

PARENTS' ACCESS TO AND DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE IN SCOTLAND

FINAL REPORT

Prepared for:
Scottish Executive

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Contents

Contents	i
A. Introduction	1
Policy background to the research.....	1
Scope of the current study.....	5
Table A-1: Parents' Demand for Childcare: Research tasks.....	7
Research objectives and policy outcomes.....	7
Structure of the report	8
B. Study methodology.....	9
Summary.....	9
Survey population	9
Sampling strategy	10
Part 1: Part 1 survey.....	11
Part 2: Part 2 survey.....	13
Qualitative research: depth interviews.....	14
C. Patterns of childcare usage.....	17
Household and child-level data.....	17
Main childcare providers in the previous year and week.....	18
Figure C-1: Main provider of childcare over previous year and week.....	19
Table C-1: Main providers of childcare over previous year – 0-4 year olds.....	20
Table C-2: Main providers of childcare over previous year – 5-11 year olds.....	22
Table C-3: Main providers of childcare over previous year – 12-14 year olds.....	23
Table C-4: Whether informal provider lives in same household as respondent, by age of child	25
Times at which parents used childcare in the previous year.....	26
Table C-5: Periods over previous year when main provider looked after Child 1, by age of child.....	27
Table C-6: Periods over previous year when main provider looked after Child 1, by respondent working status	28

Table C-7: Number of weeks in previous year when main provider looked after Child 1, by age of child.....	29
Table C-8: Number of weeks during each time period when main provider looked after Child 1 over previous year (row percentages).....	29
Table C-9: Number of days per week during each time period when main provider looked after Child 1 over previous year	30
Childcare use in the previous week.....	30
Table C-10: Childcare use over previous week by household type and employment status.....	31
Table C-11: Childcare use over previous week by marital status of parent interviewed... 	32
Table C-12: Childcare use over previous week by household work patterns.....	33
Table C-13: Childcare use over previous week by availability of family-friendly working arrangements.....	33
Figure C-2: Childcare use over previous week by social class	34
Figure C-3: Childcare use over previous week by gross household income	35
Types of childcare provider used in the previous week.....	35
Table C-14: Types of childcare providers used over previous week.....	36
Table C-15: Types of childcare providers used over previous week – by age of child	37
Times at which parents used childcare in the previous week.....	38
Figure C-4: Days of week when childcare used in previous week.....	38
Table C-16: Days of week when childcare used in previous week by age of child.....	39
Times of day at which childcare is used.....	39
Table C-17: Time at which childcare started by age of child	40
Again, there were variations by age of child, with parents of 5-14 year olds more likely to stop using childcare after 5pm, while parents of 3-4 year olds more likely to stop using childcare between 3pm and 4pm. More parents with children aged 0-2 years than other age groups said that they stopped using childcare between 11am and 12pm, suggesting that their children may have attended a morning session at a playgroup or nursery.	40
Table C-18: Time at which childcare ended by age of child.....	40
Duration of childcare.....	41

Table C-19 : Childcare sessions used in last week.....	42
Location of childcare in past week.....	42
Figure C-5: Location of childcare used in previous week.....	43
Childcare arrangements in the previous week for parents with more than one child.....	43
Table C-20: Childcare arrangements for parents with more than one child by employment status	44
Whether childcare arrangements over the previous week were typical.....	44
Table C-21: Whether childcare use over previous week was same as normal or different, by household working status.....	44
Out-of-school activities	45
Figure C-6: Out-of-school activities undertaken in the previous week by age of child.....	46
D. Evaluation of childcare providers.....	48
Reasons for using main childcare providers.....	48
Figure D-1: All reasons for choosing main childcare provider.....	49
Figure D-2: Single most important reason for choosing main childcare provider.....	50
Table D-1: Reasons behind choice of main and other childcare providers.....	50
Informal providers	51
Formal providers	53
Satisfaction with main childcare provider.....	55
Figure D-3: Satisfaction with main childcare provider	56
Rating of learning opportunities at main childcare provider.....	56
Table D-2: types of learning opportunities provided by main provider.....	57
Figure D-4: Whether or not is within the role of a childcare provider to provide opportunities for learning – by age of child.....	58
Figure D-5: Whether or not is within the role of a childcare provider to provide opportunities for learning – by provider type	60
E. Unmet demand for childcare	63
Breakdown of usual childcare arrangements in the last year	63
Table E-1: Frequency of breakdown in childcare arrangements in the last year (%).....	64
Figure E-1: How easy or difficult was it for you to make alternative childcare arrangements?.....	65

Unmet demand for childcare in the last year	66
Table E-2: Frequency of unmet demand for childcare in the last year (%)	66
Table E-3– Reasons for unmet demand (%).....	67
Unmet demand for childcare in the last week	72
Figure E-2: Reasons for unmet demand in the last week.....	73
F. Childcare use and labour market participation.....	75
Parents' working status	75
Table F-1 : Respondents' current working status, by household and respondent type	76
Figure F-1: Current working status of respondents' partner	77
Figure F-2: Respondents' journey time from home to work	78
Factors affecting parents' decisions over participation in the labour market.....	79
Table F-2: Main factors affecting parents' decisions to work/train/study/stay at home	79
Figure F-3: Most important factor affecting parents' decisions to work/train/study/stay at home	81
Working parents' views on employment.....	81
Table F-3: Reasons behind parents' decisions to work	82
Table F-4: Extent of agreement/disagreement with employment statements.....	83
Childcare arrangements that help parents to work.....	84
Table F-5: Aspects of childcare that help parents to work.....	85
Whether working parents feel they had a real choice over whether or not to work	85
Table F-6: Reasons why parents felt they had a choice over whether to work or not.....	86
Table F-7: Did parents feel they had real choice over whether or not to work, by household working status	88
Parents' planned labour market activities over the next year	90
Table F-8: Working parents' plans for the next year - by age of child.....	91
Table F-9: Likelihood of non-working parents undertaking learning, training or looking for a paid job over next year	92
Figure F-10: Expected salary of non-working parents looking for a paid job over next year	93
Figure F-4: Likelihood of securing a job with various qualities.....	94

