registered Minders, are paying over £50 per week. 15% are paying over £100 per week. The comparative figures for those with children of school age are 32% and 4% respectively.

- 6.4.4 Lone parents with under 5's also pay more to friends or relatives to look after their child – 22% pay over £50, compared to only 9% of those with school age children. This is because school age children require after school care, rather than all day care.
- 6.4.5 Those who have children in formal care arrangements, but who are not paying a fee for the place are likely to be those who are able to benefit from 'free' places – possibly provided by a local authority.
- 6.4.6 A lone parent in HE in 2001-2002 received one LPCG of £1,000 regardless of the number of children they had. Lone parents informed us that this did cover the cost of one child for an academic year at an After School Club. The survey results show that for most lone parents using 'formal' childcare, the cost for an under five is in excess of £50 per week, i.e. a minimum of £1,900 per academic year.
- 6.4.7 In some areas, where there is a shortage of registered childminders, parents find that they have to pay a retainer fee in addition to the amount discussed above to maintain a place over the holiday periods, or lose it. This makes such provision less affordable.

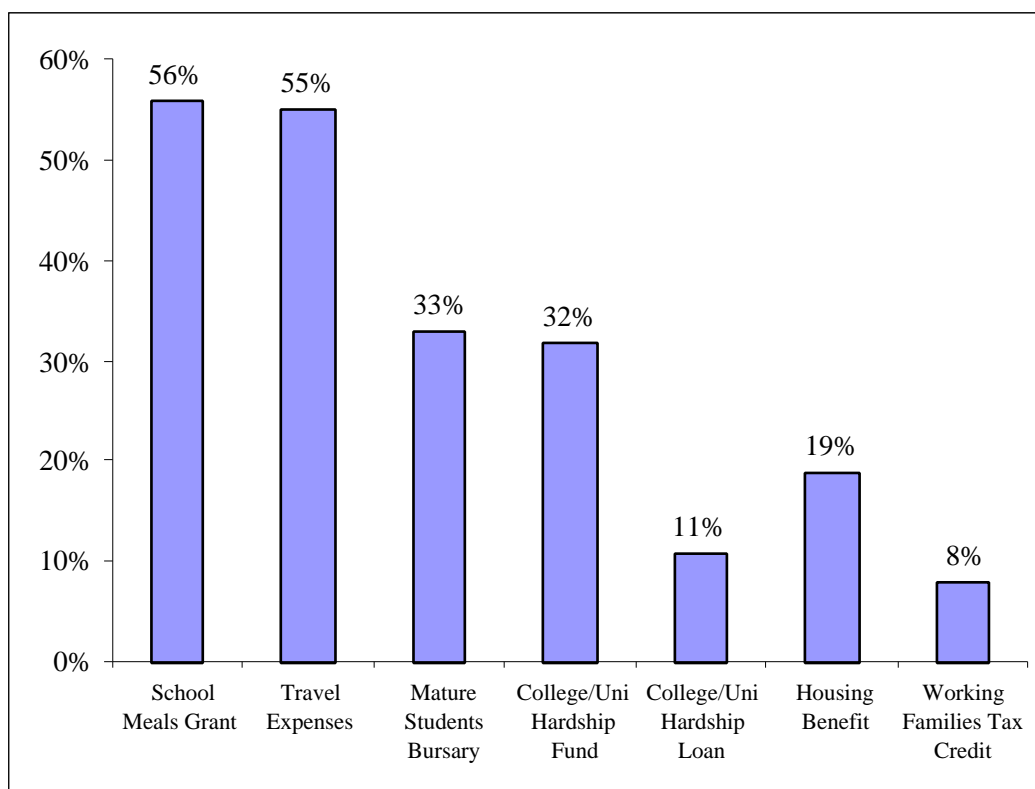
*“You have to pay nurseries/childminders even when (the children) are not there for the summer. You have to pay a retainer. But that it's not taken into consideration (when deciding the amount of the grant). Last year I had to pay a childminder, who lived just round the corner, £15 a week for 17 weeks over the summer. I couldn't give the place up, because I couldn't get another childminder in the area.” (Female, Dundee, HE)*

- 6.4.8 A point that was raised several times in the focus groups is the fact that University/College holidays do not always coincide with school holidays, and this can add to childcare costs, as can in-service days. The Easter holidays create the most problems, and are particularly difficult for lone parents with children over the age of 11+ (i.e. for whom there is no formal provision). One of the colleges in the study, Lauder College, is specifically trying to address this, and bring their holidays in line with local schools.

## 6.5 OTHER GRANTS OR BENEFITS CLAIMED

6.5.1 Respondents were asked which other grants and benefits they currently claim. The School Meals Grant (56%) and Travel Expenses (55%) were most frequently mentioned. Both the Mature Students Bursary and Hardship Funds are claimed by a third of students, and almost a fifth (19%) claim Housing Benefit.

**Figure 14: Other Grants and Benefits Claimed**



6.5.2 The main Grants and Benefits claimed by domicile are shown in the table below. It is also noticeable that those who live in rented property are most likely to be claiming from the Hardship Funds.

**Table 18: Grants & Benefits Claimed by Domicile**

	With Parents %	Social Rented %	Private Landlor %	Own Home %	Partner %	Total %
School Meals	40	57	55	58	43	56
Travel Expenses	50	56	55	56	43	55
Mature St. Bursary	22	34	34	31	43	33
Hardship Fund	16	36	35	29	14	32
Hardship Loan	8	13	12	10	0	11
Housing Benefit	4	23	44	5	14	19
Work. Fam. Tax Cr.	6	7	5	10	0	8

- 6.5.3 Those who were on Income Support prior to starting their studies show a higher instance of claims for the key benefits and grants.