G.	Attitudes to local childcare provision	96
	Sources of information about childcare.....	96
	Table G-1: Sources of information used by household structure.....	97
	Whether the right amount of information is available.....	99
	Figure G-1: Whether there is adequate information on different aspects of childcare.....	99
	Further information required by parents	100
	'Childcare Link' service awareness and usage.....	100
	Figure G-2: Where parents heard about <i>Childcare Link</i>.....	101
	Table G-2: Potential future usage of <i>Childcare Link</i> by respondent's highest academic or vocational qualification	102
	Perceptions of quantity of childcare and nursery education places in the local area.....	103
	Table G-3: Assessment of number of childcare and nursery education places	103
	Perceptions of quality of childcare and nursery education places.....	103
	Table G-4: Assessment of quality of childcare and nursery education places.....	104
H.	Costs and affordability of childcare.....	106
	Costs of childcare.....	106
	Figure H-1: What money for childcare provision covers.....	107
	Table H-1: What money for childcare provision covers – by age of child.....	108
	Weekly childcare costs.....	111
	Figure H-2: Average weekly amount paid for childcare.....	111
	Impact of an increase in the cost of childcare.....	111
	Impact of a decrease in the cost of childcare.....	112
	Impact of securing 'better' childcare.....	113
	Impact of receiving more hours of childcare a week.....	113
	Figure H-3: Number of additional hours of childcare required a week.....	114
	Figure H-4: Likelihood of parents paying £3 an hour for additional hours of childcare required.....	114
	Table H-2: Impact of receiving additional hours of childcare required.....	115
	Parents' perceptions of costs of various types of childcare provider.....	115
	Costs of provision for pre-school children.....	116
	Table H-3: Estimated weekly childcare costs (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) for pre-school children aged 2 years.....	117

Table H-4: Estimated weekly childcare costs (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) for pre-school children aged 4 years.....	118
Costs of provision for school-age children.....	118
Table H-5: Estimated weekly childcare costs (three hours after school, Monday to Friday) for primary school children aged 8 years	119
Table H-6: Estimated weekly childcare costs (three hours after school, Monday to Friday) for secondary school children aged 12 years	120
Costs of babysitters for pre-school children.....	120
Table H-7: Estimated costs of babysitters at non-standard times.....	121
Costs of babysitters for school-age children.....	123
Table H-8: Estimated costs of babysitters at non-standard times.....	124
I. Parental ideals: formal and informal childcare	127
Drivers of demand for childcare.....	128
Figure I-1: Parental decisions when choosing preferred type of childminder.....	128
Ideal childcare provision	131
Ideal and realistic preferred childcare arrangements by provider type	131
Figure I-2: Ideal choice for childcare provision.....	134
Table I-1: Reasons for first choice of childcare provider	136
Table I-2: Whether ideal provider lives in same household, by age of child	136
Figure I-3: Reasons for choosing a registered childcare provider	137
'Preferred but idealistic' childcare arrangements.....	137
Table I-3: Ideal versus realistic preferred choice for childcare provision by provider type	138
Table I-4: Ideal childcare provision by age of child.....	139
Table I-5: Ideal childcare provision by household structure and employment	141
Ideal formal childcare provider.....	143
Figure I-4: First choice of formal childcare provider	143
Figure I-5: First choice absolute ideal and ideal formal childcare provider.....	145
Whether children currently have their ideal childcare provision.....	145
Table I-6: Whether children were receiving their parents' ideal childcare provision by household structure and employment.....	146

J. Parental priorities: childcare, culture and the labour market.....	148
Attitudes towards childcare and the labour market.....	149
Table J-1 Extent of agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statements.....	149
Table J-2: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 1 by age of child.....	150
Table J-3: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 2 by age of child.....	150
Table J-4: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 3 by age of child.....	151
Table J-5: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 4 by age of child.....	152
Table J-6: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 5 by gross household income	153
Whether there have been shifts in attitudes towards employment and childcare since becoming a parent...	154
Figure J-1: Whether or not attitudes towards employment and childcare have changed since becoming a parent	154
Table J-7: Ways in which respondents' views towards working and studying have changed since becoming a parent	155
Ideal labour market/childcare balance for working parents.....	156
Table J-8: Ideal labour market/childcare balance for working parents.....	156
Figure J-2: Ideal working hours to fit in with childcare for two-parent families.....	158
What working parents would like to change most about their working arrangements.....	160
Figure J-3: Ideal working hours to fit in with childcare	161
Table J-9: What would help parents go back to work?.....	162
What would most help non-working parents to go to work?.....	163
Figure J-4: Three things that would most help parents go back to work.....	164
Traditionalism	164
Table J-10: Extent of agreement/disagreement with 'traditionalism' statements	165
Assessing parental preferences – the Priority Evaluator Model.....	166
Table J-11: Summary of options for children in different age groups.....	167

Preschool Children.....	168
Table J-12: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for preschool children (as a % max score available for each category)	168
4 – 7 year olds	170
Table J-13: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for 4-7 year old children (as a % max score available for each category)	170
8 – 11 year olds	171
Table J-14: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for 8 – 11 year old children (as a % max score available for each category)	171
12 – 14 year olds.....	172
Table J-15: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for 12 – 14 year old children (as a % max score available for each category)	172
Socio-economic characteristics	173
Table J-16: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision by household structure (as a % max score available for each category)	174
Table J-17: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision by household income category (as a % max score available for each category)	175
Conclusions – preferences influence on demand.....	176
K. Implications for childcare policy	180
Summary and conclusions	185

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The Executive has not published this full report in hard copy. For further information please contact Fiona McWhannell at recs.admin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

A. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study of demand for and access to childcare among parents of children aged 0-14 years across Scotland. The study was carried out by NFO Social Research (as was)¹ and DTZ Pidea on behalf of the Scottish Executive, and was undertaken between September 2003 and March 2004.

Policy background to the research

A recent debate on Radio 4² stressed the need not only for provision of different types of childcare, but the need to give parents - particularly mothers - genuine choices between working and staying at home. While policy debate has historically focused on the need to provide accessible and affordable childcare to enable mothers to go work, there has now been a shift in focus, with the recognition that some mothers would choose to stay at home to bring up their children if they could afford to do so.

In the radio debate, callers to the show emphasised the following issues in particular:

- the need for childcare places to be provided on a more flexible basis to fulfil the requirements of mothers working part-time or attending education or training courses
- the need to review tax credits for parents, making staying at home to bring up their children a realistic financial option
- recognition of the extent to which parents rely on informal childcare providers, particularly grandparents, and why this is the case. In ideal circumstances, do parents feel that they are 'burdening' grandparents and would they use other providers if there were other realistic choices available? Should informal providers receive some kind of remuneration?

Although it is recognised that this debate was simply the focus of a radio programme discussing childcare in England and Wales, it does raise some interesting issues. Childcare has long been on the political agenda in Scotland. The Scottish Executive recognised the need for accessible and affordable childcare as part of its strategy on

¹ NFO WorldGroup was bought in 2003 by Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) and from February 2004 the combined social research team now works under the name TNS Social Research

² You and Yours – Radio 4. 12.30pm, Tuesday 24 February, 2004

supporting families. In 1998, the Green Paper, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland*³, identified three key problems

- variation in the quality of provision
- high costs
- difficulty in finding childcare places.

It was noted that in some areas there are not enough childcare places and that it can be difficult for parents to get information about the types of childcare available in their area.

The Green Paper was followed up with the Childcare Strategy, which has at its core the aim of providing good quality, affordable and accessible childcare. A key component of the Strategy is the provision of Out of School Care (OSC). Childcare is believed to have both social and economic benefits for parents and children: parents are able to participate in work and/or training, while children are offered play, social and educational opportunities. Employers also benefit through having access to a wider workforce and increased levels of staff retention.

OSC is currently being developed through the *School's Out* framework⁴, the aim of which is *"to promote and achieve better services for children and their families, including those who are vulnerable or deprived"*, and also including working families, regardless of economic or social circumstances. OSC clubs have been opened across Scotland and the aim is to establish further clubs with an emphasis on provision for children of different age groups and needs. This strategy should be delivered through a multi-agency approach, to include local authorities, health and education services and private and voluntary sector childcare organisations.

However, there have been some concerns about the sustainability of OSC, which prompted the Scottish Executive to commission research examining existing models of childcare provision.⁵ This research indicated that *"the greatest overall positive impact seems to be where OSC is directly provided by a local authority"*. Among the benefits cited are access to council resources and staff, economies of scale, and use of existing local authority systems, procedures and policies. This model was thought to be more sustainable than a parent-led model, due to the fact that staff in the latter case were likely to be unpaid volunteers with

³ 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland' (May 1998) Scottish Office

⁴ School's Out Framework for the Development of Out-of-School Care (2003) The Scottish Executive

⁵ 'Provision of Out of School Care (OSC) Management Models and Business Planning', (Feb 2003) Blake Stevenson Ltd

little spare time. It was suggested that parents could be involved in more significant ways in the OSC service, for example, as advisers.

Against this background, *School's Out* makes recommendations to local authorities and local enterprise companies regarding the development and sustaining of OSC services, and gives examples of good practice. In order to make progress, Childcare Strategy funding is being increased from £16.75 million in 2002-2003 to £40.65 million in 2005-2006, and this includes monies for OSC.

Economic issues

In answering the key objectives, the study also aimed to provide economic analysis of parents' demand for and access to childcare. While the 2000 survey contains a wealth of information on patterns of childcare and on assessments of unmet childcare, there was scope for more analysis of the economics of the *choices* made by different types of household and thus the likely impact of policy initiatives.

The Childcare Strategy identifies the aim of providing good quality, affordable childcare for children throughout Scotland. However, the focus of the national strategy is on the formal childcare sector, both commercial and local authority-provided, with some voluntary sector activity to support parents looking after their own children. At the same time, the 2000 survey highlighted the importance of informal child care and, indeed, the apparent preference of many parents for "informal" (i.e. close family) childcare.

The use of informal child-caring arrangements also emerged as being very important in the 2001 study of childcare demand in Motherwell North Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP), conducted by NFO Social Research for the SIP and North Lanarkshire Council. Almost 80% of those who said they ever used childcare used grandparents, while less than 1 in 10 used formal childcare such as nurseries, playgroups or registered childminders.

In the Scottish Household Survey⁶ a number of questions were asked about childcare including use of childcare arrangements and pre-school education, and reasons behind choice of provider. The results indicated that 26% of households with children had had the children cared for by someone outside the household for more than 5 hours in the previous week. The rate was higher for single parents, with 35% using childcare.

⁶ NFO System Three Social Research and MORI Scotland, *Scotland's People: Results from the 2001 Scottish Household Survey, Volume 5 Annual Report*, Scottish Executive, 2002.

Of more relevance in an economic context, the Scottish Household Survey results indicated that the main reason for households using childcare in the previous week was to enable the highest income earner or that person's partner to go out to work (in 77% of cases). However, this could be a consequence of the limited options given to respondents when answering this question. Only 3% of respondents used childcare to enable someone to participate in training or education. This suggests that for 1 in 5 households using childcare (as defined here) nationally, there are other reasons for using childcare than to go to work or undertake training. There are, obviously, important differences between parents obtaining a babysitter so that they can visit the cinema and the all day childcare required by a working parent. The reasons behind these different requirements may be strongly related to variables of interest such as the age of child, and the social class and household income of the respondent.

The 2000 survey results highlight the importance of income in childcare choices without fully exploring the nature of those choices or the likely response to changes in the quality or cost of provision. For example, the finding that childcare use was more common among higher income groups may appear to be unsurprising if one considers that the opportunity cost (in terms of career progression as well as current income) of "staying at home" is higher for high income earners, as is the ability to afford childcare. However, it may also be the case that the scope to absorb the loss of income is higher within this group, that their skills are more sought after and that there is no significant opportunity cost to taking a career break.

Where parents in higher income households choose not to work we might hypothesise that this reflects preferences rather than the cost of childcare – there was some indication in the 2000 survey that many working parents would prefer to work fewer hours if their employment contracts could be varied. This leads to the tentative suggestion that if parents in higher income households want to work at all, they are under pressure from their employers to work full-time and so are made to choose between working full-time or not working at all. The situation of low earners and single parents is likely to be different. For low income households the need to increase earnings may be pressing while the cost of childcare is high relative to income. Reducing childcare costs may well have a strong impact on labour supply in this group.