**Table 19: Grants & Benefits Claimed by Previous Economic Status**

	Unemployed %	Income Support %	Total %
School Meals	55	61	56
Travel Expenses	43	58	55
Mature St. Bursary	37	38	33
Hardship Fund	38	30	32
Hardship Loan	10	16	11
Housing Benefit	19	32	19
Work. Fam. Tax Cr.	4	2	8

- 6.5.4 Lone parent students in the 25 – 44 age groups are most likely to be claiming from the Hardship Funds.

**Table 20: Benefits Claimed by Age of Lone Parent**

	Age of Parent					Total %
	<25 %	25-35 %	36-44 %	45-54 %	55-65 %	
School Meals Grant	38	59	57	62	0	56
Travel Expenses	53	56	55	52	100	55
Mature St. Bursary	18	35	35	23	0	33
Young Pers. Bursary	5	0	0	0	0	1
Hardship Fund	24	37	31	22	100	32
Hardship Loan	12	12	11	7	100	11
Housing Benefit	16	22	17	19	0	19
Work. Fam. Tax Cr.	6	8	9	4	0	8

- 6.5.5 Claims from the Hardship Funds are particularly high amongst 25 – 35 year olds. Table 8 identifies the fact that 74% of lone parent students in this age category have children under the age of 10, and 22% have children under the age of 5. They are making use of a high proportion of Formal Care (73% compared to an average of 60% - see Table 14).

## **6.6 ISSUES RELATING TO GRANTS AND BENEFITS RAISED BY RESPONDENTS**

- 6.6.1 Lone parents who took part in the Focus Groups raised several issues about the Grants and Benefits that are available. Many stated that they are experiencing financial hardship and, for most lone parent students that the research team spoke to, their lives are a hand-to-mouth existence. For some, the loss of Housing Benefit and Income Support, even with a Student Loan means that they also start to incur private sector and family debt.

6.6.2 The fact that the student loan is classed as income – and therefore reduces benefits entitlement – creates a difficulty for lone parents. As the loan has to be repaid, although only when the student has ceased studying and is earning more than £10,000, it is not perceived to be the same as income or benefits. The lone parents argue that they differ from other students in that their parenting responsibilities reduce their ability to work to supplement their income, their costs are higher, and their family unit keenly feels the loss of benefits. Once they cease to receive a prescribed benefit, they also cease to be eligible for free prescriptions and other benefits.

*“I applied for my full student loan, and an additional means tested loan. What happened was that all of that was counted against my housing benefit. So I have a debt which I have to pay back, but that is counted as if it is income.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

*“People seem to forget that with benefits you also get free prescriptions, and dentistry.” (Female, Glasgow, HEI)*

*“I had to give up working, which meant I lost the Family Working Tax Credit, which doubled my wages. I just could not cope with the work as well as my student work and being a parent.” (Female, Dundee, HEI)*

*“I have three kids. I don’t have the choice, I can’t work and it is really difficult. You have to pay your student loan back. My loan is used to cover the childcare so you have to live of the grant and it is really, really tight.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

*“The difference with our course is we go on placements, and we work full time for big blocks of time, plus we go home and have got paperwork to deal with. We can’t get jobs because of the placements.” (Female, Dundee, FE in HEI).*

6.6.3 Many lone parents started their studies as a route to moving the family to a better standard of living (See Table 5 at Section 4.9), but now feel that they face many years of debt repayment once they start working. A key concern is that their lone parent status will not be taken into account when repayments of the Student Loan start, and that they will be facing financial hardship for many years to come.

*“I am in debt to my parents, my friends, my ex-husband, the Student Loans Company, catalogues, everything. I am in debt left right and centre. I find it really depressing. I can’t give (the children) the things they want to do. It is depressing that in years to come I will be paying interest on school trips etc., that I have to pay for now. If you want (the children) to have any kind of life it is a struggle, then you pay interest for years to come.” (Female, Dundee, HE)*

*“Since starting at university, quality of life for my daughter and myself has most definitely declined. I have accumulated so much debt that I can barely sleep for worrying about it, let alone study.” (Female, letter sent with questionnaire)*

- 6.6.4 Rent payments are a major area of concern, and the loss of housing benefit in favour of a loan removes the security of knowing that the rent will be paid irrespective of other financial demands. This increases their fears for the well being of their children. Those who have secured a mortgage prior to becoming a student often find themselves better off, as their mortgage cost with present interest rates is cheaper than the rental on an equivalent property in the private sector.
- 6.6.5 Many indicate a preference to receive their grants in smaller, more frequent amounts, as they find managing a quarterly budget difficult, given their financially precarious position. The summer holidays are a particular problem. If they work, all their money disappears on childcare. If they do not work, they have problems paying their bills.

*“I find it hard to manage. You know getting it in these lump sums, half of it I usually owe out by the time I get the cheque.” (Female, Dundee, HE in FE college)*

*“In the summer holidays I have a big problem. There is no money left from any grants, you can’t work or most of your money goes to the childminder.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

- 6.6.6 On a practical level, they incur additional costs compared to other students, not just in terms of paying for childcare, but also in travelling to and from the child’s carer or school. Where there are no College-based nurseries, most lone parents have a double bus journey to drop their children off with the carer, and then make their way to College/University. This double journey does not qualify under the transport grant.
- 6.6.7 Although such costs can be covered by the Mature Students’ Bursary Fund, the MSBF is discretionary and capped at £2,000, which means that the travel costs compete with the many other living costs that lone parent students face in seeking to provide for their families.
- 6.6.8 Many lone parent students experience guilt over the hardship that they feel they are asking their children to cope with, and the fact that they (the children) have to go without the things that their friends enjoy.