Scope of the current study

Previous research on parents' demand for childcare

Set against the growing political agenda, the Scottish Executive recognised that there was a need to review existing arrangements for childcare across the country, with a view to assessing the levels of demand for childcare from parents and identifying where there may be unmet needs. In 1999, they commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR) to conduct the Parents' Demand for Childcare Survey.⁷ This Scottish study was preceded and followed by similar studies in England and Wales.

The NCSR research was conducted in two parts; a large scale survey of 1,336 parents, providing baseline data on the use of and demand for childcare, and a sub-sample of 516 parents, exploring in more depth the affordability of childcare and links with the labour market. The use of childcare services was analysed in relation to key socio-economic factors, including household structure and employment, social class, and income.

Research design - quantitative research

In 2003, the Scottish Executive commissioned NFO Social Research and DTZ Pleda to undertake a second study of a similar nature. One of the key aims was to compare and contrast results with the previous survey, therefore the methodology was replicated as far as possible. Part 1 of the study comprised a large-scale survey of 1,003 parents and Part 2 involved interviews with a sub-sample of 500 parents.

The 2000 survey found that 88% of parents had made some use of childcare in the week prior to the survey, and that childcare use was highest among:

- lone parents with full time jobs
- couples who both worked full time
- families in higher income groups
- families in non-manual occupations
- households with children of pre-school age.

Differences in income and household structure therefore have notable effects on the types and levels of childcare required, and these factors also have implications for the parents'

⁷ www.scotland.gov.uk/hmis/Pdf/ers/parents_demand.pdf

access to childcare. It became clear that further research needed to be undertaken in order to investigate these differences more closely.

Research design - qualitative research

As well as comparing and contrasting results with the previous survey, this study assessed in greater depth differences in the use and demand for childcare between ten different target groups, with the aim of comparing their needs with those of the general population. Qualitative depth interviews were carried out with 40 parents covering the following target groups:

- ethnic minority parents
- single parents
- student parents
- parents and families living in deprived areas
- parents and families living on low incomes
- parents and families living in rural areas
- young parents
- parents of older children
- parents of disabled children or children with special needs
- parents of children with special educational needs (SEN).

Clearly, there is overlap between some of these groups – for example, between parents and families living in deprived areas and those living on low incomes – and this was taken into consideration when undertaking the analysis. Rather than reporting separately on the depth interviews, they have been used to both qualify and expand on the issues raised in Part 1 and Part 2 of the study.

The division of labour for the research was as shown in Table A-1 below. The methodology is described in full in Chapter B.

Table A-1: Parents' Demand for Childcare: Research tasks

Research task	Who was responsible
Part 1:	
Main stage survey of 1,003 parents using CAPI and all analysis	NFO Social Research
Part 2:	
Follow-up survey of 502 parents using CAPI and analysis	NFO Social Research
Analysis of Parental Priorities Model	DTZ Piedad Consulting
Qualitative	
40 depth interviews with parents and analysis	NFO Social Research
Economic and policy evaluation	
Implications for policy from economic perspective	DTZ Piedad Consulting
Implications for policy from research findings	NFO Social Research

Research objectives and policy outcomes

The broad rationale for the research has been outlined above, but a number of detailed research objectives were also set out at the start of the study. The research aimed to answer the following questions:

- What are the current levels of use of childcare by parents of children aged 0-14 years in terms of the types and quantities of provision that are used and why?
- What gaps can be identified in the current provision of childcare in terms of parents' unmet requirements?
- What types and levels of childcare would parents ideally prefer to utilise?
- What influences parents' decisions about childcare, and what are their opinions regarding their current childcare arrangements?
- How much do parents know about local childcare services?
- To what extent do current childcare arrangements enable parents to take up paid work, education and training?
- Does the type of childcare provision available match parents' needs?
- Do the 'hard to reach groups' experience any important differences in their access and demand for childcare?

The Scottish Executive wishes to feed the findings of this study into policy on childcare and anticipated that the study would give pointers towards the following:

- providing a basis for an assessment of the current use of childcare services
- addressing the research gaps existing around areas of unmet need for childcare, particularly for the ten target groups identified in the brief
- measuring the effectiveness of the Childcare Strategy in responding to parental demand
- linking in with the work being currently developed within the *School's Out* framework for the development of Out of School Care.
- assisting in future planning and development of services.

Structure of the report

In this chapter, we have outlined the rationale and research objectives for the study, setting these into the context of recent policy developments in childcare and previous relevant research. In Chapter B, the research methodology is outlined in detail, along with details of sample selection and characteristics of the respondents. In Chapter C, the patterns of childcare use are explored in detail, in terms of the providers that parents use at different times. Chapter D provides a discussion of how parents rated the different types of childcare provider and how satisfied they were with the characteristics of childcare provided. Chapter E outlines the extent to which parents have experienced any unmet demand for childcare in the previous week and in the previous year and what problems, if any, this has caused. Chapter F investigates childcare and parents' labour market participation, while Chapter G covers attitudes to local childcare provision and examines what sources of information parents have used and how they perceive the quality of childcare in their local area. Chapter H outlines issues surrounding the cost and availability of childcare. In Chapter I there is an exploration of what parents consider to be ideal and more realistic childcare arrangements, and Chapter J considers parental priorities in terms of childcare characteristics. In Chapter K, there is a descriptive analysis of the Parental Priorities model, and this is followed by a section on policy implications.

Throughout each section, the results from both the qualitative and quantitative research are used to illustrate the main themes and findings.

B. Study methodology

Summary

The study comprised three parts:

- Part 1: Part 1 survey of 1,003 parents of children aged 0-14 years, exploring current usage of childcare, unmet demand and ideal arrangements
- Part 2: A Part 2 survey of 500 interviews with parents, exploring in more detail the affordability of childcare and the relationship between childcare and parental labour-market participation. This included the Parental Priorities model, the methodology for which appears in Appendix I.
- Qualitative research: depth interviews with 40 parents, representing each of 10 target groups (described later).

The research also included economic evaluation, which was built into each of the three stages outlined above.

Each of the three parts of the research is described in detail below, following a discussion of the selection of the survey population and the sampling strategy.