*“If you are working then you feel you are denying your child time, and if you give up working then you are denying them Playstation games, or whatever they want.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

## **6.7 HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES**

- 6.7.1 The 2001-2002 SAAS Award Letter did not make any reference to the £1,000 LPCG because of the timing of its introduction. This caused difficulties for FE college student support staff who needed to make additional enquiries of HE students to find out what support they were already getting from SAAS before determining what the college could offer. The Award Letter for 2002-2003 onwards will make reference to the LPCG, which will resolve this issue.

- 6.7.2 Lone parent HE students attending FE colleges informed the researchers that the normal SAAS payment system is geared to institutional term dates. However the timing of the announcement of the LPCG in July 2001 meant that, with mid-August start dates, FE students had to pay out for childcare for around one and a half months before receiving the LPCG. The SAAS Guide to Student Support 2002-2003 states that, if making the first payment at the start of the course would cause hardship, advance payment of Dependants' Grant, Lone Parent Grant and LPCG (which cover a period of 52 weeks from 1 August 2002) and School Meals Grant (which covers a period of 38 weeks) can be requested to cover the period from 1 August to the start of the course. This should alleviate this issue.
- 6.7.3 FE colleges visited and which have an on site nursery pay the nursery direct for student childcare. The nurseries raise a single bill to the college and do not want to have to introduce split billing to the college and individual students. This is causing problems in respect of students following HE courses in receipt of the £1,000 from SAAS. Colleges could bill their HE students direct. However, this results in additional administrative costs and colleges have experienced problems in collecting such debts in some instances. Where such students have additional children not in the college nursery, the student may have used some of the £1,000 LPCG to pay for after school care, so does not have the full amount to pay to the college towards college nursery costs.
- 6.7.4 One college visited stated that the administrative issues are driving them towards offering college nursery places to FE students in preference to HE students.
- 6.7.5 A lone parent following a HE course in a FE college has access to a maximum of £3,000 towards childcare, made up of the £1,000 LPCG paid by SAAS to the student and up to £2,000 from the HE Mature Student Bursary Fund (although, if all £2,000 is used for childcare the student will not get any support for rent or hardship). An equivalent student following a FE course can have all childcare costs, which can be in excess of £5,000, paid for by the college and still get support for rent or hardship. This causes problems for completing FE students wishing to progress to HE. Such students can face even more difficulties and financial hardship if they wish to move to a HEI. Such a move is likely to involve greater travel and the research team was informed by lone parent students attending HEIs, who had previous experience of FE college, that they received far less support and guidance at the HEI.
- 6.7.6 As stated above, all HE students in a FE college can get a maximum of £2,000 from the Mature Students Bursary Fund. In one college visited, if the student is a lone parent, £1,000 of that is ring fenced and can only be paid to a childcare provider, leaving only £1,000 towards rent and hardship. A non-lone parent student can get all of the £2,000 for rent and hardship. The average payment from the fund in support of rent and hardship during 2001-2002 at the college visited was £1,300. Therefore, lone parent HE students at this college perceive that they get £300 less support towards rent and hardship than non-lone parents. The researchers understand that a solution could be for the college not to ring fence half of the MSBF limit or to use some of its Hardship Fund allocation (which can be enhanced to some extent from its MSBF allocation) to provide additional support for rent and hardship to lone parents. However, college staff did not seem to be aware of these possibilities.

- 6.7.7 The same college expressed a preference for the £1,000 that the guidance asks institutions to provide to lone parent students for childcare costs and the SAAS £1,000 to be withdrawn for students in FE colleges, with all this money being put into one Childcare Fund for both FE and HE students with laid down criteria for its use.
- 6.7.8 Participants in the focus groups expressed the view that the FE colleges are more family friendly than the universities. They are more aware of their lone parent students as a group, and more likely to be sympathetic, e.g. in granting extensions for written work to be handed in if there has been a family problem.

*“In FE, there was more support and staff knew you. In University you are anonymous they don’t know you.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

## **6.8 SUMMARY**

- 6.8.1 The main reason given for not claiming the LPCG is the fact that the respondent is not using a formal childcare arrangement. Around a fifth of non-claimants, however, said that they did not know about the grant. The vast majority (96%) of respondents found the LPCG “helpful” or “very helpful”. Childcare costs reduce as the age of the child increases. According to our calculations on the basis of survey responses, the cost of ‘formal’ childcare for an under five for one academic year is at least £1,900 and the cost of one child for an academic year at an After School Club is around £1,000. This latter figure equates to the amount of the LPCG in 2001-02. Typical lone parents in the 25 – 44 age groups are most likely to be claiming from the Hardship Funds. The debt levels they are incurring are a cause of stress and concern to lone parent HE students. Worries about rent are one of the main sources of financial concern, and lone parents have less flexibility to take part-time jobs whilst studying, due to their parenting responsibilities. FE colleges experience some administrative difficulties working with the lone parent HE student support system in comparison to that for FE students.