Survey population

The population for the survey included all parents in households containing any children aged between 0 and 14 years. Normally in household surveys only one person per household is interviewed. However, children have (on the whole) two parents living with them, and where this was the case, we interviewed the parent who had main or shared responsibility for childcare decisions in the household. As this design was employed in the 2000 survey, this ensured that direct and reliable comparisons could be made between the two studies. The vast majority of interviews were carried out with women (88%), as was the case in the 2000 survey (95%). We also replicated the design of the 2000 survey by collecting information about childcare relating to up to two children per household. Where a household contained more than two children, we collected their demographic details, but selected two at random for the remainder of the questions.

Sampling strategy

We adopted a structured method to identifying households that were eligible to take part in the research in order to achieve a good cross-section of the population; respondents came from a mix of geographical areas and socio-economic groups.

In order to ensure a mix of areas, the sample was stratified into three broad population bands comprising Southern Scotland, the Central Belt and the Highlands/North-East Scotland. The data were weighted, thus tending to reduce the proportion of sample from urban areas and allowing us to analyse rural areas with more confidence.

Sampling relatively rare populations always relies on some type of screening. In this case, we wanted to interview only parents of children aged 0-14 years, meaning that only 22% of Scottish households were eligible to take part. Within each of the three broad strata, we therefore used Census Output Areas (OAs) as the primary sampling unit. OAs are the smallest unit of Census geography and using them allowed us to focus most closely on those areas with households with children in the 0-14 age group. As OAs are relatively small – with an average household population of 50 – we were also able to screen every address in the sampled OAs, either directly or indirectly.

There are approximately 40,000 OAs in Scotland and each of these was in scope for the survey provided that they contained children aged 0-14 years (or as close to this as the publicly available data allows). OAs with no households in scope were excluded from the sampling. In the remaining OAs the potential interview yield (Y) was calculated, and this was based on the number of households containing a child aged 0-14 years, such that:

$$Y = N * (1-V) * (1 \div R)$$

where V = estimated proportion of addresses that were invalid and R = the anticipated response rate. If we assume that V would be 10% and R would be 65%, an output area with 10 valid households would have a potential yield of 5 interviews. Those with a potential yield of less than 2 interviews were excluded from the sampling.

OAs that remained in scope for the survey were divided into geographical strata and then randomly selected with probability proportionate to the number of eligible households. This ensured that each household eligible to take part in the research had an equal chance of inclusion and would not bias the sample by over-representing areas with a high proportion of children. OAs were picked until the total potential interview yield from sampled OAs was equal to (or slightly exceeded) the desired number of interviews in each stratum.

The total size of the OA then determined the screening approach. For example, it would be easier to find 5 households from a total of 10 than from a total of 100. Given the size of OAs, removing those with an anticipated yield of less than 2 interviews also removed most of those where interviewers would have to screen more than 100 addresses to achieve one interview.

Where the average number of households to be screened for a successful interview was greater than 10, interviewers approached every 10th address on their list to enquire not only about the eligibility of that household, but about the presence of eligible households in any of the 9 properties on either side. Where a positive response was received, every address between the two initial addresses was screened to identify those household(s). This continued until every address in the OA had been screened directly or indirectly. Where the average number of households to be screened for each interview was 10 or fewer, every address was approached directly.

Part 1: Part 1 survey

Method

Interviews were carried out with 1,003 parents in their own homes and took the form of a CAPI questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the one used in the 2000 survey for purposes of comparison, with consideration also being given to changes in policy since 2000 – the aim being to pose questions which would illuminate the likely effects of future policy.

DTZ Pieda Consulting also reviewed the 2000 survey and other studies with the aim of developing a series of key issues and hypotheses to be tested by the study. These focused on the choices made by households of different types and in different situations, and the factors influencing these choices.

Questionnaire content

The main topic areas covered in the Part 1 questionnaire were:

1. Overview of childcare use in the previous year and week

- Details of children in the household
- Types of childcare (formal and informal) used

2. Patterns of childcare use

- Reasons for using main provider and other providers of childcare
- Times at which childcare is needed/used

3. Unmet demand for childcare in the previous year and week

- Reliability of existing childcare arrangements
- Frequency of a breakdown of childcare arrangements
- Times in the previous year/week when parents needed and wanted childcare but could not obtain it

4. Evaluation of childcare providers and costs

- Satisfaction with childcare provider(s)
- Whether fees or wages are paid for childcare provision, and how much this costs on a weekly basis
- Value for money of childcare provision
- Ease or difficulty of meeting the costs of childcare

5. Ideal childcare arrangements

- Ideal childcare arrangements if choices were not constrained by availability or cost,
- Realistic ideals, given current circumstances of parents

6. Attitudes towards childcare provision

- Sources of information used to find out about local childcare provision
- Whether or not there is enough information available about local childcare provision
- Whether or not there are enough childcare places available in parents' local area
- Factors affecting parents' decision to work or not work

7. Demographics (respondent, children and partner, if applicable)

- Respondents' details, including age, ethnicity, working status, qualifications, traditionalism measure, workplace provisions for parents
- Details of all children aged 0-14 in household
- Details of all other persons over 15 years of age in household, including respondents' partners and other children

Part 2: Part 2 survey

Method

Respondents for Part 2 were recruited through the main stage (Part 1) survey. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked whether they would be willing to take part in follow-up research.

The main aim of Part 2 was to explore in more depth the costs of childcare and links with the labour market, and 30-minute interviews were carried out with 500 parents in their homes, using CAPI. The questionnaire was again based on the 2000 survey and responses were linked to the Part 1 survey.

Questionnaire content

The topic areas covered in the Part 2 questionnaire included:

1. Overview of childcare usage

- Details of main and other childcare providers
- Reasons for using main and other providers

2. Parenting and employment

- Respondents and partners main activity (working, at home, training, studying etc)
- Hours and days of work and journey times to work
- Reasons for working, not working, training, studying etc.
- Ideal labour market and childcare arrangements

3. Future plans

- Parents' planned labour market activities over next year
- For non-working parents, expectations about work and pay

4. Formal versus informal childcare

- Reasons for choosing to use formal (regulated) childcare
- Reasons for choosing to use informal (unregulated) childcare
- Expectations of formal versus informal providers

5. Childcare costs and affordability

- Whether fees or wages are paid for childcare, and if so, how much?

- Parents' knowledge of the costs of different types of childcare
- Impact of hypothetical increase/decrease in childcare costs
- Priority evaluation model, rating childcare choices using economic indicators.