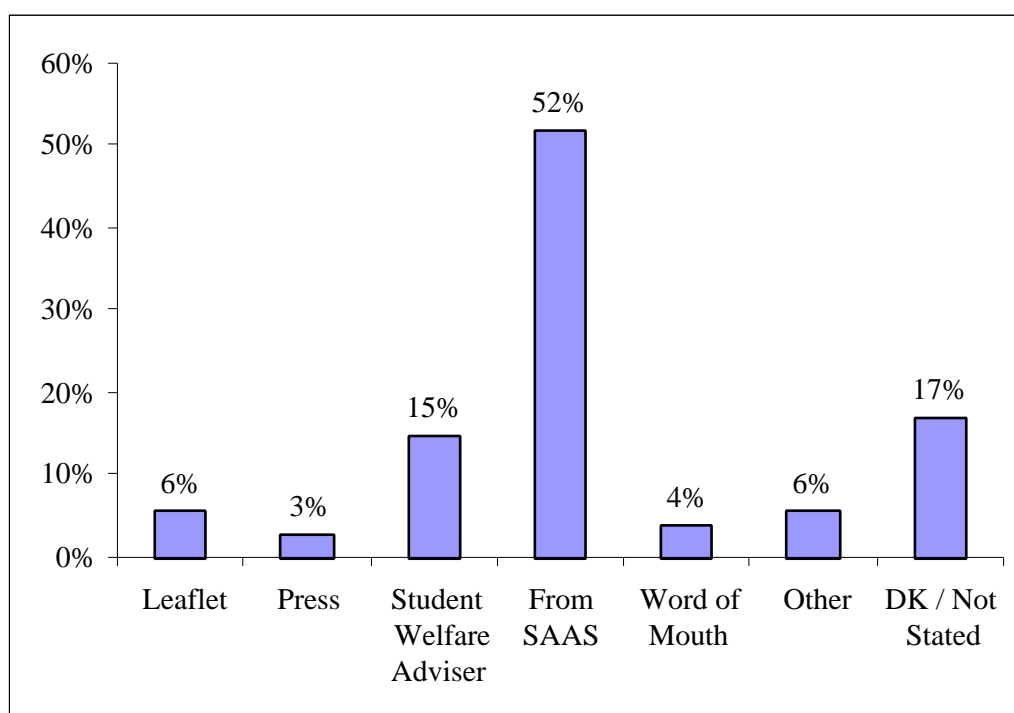
## 7 COMMUNICATION OF SUPPORT

This section describes the range of communication issues arising from survey responses and the focus groups.

### 7.1 AWARENESS OF LONE PARENT CHILDCARE GRANT

7.1.1 Just over half the LPCG claimants found out about the grant through SAAS, and a further 15% had heard about the grant from student welfare advisers. Only 6% had heard of it through the leaflet produced by the Scottish Executive, and 3% from the press articles.

**Figure 15: Source of hearing about the Lone Parent Childcare Grant**



*Base: All those who had heard about the grant.*

**Table 21: Source of Hearing about the Lone Parent Childcare Grant – Claimants and Non-Claimants**

	Claimant %	Non Claimant %	Total %
Leaflet	4	9	6
Press	3	3	3
Welfare Advisor	19	10	15
SAAS	56	48	52
Benefits Advisor	1	1	1
Word of Mouth	6	2	4
DK/Can't Remember	7	28	17

*Base: All those who had heard about the grant.*

- 7.1.2 Grant Claimants are more likely to have heard about the grant through the SAAS letter, through advice from the Student Welfare Advisor, or through Word of Mouth. These all involve personal interaction.
- 7.1.3 In three of the focus groups, respondents commented on the time that they have to spend applying for different sources of funds and providing the same information to different funders. It would appear that personal interaction with an advisor is effective in helping them secure that funding.
- 7.1.4 A proportion (17%) of lone parents cannot remember or do not know how they heard about the grant.
- 7.1.5 These figures are likely to have been affected by the timing of the announcement about the grant in 2001. The inclusion of information about the LPCG in the Application for Student Support forms for 2002-2003 should ensure that there is a higher awareness amongst eligible students this year.
- 7.1.6 Twenty-one % of survey respondents who did not claim the LPCG stated that they did not know about the grant. This was despite a leaflet produced by the Scottish Executive on support for lone parents, in which the grant was highlighted along with information on the SAAS web-site, and SAAS writing to support officers to make them aware. Interestingly, the lone parents towards the younger end of the age spectrum were more likely not to have claimed through not knowing about the grant than their older counter parts (see Table 15 at Section 6.1). The apparent lack of awareness of the grant underlines the need to continually reinforce good financial advice and support networks for lone parents.

## **7.2 SUPPORT IN FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

- 7.2.1 Through the focus groups, and discussions with students in FE colleges, the research team found that lone parents in FE colleges felt better supported and advised than those in universities. One lone parent in the focus groups was told by a lecturer that the university experience was for single people, and that she should consider the Open University.
- 7.2.2 Another, in a letter attached to the questionnaire, points out that whilst her HE institution classes her as one of “fifty parent students”, her situation is somewhat different from other parents in that -

*“I am a single parent with one child aged 7 in school, one child aged 4 in nursery, family/relatives 375 miles way, absent father 200 miles away.” (Letter sent in with questionnaire)*

- 7.2.3 The transition from FE to HE can be difficult for lone parent students because of the changes in their benefit entitlement, and in terms of the childcare facilities available to them. Those who move from FE to HE within the same institution find that although they may still be able to use the college nursery, they now have to pay. The cost of this (particularly if they have children under 2, or more than one child) can easily exceed the funds and grants available.

*“I got much more help when I was at college. I stayed on income support, and they paid all my childcare, that makes a big difference. Also I still got housing benefit.” (Female, Glasgow, HEI)*

*“I found it very helpful when I was at Northern College, they gave us childcare costs, they paid for After School Club. It was brilliant - a weight off my mind. You just go to After School Club to sign up when you are in, but at the Art College you get nothing.” (Female, Dundee, HEI)*

*“When I was at college they had a crèche and my two children stayed there free. But now I am at university they don’t have the facility, although they give you money. I prefer the college arrangement.” (Female, Edinburgh, HEI)*

*“I think I would have gone back to study sooner when I did my access course if they had childcare facilities.” (Male, HE in FE)*

- 7.2.4 It was also apparent that the quality of advice available varied with the individual who was giving it.