6. Traditionalism scale

- Parental attitudes towards working/not working
- Attitudes towards 'stay at home' mothers
- Maternity and paternity leave.

Qualitative research: depth interviews

Objectives of the qualitative component

Respondents for the qualitative research were also recruited through the Part 1 survey.

The main objective was to explore those issues surrounding the use of and demand for childcare for ten different target groups, with a view to understanding how the issues salient to these groups may differ from the general population. Thus, the issues covered in the interviews did not differ greatly from those covered in the survey, although the respondents' opinions and experiences were explored in more depth and those issues of particular relevance to each group were covered in more detail.

Method

The qualitative research took the form of 40 in-home depth interviews of approximately 45 minutes duration. The interviews served to build on the issues raised in the quantitative research, and also highlighted those issues salient to certain groups in particular (e.g. ethnic minorities, single parents, parents of children with special needs, parents and families living in deprived areas). Specifically, the depth interviews examined differences in the access to and demand for childcare between these groups and the general population. The aim was to investigate whether there were differences related to age, income and culture that affect the needs and options available to these individuals.

Although the ten groups were dealt with separately in terms of depth interviews, we were mindful of the overlap between these groups, for example, between single parents, young parents, and parents living on low income. In analysing of the interviews, care was taken to ensure that all the information derived from the depth interviews was brought together in

order to create a list of factors that can affect access to and demand for childcare. The ten groups that were investigated are detailed below:

- ***Ethnic minority groups***: Although it is not appropriate to make generalisations from one ethnic group to another, the interviews sought to explore variables common to all groups such as family structure and cultural differences that may affect the demand, availability, and suitability of childcare.
- ***Single parents***: The 2000 survey indicated that one of the characteristics most strongly related to use of childcare was whether the household contained one or two parents. Additionally, unmet demand for childcare was more common among single parents than couples. It was therefore important to investigate how single parents access childcare, and how they may be constrained by their lack of time, money, and support.
- ***Student parents***: Of particular relevance to this group was ascertaining to what extent current childcare arrangements enabled parents to take up paid work, education, or training. Additionally, the 2000 survey indicated that childcare use corresponding with normal school hours was the most common, which was unlikely to be relevant for student parents as their hours are more irregular.
- ***Parents and families living in deprived areas and Parents and families living on low incomes***: There was much overlap between these two groups. Results from the 2000 survey indicated that 12% of individuals from the lowest income households reported unmet demand for childcare at least once a month. Additionally, one of the most common reasons for not using the ideal childcare provision was cost, and in fact nearly a third of all parents who paid their childcare provider found it difficult to meet these costs. The current survey examined what issues those living on low incomes face and which barriers most affect their unmet demand for childcare, e.g. cost or availability.
- ***Parents and families living in rural areas***: It was assumed that parents in these areas may have particular problems relating to the access and availability of childcare, and the potential distances required to travel for childcare.
- ***Young parents***: This group was defined as parents aged 20 years and younger, and there was overlap between this group and others, including student parents, single parents and those on low incomes and/or living in deprived areas.

- **Parents of older children:** The 2000 survey suggested that the use of childcare declined with the age of child. We examined whether this was still the case and if so, the reasons behind this decline, i.e. whether parents do not have the same need for childcare or whether they are more constrained by availability when their child is older.
- **Parents of disabled children or parents with special needs and Parents of children with special educational groups (SEN):** These last two groups were investigated separately as parents have special requirements in terms of childcare. However, issues common to all were how parents perceive their access to and demand for childcare and how their demands are being met. A particular problem for these groups is related to a result in the 2000 survey, that childcare provision was most commonly of an informal nature, although the real need was for specialised supervision.

Those taking part in the depth interviews were given a £25 incentive to show appreciation for the time spared to participate in the research.

Analysis

The CAPI data for the Part 1 and Part 2 survey was analysed and tables produced using crossbreaks which matched those used in the 2000 survey. DTZ Pineda Consulting undertook additional economic interpretation and analysis of the data.

With the consent of the participants, the depth interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed with the subsequent transcripts used confidentially for analysis.

The research study team carried out the interviews themselves and undertook full content analysis of the qualitative data.

Data protection

Data was input and stored anonymously. No data has been provided to the Scottish Executive that would enable the linking of responses to participants.

We agreed that participants' contact details would be forwarded to the Executive only with the consent of the participants. These details were asked for at the end of the Part 1 survey; where we also asked whether respondents would be willing to take part in future research.

C. Patterns of childcare usage

Key questions:

What types of childcare provision have parents used over the last year and last week?

During which time periods over the last year have the main and other childcare providers been used?

On what days of the week and during which hours have parents used childcare providers in the last week?

What types of childcare have been used by different ages of children?

Did school-age children undertake any out-of-school activities in the last week? What activities did they undertake, and at what times?

This chapter focuses on the use of childcare, both over the previous year and the previous week. A wide range of formal and informal providers was included in the survey definition of childcare so that a full picture could be built up of childcare use, encompassing weekends, early mornings, evenings and nights, as well as 'standard' times. Data on the use and patterns of childcare was collected at both a household level and at the level of the individual child.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of childcare use in the last year at household and child level, drawing out the relationships between childcare use, child age and household socio-economic characteristics. Data on childcare use in the last year and the previous week are compared.

The second section of the chapter is based on childcare usage over the previous week and reports at the level of household and child. It details the types of providers used as well as the days and times of day during which childcare sessions took place. Emphasis is placed on describing childcare patterns according to the age of the child and parents' household and employment status.

Household and child-level data

Parents were asked about their use of childcare for up to two of their children over the previous year, that is, the twelve months prior to the date of interview. In addition, parents

were asked about childcare use over the past full week, unless the previous week had been a school holiday, in which case the week prior to that was used.

The data were analysed for all parents (1,003) and also at the level of all children for whom childcare was used (2,217 in the past year and 1,208 in the past week). Where there were more than two children in a household, a maximum of two were selected at random and details of their childcare collected.

Main childcare providers in the previous year and week

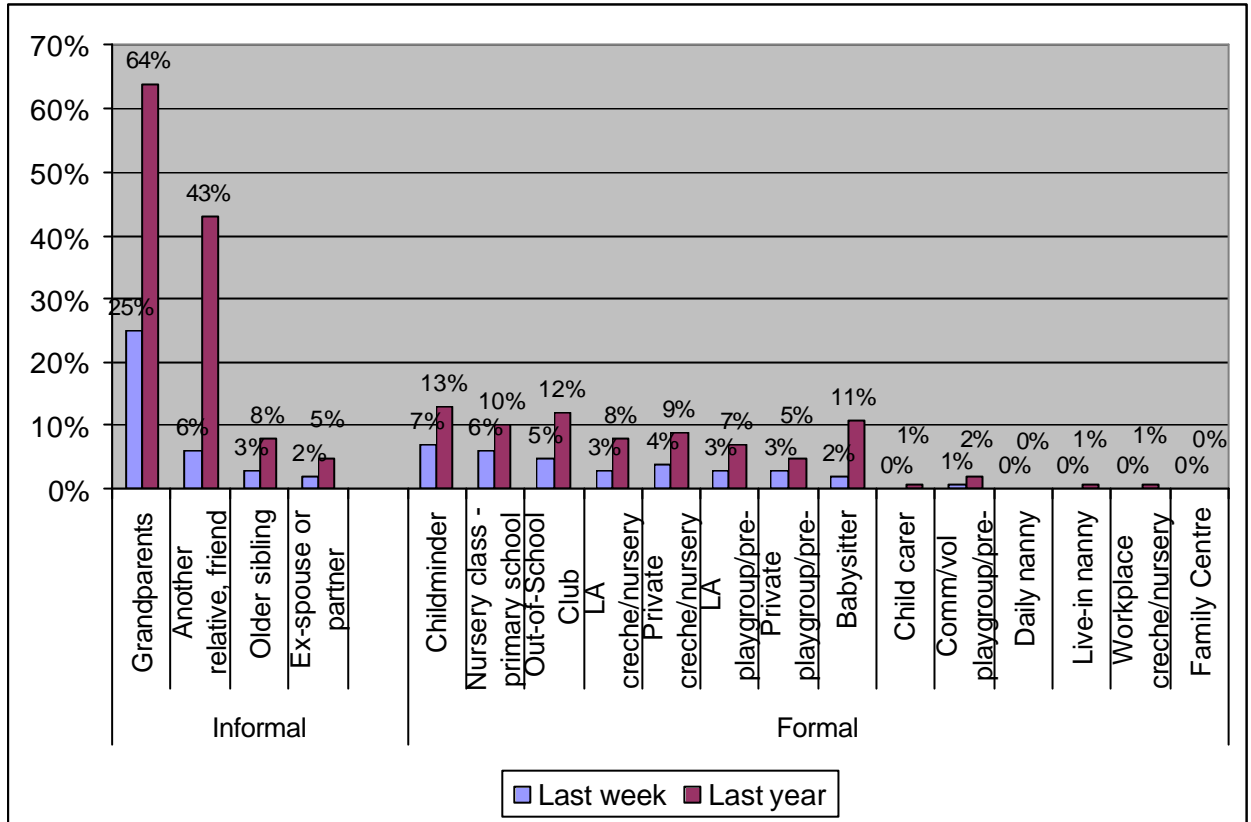
When parents were interviewed in depth, a common theme that emerged was that all parents arranged both their working and social lives around available childcare provision, relied on grandparents or other friends or relatives to transport their children from the childcare provider to home and vice versa.

Overall, all parents interviewed had used some form of childcare in the previous year. The methodology differed from the 2000 survey, as on that occasion, parents who had not used childcare in the previous year (but had used it at some point before that) were also interviewed. Eighty-eight per cent of parents in 2000 said that they had used some form of childcare in the previous year.

When asked who had been their *main* provider of childcare over the past week and year, informal providers, and particularly grandparents, were the most commonly used main provider. Two thirds of parents (64%) said their child/ren's grandparents had been the main childcare provider in the previous year, while for the previous week, grandparents had been the main childcare provider for a quarter of parents (25%).

Among those whose main provider was a formal type, childminders had been the most frequently used provider over the previous year (13%) and in the previous week (7%). Figure C-1 shows the full results.

Figure C-1: Main provider of childcare over previous year and week
Base: All respondents



Of those parents who had used a childminder over the previous year (n=148), just over two thirds (65%) had chosen a registered childminder. This proportion was higher among parents of younger children, rising to three quarters of parents (75%) with children aged 3-4 years.

In the depth interviews, some parents felt that registration was crucial and that they would not consider a childminder that was not registered. However, other parents felt that each childminder should be considered on an individual level, and that judgements should be based on their personal characteristics and qualities, regardless of qualification.

“It has to be somebody who you would trust with the children, who is honest and capable, and knowledgeable about children, reliable, healthy. I don’t know whether an official qualification is necessary”.

Some parents relied on references as the most important factor affecting their choice of childminder.

“I would always go for a reference. I would be looking for somebody whose children had been there to speak to them....A reference from somebody you don't know is a bit risky I feel”.

When looking at child-level data in the Part 1 survey, for 31% of children, their grandparents had been their main provider of childcare in the last year, and for just under a quarter, the main provider had been another relative (12%) or a friend or neighbour (11%). For 7% of children, a registered childminder had been their main childcare provider, while babysitters and out-of-school clubs had each been main providers for 6% of children.

As type of provider is strongly related to age of child, the findings below are presented by age group. They are compared with the results of the 2000 survey.

Informal childcare was most frequently used for children in the 0-4 age group, particularly grandparents. However, usage was not as high for these age groups as it was in 2000 (32% of 0-2 year olds were looked after by grandparents in the current survey, compared with 55% in 2000).

Pre-school education

Older pre-school children (aged 3-4) had used a wider range of childcare providers than had their younger counterparts, and there was a greater emphasis on playgroups and pre-schools, with 16% of children using them (compared with 25% of children in 2000).