*“They don’t seem to know very much about anything apart from their own system. The advice centre is very good within the college for the college funds, but outwith that they know nothing.” (Female, Dundee, FE)*

*“I went to someone at the benefits agency, through a friend that works there. She was wonderful; she worked it all out and allowed me to still get free school meals and clothing allowance. However the person before that just couldn’t tell you anything, they kept saying wait until you have your student loan etc.” (Female, Dundee, HE in FE college)*

### **7.3 SUMMARY**

- 7.3.1 Personal interaction with an advisor appears to be effective in helping lone parent HE students secure funding. Lone parents towards the younger end of the age spectrum were more likely not to have claimed the LPCG through not knowing about it. The fact that some students were unaware of the grant highlights the need for good financial advice and support networks for lone parents. Lone parents in FE colleges felt better supported and advised than those in universities.

## **8 MONITORING FRAMEWORK**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 8.1.1 This study is concerned with two of the three elements of the new package of initiatives announced in July 2001 to assist lone parents into further and higher education through supporting additional childcare costs and childcare supply. They are the £1,000 grant to lone parents in full time higher education and the widening of childcare support through further education colleges.
- 8.1.2 The research team was asked to develop a monitoring framework and to collect and analyse monitoring data in order to provide an assessment of how the two elements of the package are working in their first year of operation. This section of the report looks at the results of the work to develop a monitoring framework.

### **8.2 APPROACH**

- 8.2.1 The research team met with the Operational Policy Officer for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland to discuss the data held on lone parent students that might be relevant to the study. The team also met with the FE Student Support Officer at the Scottish Further Education Funding Council to understand the monitoring arrangements that the Council has put in place.
- 8.2.2 Discussions were also held with Student Services staff in a sample of FE colleges and with the Student Records Section in an HEI.

### **8.3 HIGHER EDUCATION LONE PARENT CHILDCARE GRANT**

- 8.3.1 Data on HE students, and lone parent HE students, is collected by SAAS through the Application for Student Support form SAS3. SAAS currently collects the majority of data that is required for monitoring the HE LPCG. SAAS is not, however, required to analyse this information and there would be data protection issues if the individual student records were passed to another organisation.
- 8.3.2 The last complete data set available at the time of the fieldwork is based on session 2000-2001. Data is collected throughout the academic year and processed after the end of the academic year in July. The data for 2001-2002 was scheduled to be complete in August 2002.

8.3.3 Table 22 refers to data available on the SAAS database and what would need to be collected manually from student application forms:

**Table 22: Data Collected by SAAS**

Data	2000-01	2002-03
Age, Gender, Marital Status	Available	
Current Course	Course Codes indicate HNC, HND or Degree Level, but individual course titles cannot be identified	
Type of institution attended	HEI or FE college	
Where staying during term time	Classified as Own Home or Elsewhere only	
Previous Qualifications	Manual search required	
Employment History	Manual search required	
Number of Dependent Children	Difficult and not cost effective to extract	
Cost of Childcare	Not collected	Available
Student Income	Manual search required but student contribution, which is derived from student income available	

8.3.4 The data from the Application Forms is collected for decisions over eligibility, and is analysed accordingly. It could provide some useful information for monitoring purposes.

8.3.5 The data does track the number of lone parents entering HE, the number of lone parents as a percentage of HE students, and the number claiming the LPCG. It would also be possible to track the progression of lone parent students across academic years.

8.3.6 In future, it may be possible to analyse information on the number and ages of dependent children. This is the subject of internal discussions in SAAS.

8.3.7 Not all HEIs currently collect information as to which students are lone parents within their Student Record System. One of the standard IT packages used in the sector does not provide a field to collect such information. Even if it were thought to be desirable to ask HEIs to start to collect monitoring information, it would not be possible to put a system in place prior to academic year 2003-2004 and there would be additional administrative costs for HEIs.

8.3.8 The research team recommends that negotiations be entered into with SAAS with a view to that organisation carrying out the required analysis of the information it already collects. We understand that it may be possible for SAAS to produce more sophisticated analyses and cross-tabulation of the information gathered from 2002-2003.

8.3.9 The following framework for data collection, populated with the data available from SAAS in respect of 2001-02, is recommended for future years:

**Table 23: HE Monitoring Data Collection Framework**

<b>Data</b>	<b>2001-02</b>				
	<b><u>Male</u></b>		<b><u>Female</u></b>		<b><u>Total</u></b>
No. of lone parent students entering HE	253		3,598		3,851
No. progressing to Y2	N/A		N/A		N/A
No. progressing to Y3	N/A		N/A		N/A
No. progressing to Y4+	N/A		N/A		N/A
% studying in	<b><u>FE colleges</u></b> N/A			<b><u>HEIs</u></b> N/A	
% studying for*	<b><u>HNC</u></b> 20%		<b><u>HND</u></b> 25%		<b><u>Degree +</u></b> 55%
Age %	<b><u>&lt;24</u></b> 16.4	<b><u>25-34</u></b> 47.2	<b><u>35-44</u></b> 32.2	<b><u>45-54</u></b> 4.1	<b><u>55+</u></b> 0.02
Marital Status %	<b><u>Married</u></b> 1.5	<b><u>Widowed</u></b> 1.2	<b><u>Separated</u></b> 22.4	<b><u>Divorced</u></b> 19.5	<b><u>Single</u></b> 55.3
Childcare cost/week %*	<b><u>£0</u></b> 25	<b><u>&lt;£50</u></b> 48	<b><u>£51-100</u></b> 22	<b><u>£101-150</u></b> 4	<b><u>£150+</u></b> 1

*Data marked\* was collected during the course of this study, other figures were sourced from SAAS.*

8.3.10 The data shown as not available for 2001 – 02 has been collected through the Application for Childcare Support 2002 – 03 (SAS 3), and will be available when this is analysed at the end of the academic year.

8.3.11 Information on the percentages of lone parent students studying for the different types of qualification, and childcare costs per week was gathered during the quantitative survey. As this data is based on a self-selecting sample of respondents, it is not directly comparable with the SAAS data.

8.3.12 It is recommended that consideration be given to conducting another large scale, quantitative survey of lone parent students, similar to that carried out within this project, after the LPCG has been available for a period of years, e.g. in academic year 2003-04 or 2004-05.

## **8.4 FURTHER EDUCATION CHILDCARE FUNDS**

8.4.1 The Scottish Executive had previously announced that SFEFC would be responsible for administering a £3m per year Childcare Fund for academic years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. When the additional funds of £3m for each of academic years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, and £1.5m for 2003-2004 were announced in July 2001, SFEFC added these to the existing Childcare Fund. SFEFC has made it a condition of grant that colleges use the Childcare Fund to provide or purchase additional childcare provision.

- 8.4.2 For 2000-2001, SFEFC required colleges to submit information about how they had responded to childcare needs within their 2001 Operational Plan. Colleges were also asked to set out in future Strategic Plans how they intend to develop childcare provision in future years, as a strategic issue. SFEFC produced an internal report as at 25 April 2002 entitled, “Operational Plan 2001 – Childcare Reports.” 28 colleges, from the 45 funded, referred to childcare facilities within their Operational or Strategic Plans. Of these, only nine go into the detail requested by Circular Letter FE/26/2000, which set out how colleges should report to the Council. Ten colleges made no reference to the childcare funds and the remaining plans were not available.
- 8.4.3 For 2001-2002, SFEFC has required colleges to produce a “Statement of Use of Funds” if this information is not included in the college’s Operational Plan. A copy of the required Childcare Fund Statement covering academic year 1 August 2001 to 31 July 2002 is included in Appendix 2. These statements were not due for return until 30 September 2002 and, therefore, data was not available during the period of fieldwork for this project.
- 8.4.4 In the FE sector, the amounts of money allocated to individual colleges are relatively immaterial within the context of overall budgets, and colleges make the point that the administrative effort to separately monitor the funds is disproportionate to the amount received. It is understood, however, that the majority of colleges have now implemented system changes, paid for from college budgets, to enable the information requested by SFEFC to be reported. The research team believes that this will provide the required level of monitoring information.
- 8.4.5 The following framework for FE data collection is recommended:

**Table 24: FE Monitoring Data Collection Framework**

<b>Data</b>	<b>2001-02</b>			
Childcare Fund carried fwd from AY 2000-01	£			
Amount allocated in 2001-02	£			
Amount distributed	£			
Amount under spent	£			
No of FE students: applying for assistance assisted	<b><u>P/T</u></b>	<b><u>F/T</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>Lone Parents</u></b>
Amount disbursed	£	£	£	£

## 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The quantitative and qualitative research amongst lone parent students has identified some “stress points” for the respondents, and highlighted the childcare and financial aspects that affect them most. These are areas where intervention in some form may help to either retain existing lone parent students in the education system or encourage others to enter it. Each of these areas is covered in the text of the report and summarised below.

### 9.1 FURTHER EDUCATION SUPPORT

- 9.1.1 *In order to encourage action in those colleges that have yet to prioritise the lone parent market, the consultants recommend that a case study based around the experience of a college that has had success in this market (e.g. Lauder College) be produced and circulated to other colleges.*

### 9.2 LIFE CYCLE STAGE, NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND CHILDCARE COSTS

- 9.2.1 There are inequalities in childcare costs, either through the age of the child or whether or not the Lone Parent attends an FE college or HE institution.
- 9.2.2 Pre-School childcare is the most expensive form of childcare, requiring a 2:1 ratio of children: carer for the under 2s. The survey respondents stated that the cost of this level of childcare is in the region of £100 per week. The concentration of need in this respect is amongst lone parents under the age of 25, three quarters (78%) of whom have children under 4, and 35% have children under 2.
- 9.2.3 44% of the sample make use of informal care for their children.
- 9.2.4 The issues of cost and availability of childcare are, in some cases, resulting in lone parents' own mothers giving up their jobs to provide childcare – a negative impact on the job market.
- 9.2.5 Half (52%) the lone parent students in the 25 – 35 age group in the sample have children in the 5 – 10 age group. These children qualify for After School Care (ASC), and the LPCG pays for ASC for one child per annum. 39% of lone student parents of this age group have more than one child.
- 9.2.6 *The consultants recommend that consideration be given to recognising the issues concerning the age of the child and cost by making additional support available for younger children. Appropriate age bands might be 0 – 2, 3 – 4 and 5 and over.*
- 9.2.7 *The consultants recommend that consideration is given to making additional support available for second and subsequent children of lone parent HE students.*

### **9.3 FURTHER EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT COMPARED**

- 9.3.1 There are significant differences in the treatment of childcare provision and costs between FE ('free' places provided by the FE Childcare Fund) and HE (grant provided directly to the lone parent student). This means that if a lone parent FE student with a child or children under 5 wishes to progress to an HE course, the potential reduction in childcare support can be a major disincentive, compounded by the loss of benefits suffered on enrolling for full time HE study.
- 9.3.2 The current support systems are also leading FE colleges to give preference to FE students for college nursery places. The recommendation in 9.2.7 that consideration is given to making additional support available for second and subsequent children of lone parent HE students could alleviate these issues.

### **9.4 CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY**

- 9.4.1 After School Care is provided mainly for primary school children. There is little provision over this age, and none beyond age 14. Lone parent students with children at secondary school are dependent on informal childcare arrangements, which do not qualify for the LPCG. The lack of availability of childcare for this age group means that some children have to fend for themselves after school. The issue is of particular concern in respect of children aged 11 – 13 (beyond this age children tend not to attend, regardless of the provision available.)
- 9.4.2 *The consultants recommend that the Childcare Strategic Partnerships and secondary schools (in particular the new Community Schools) be encouraged to pay particular heed to the needs of lone parent students in respect of wrap around pre and after school childcare for children aged 11 – 13.*
- 9.4.3 The lack of formal childcare arrangements in rural areas was flagged up by lone parent students in the focus groups and by staff at some of the colleges that the research team visited. Childcare in rural areas needs to be particularly flexible and to allow for the early drop off and late collection of children as parents have additional travel time to and from college. Lone parents stated that this gap in provision deters them from entering either the job market or the education system. This constitutes a negative impact on the job market.
- 9.4.4 *The consultants recommend that the Childcare Strategic Partnerships and FE colleges in rural areas be encouraged to pay particular heed to the needs of lone parent students in rural areas in respect of childcare for the reasons stated at 9.4.3 above.*
- 9.4.5 *The consultants recommend that consideration be given to making support available for informal care where there is a demonstrable market failure in formal childcare provision.*

## **9.5 TRAVEL COSTS**

- 9.5.1 Lone parent students incur additional costs compared to other students, not just in terms of paying for childcare, but also in travelling to and from the child's carer or school. Where the child does not have a place in a college-based nursery, most lone parents have a double bus journey to drop their children off with the carer and then make their way to college/university, and vice versa at the end of the day. These double journeys do not qualify under the transport travel grant. They do qualify under the discretionary MSBF grant for HE students, but would effectively reduce the monies available for hardship for that student.
- 9.5.2 *The consultants recommend that consideration be given to funding travel to and from a childcare facility remote from the college/university for lone parent students not eligible for MSBF.*

## **9.6 STUDENT LOANS AND BENEFIT COMPARED**

- 9.6.1 Lone parent students find the switch from benefits to loans, and the resulting debt, particularly stressful. Their parenting responsibilities mean that they have less flexibility to work to reduce dependence on the loan than non-lone parent students. The result is an extremely fragile financial position, and one of the biggest areas of concern is the payment of rent - housing being central to the security of their family.
- 9.6.2 Lone parents argue that they differ from other students in that their parenting responsibilities reduce their ability to work to supplement their income, their costs are higher, and their family unit keenly feels the loss of benefits. Once they cease to receive a prescribed benefit, they also cease to be eligible for free prescriptions and other benefits.
- 9.6.3 *The consultants recommend that fundamental differences between lone parent students and non-lone parent students be recognised, and that the possibility of achieving greater flexibility over benefit receipt by lone parent students is investigated by the UK government. In doing so, the implications of the new Child Tax Credit for lone parent students will need to be taken into account.*

## **9.7 LONE PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK**

- 9.7.1 The research team observed a lot of networking, the passing of advice on financial entitlement and general personal support amongst participants in the focus groups. Some were not used to this contact and clearly enjoyed networking with fellow lone parent students.
- 9.7.2 There could be considerable benefit from contact of this kind on a regular basis. It would provide opportunities for self help, e.g. reciprocal childminding during emergencies or a fellow student to take notes if a lone parent has to miss a lecture because a child is ill. Sessions on lone parent finance could also be provided by the specialist lone parent organisations. This would help to address the issue of the 21% of non claimants who did not know about the LPCG, and would be particularly helpful in those FE colleges and HEIs that do not offer such sessions already.

9.7.3 *The consultants recommend that Student Services departments in FE colleges and HEIs be encouraged to establish lone parent support networks with support from One Parent Families Scotland and One Plus.*

9.7.4 *This should be linked to the provision of information, advice and support for lone parent students on campus to ensure that information on the support available reaches students and potential students. Information should also be available through Family Support Centres and community groups working with lone parents.*

## 9.8 MONITORING FRAMEWORK

9.8.1 *In respect of HE support, the consultants recommend that negotiation be entered into with SAAS with a view to that organisation carrying out the required analysis of the information it already collects.*

9.8.2 *The consultants recommend the following framework for monitoring HE support:*

### HE Monitoring Data Collection Framework

Data	2001-02				
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>
No. of lone parent students entering HE					
No. progressing to Y2					
No. progressing to Y3					
No. progressing to Y4+					
% studying in	<u>FE colleges</u>			<u>HEIs</u>	
% studying for	<u>HNC</u>		<u>HND</u>	<u>Degree +</u>	
Age %	<u>&lt;24</u>	<u>25-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45-54</u>	<u>55+</u>
Marital Status %	<u>Married</u>	<u>Widowed</u>	<u>Separated</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Single</u>
Childcare cost/week %	<u>£0</u>	<u>&lt;£50</u>	<u>£51-100</u>	<u>£101-150</u>	<u>£150+</u>

9.8.3 *The consultants recommend the following framework for monitoring FE support:*

**FE Monitoring Data Collection Framework**

<b>Data</b>	<b>2001-02</b>			
Childcare Fund carried fwd from AY 2000-01	£			
Amount allocated in 2001-02	£			
Amount distributed	£			
Amount under spent	£			
No of FE students: applying for assistance assisted	<b><u>P/T</u></b>	<b><u>F/T</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>Lone Parents</u></b>
Amount disbursed	£	£	£	£

9.8.4 *The consultants recommend that consideration be given to conducting another large scale, quantitative survey of lone parent students, similar to that carried out within this project, after the LPCG has been available for a period of years, e.g. in academic year 2003-04 or 2004-05.*

9.8.5 *The following recommendations are made for future similar research exercises on childcare support for lone parents:*

- *that the research takes place outside the examinations period in order to maximise responses;*
- *that future questionnaires for HE students differentiate between HE students studying in an HE institution, and HE students studying in an FE institution.*

## APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

### Lone Parent Students' Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire by ticking the appropriate box and return it to us in the enclosed reply paid envelope **by 7<sup>th</sup> June 2002**. The research is being conducted on an anonymous basis, and we do not ask you to provide your name or any other information that will identify you. Thank you for your assistance.

1. **Are you:** Male 3% Female 96% Not Stated <1%
2. **What age category are you in?**

Under 25	10%	36 - 44	37%	55 - 65	<1%
25- 35	46%	45 -54	7%		
3. **Are you:**

Married	<1%	Single - living alone	42%
Widowed	2%	Single - living with partner	1%
Separated	25%	Not Stated	1%
Divorced	28%		
4. **How many dependant children do you have in the following categories?**

	Q 4.1 aged 0-2	Q 4.2 aged 3-4	Q4.3 aged 5-10	Q4.4 aged 11-15	Q4.5 aged 16-18
None	91%	81%	46%	61%	86%
One	9%	18%	41%	30%	12%
Two	<1%	<1%	12%	7%	2%
Three or more	<1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Not Stated	0%	<1%	0%	<1%	<1%
5. **What is your main childcare arrangement?**

Registered Childminder	17%	Friend or relative	44%
Pre school education	13%	Other informal arrangement	12%
Out of school care (pre school)	7%	Other	<1%
Out of school care (after school)	23%		
6. **What is the total cost of your childcare per week?**

	£0	Up to £50	£51-100	£101-150	+£150
6.1 Children under School Age	16%	33%	39%	10%	2%
6.2 Children of School Age	29%	55%	14%	1%	<1%
7. **Where do you live during term time?**

Living with parents	4%	Hostel / Bed & Breakfast	0%
Renting from Local authority/Housing association	47%	Living with partner	1%
Renting from private landlord.	15%	Other	1%
Own home	32%		
8. **Which of the following qualifications are you studying for at the moment?**

HNC	20%	Degree	49%	Other	1%
HND	25%	Postgraduate Qualification	6%		
9. **What is the highest qualification that you have gained so far?**

HNC	33%	National Certificate	8%
HND	13%	Access Course	3%
Degree/BA/BSc	11%	Other	24%
Highers/CSYS	8%		
10. **Do you receive the Lone Parents Grant of £1075 to give you extra support for your studies?**

Yes	100%	No	0%
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11. **Do you also receive the additional childcare grant of £1000 for lone parents that was introduce in 2001?**

Yes	49%	No	50%	Not Stated	1%
-----	-----	----	-----	------------	----

**12. If No, why do you not claim for this additional childcare grant?**

Do not use a registered/formal childcare arrangement	75%
Did not know about the grant	21%
Applied for grant and was refused	3%
Other (please specify)	5%

**13.1 If you do claim the additional childcare grant, how helpful has this additional grant been?**

Very Helpful	76%	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	3%	Not at all helpful	1%
Helpful	20%	Unhelpful	<1%		

**13.2 Why do you say that?**

Couldn't afford childcare without it	16%	Less worry	6%
Helps with childcare	13%	Allows more time for study	5%
Extra bit helps	10%	Other	39%
Eases financial Strain	8%		

**14. How did you hear about the additional childcare grant?**

Leaflet	6%	From Benefits Advisor	1%
Read about it in press	3%	Don't Know/Can't remember	17%
From Student Welfare Adviser	15%	Other	9%
From Student Awards Agency	52%		

**15. Which other Grants or Benefits do you currently claim? (tick as many as applicable)**

School Meals Grant	56%	College/Uni Hardship Fund	32%
Disabled Students Allowance	2%	College/Uni Hardship Loan	11%
Two Homes Grant	<1%	Job Seekers Allowance	<1%
Travel Expenses	55%	Housing Benefit	19%
Training for Work	0%	Working Families Tax credit	8%
Training for Work Childcare Grant	0%	Educational Trust Grant	1%
Mature Students' Bursary.	33%	Other	7%
Young Persons Bursary	1%		

**16. Before starting this particular course of studies, were you?**

Employed full-time	15%	In full time education	18%
Employed part-time	24%	Claiming Income Support	23%
Unemployed	12%	FT Parent	2%
In part time education	3%	Other	3%

**17. Why did you decide to enter higher education at this particular time?***(tick as many as applicable)*

To improve chances of getting a job	49%
To improve the qualifications I already had	38%
To complete studies that had been interrupted	7%
To progress further in my career	26%
To support my children by getting a good job after my training	78%
To get a better paid job	49%
Other	15%

**18. If you have been in regular employment in the past, what job did you normally do?**

Admin / Secretarial	16%	Social Care/Support Worker	7%
Retail/Shop Asst.	14%	Factory Work	4%
Hospitality/Catering/Waiting	13%	Nursing	5%

**19. What job or type of job do you plan to do once you have finished your studies?**

Teaching	17%	Office/Admin	6%
Business	16%	IT/Computing	5%
Social Work	10%	Academia	5%
Medical	8%		

Thank you for your assistance

## APPENDIX 2: CHILDCARE FUND STATEMENT FOR FE COLLEGES

### Annex D to Circular Letter FE/44/2001

CHILDCARE FUND STATEMENT COVERING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1 AUGUST 2001 – 31 JULY 2002

NAME OF COLLEGE:.....

(a) Amount carried forward from Academic Year 2000 - 01 .....

(b) Amount received in Academic Year 2001 - 02 .....

(c) Less amount distributed in Academic Year 2001 - 02 .....

(d) Total amount underspent in Academic Year 2001 – 02 .....

	Part Time	Full Time	Total	*Lone Parents
1. Total number of FE students applying for assistance:	.....	.....	.....	.....
2. Total number of FE students assisted:	.....	.....	.....	.....
4. Amount of Funds disbursed:	£.....	£.....	£.....	£.....

Signed .....

Name .....

[Accounting Officer]

Approved on behalf of the [Board of Management or Equivalent]

on.....[date]

Note: These forms should be returned to Fiona Cunningham at SFEFC no later than 30 September 2002. Failure to do so may result in the delay of future distribution of funds.

\*Information on assistance given to lone parents is required in order to inform future policy development by the Council and the Scottish Executive.

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