Table C-1: Main providers of childcare over previous year – 0-4 year olds
Base: All children

	0-2 year olds		3-4 year olds	
	2004 (%)	2000 (%)	2004 (%)	2000 (%)
Formal providers				
Registered childminder	10	8	8	11
Child carer	*	n/a	*	n/a
Daily nanny	0	1	*	0
Live-in nanny	0	-	0	1
Babysitter	4	8	4	7
Crèche or nursery	18	24	23	47
Playgroup or pre-school	13	7	16	25
Nursery class attached to a primary school	5	0	14	33
Family Centre	*	2	0	2
Out-of-School Club (OSC)	1	0	1	1

Informal providers				
Ex-spouse or partner	1	3	0	4
Child/ren's grandparents	32	56	27	55
Child/ren's older sibling	*	1	*	2
Another relative, a friend or neighbour	13	31	7	26
Other	*	2	0	3
Unweighted base	316	387	224	279
Weighted base	328	422	227	313

The issue of pre-school provision was raised frequently in the depth interviews. Many parents made use of the pre-school education offered to 3 and 4 year olds, although they did cite limitations with this service. It was noted that two and a half hours a day was not long enough, as it did not enable the mother to work.

"I think even when [child] was four, the pre-school nursery was only two or three hours per day and that was of no use to me simply because you still have to have a childminder or somebody to take them."

One suggestion was to enable parents to make use of the free pre-school education but then allow them to pay for any additional hours of childcare they required in the same establishment, as this would allow parents to benefit more from the free hours of childcare they were entitled to.

"I enquired if I could have more [childcare] and pay for [it] but that wasn't available. That would have been much better..."

If this situation is available in some establishments, then there is perhaps a lack of communication and information available to parents about pre-school education that makes them fully aware of their options. One parent felt that the most crucial time for receiving help with childcare costs was before the child was three years old, when the cost of nurseries are higher as the ratio of number of staff to children is a lot lower.

"I mean now is the really expensive time, then it gets cheaper when they get to three".

There was also criticism of the lack of flexibility involved in when the children attended their pre-school education:

“..I don’t think there’s enough flexible childcare places. I think parents should have the choice of whether it’s a morning or afternoon place. People live their lives... it’s hard enough having wee ones and working out how to fit everything in to life”.

For children in the 5-11 age group, grandparents were still an important provider of childcare, although they did not provide care for as many children as was the case in 2000. This may be because parents are using a wider range of childcare providers to fulfil different needs at different times and to fit in with their working schedules, as well as the age of their child/ren. One of the reasons parents gave for not using grandparents as a childcare provider was because they did not want to place too much of a burden on them. This issue is discussed further in Chapter I.

The most popular form of formal childcare for children aged 5-11 was a babysitter, which indicates that parents use this type of childcare during evenings (since children in this age group are at school during the day). However, 12% of children in this age group had used a crèche or nursery, which may suggest that they were cared for along with a younger child from the same family.

Table C-2: Main providers of childcare over previous year – 5-11 year olds
Base: All children

	5-7 year olds		8-11 year olds	
	2004 (%)	2000 (%)	2004 (%)	2000 (%)
Formal providers				
Registered childminder	8	13	7	10
Child carer	*	n/a	1	n/a
Daily nanny	1	0	*	2
Live-in nanny	1	0	*	0
Babysitter	9	2	7	12
Crèche or nursery	9	12	3	0
Playgroup or pre-school	6	2	3	0
Nursery class attached to a primary school	8	8	1	0
Family Centre	0	0	0	0
Out-of-School Club (OSC)	10	11	8	10
Informal providers				
Ex-spouse or partner	2	7	2	6
Child/ren's grandparents	30	61	42	53
Child/ren's older sibling	2	3	5	11

Another relative, a friend or neighbour	12	38	22	40
Other	*	1	1	1
Unweighted base	337	452	416	583
Weighted base	333	516	399	673

The patterns of provision were different for 12-14 year olds, as this age group may be expected to require less supervision than younger children, and thus need childcare less often. Grandparents were still the most important provider, used by 32% of children aged 12-14. Babysitters were used by 6%, and this type of childcare is likely to have taken place during the evenings, as was the case for 5-11 year olds.

Table C-3: Main providers of childcare over previous year – 12-14 year olds
Base: All children

	12-14 year olds	
	2004 (%)	2000 (%)
Formal providers		
Registered childminder	3	2
Child carer	0	n/a
Daily nanny	0	0
Live-in nanny	0	0
Babysitter	6	9
Crèche or nursery	2	0
Playgroup or pre-school	2	0
Nursery class attached to a primary school	2	0
Family Centre	0	1
Out-of-School Club (OSC)	4	3
Informal providers		
Ex-spouse or partner	6	4
Child/ren's grandparents	32	45
Child/ren's older sibling	17	23
Another relative, a friend or neighbour	24	36
Other	2	1
Unweighted base	190	371
Weighted base	203	420

The issues that parents of older children (aged 12-14 years) face in terms of childcare were investigated thoroughly in the depth interviews as it was expected that this group of parents may face particular barriers or problems as their child may not be as easy to please. A common opinion amongst these parents was that they did not feel that at this age their children were old and responsible enough to look after themselves without supervision. However, in some cases, parents reported that the children themselves felt they were too old for childcare and would prefer to look after themselves. This conflict caused many problems for some parents.

It was noted however by other parents, that the pressure of finding appropriate childcare slightly decreased as the children got older:

“..I have more choices now than when he was younger....You kind of swap the problems but it is not as difficult as it was when he was younger”.

Parents thus felt that there were more childcare options available when the child was older as the child did not require so much attention and care. However, they also experienced more problems due to children of this age having their own ideas and preferences for how they wished to be looked after and how they wanted to spend their time.

In the Part 1 survey, parents whose main provider had been an informal one (with the exception of babysitters) were asked whether that provider lived in the same household as them, or elsewhere. In the majority of cases (87%), the provider lived in a different household, although 13% of respondents said that the provider lived in the same household. Informal providers were more likely to live in the same household of parents with children aged 12-14 than those with younger children, which suggests that these households may have aging grandparents living with them, who also take on the role of an informal childcare provider.

Table C-4 illustrates this point.

Table C-4: Whether informal provider lives in same household as respondent, by age of child
Base: Parents whose main provider in previous year was informal

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, lives in same household	6	8	8	13	26
No, lives in different household	94	92	92	87	74
Unweighted base	216	166	268	348	199
Weighted base	226	173	274	336	205

Parents of children with special needs

Parents of children with special needs were interviewed in depth in an attempt to investigate their needs in terms of childcare provision, and what specific barriers they faced due to any special requirements the child might have. These parents found it difficult to use a large amount of childcare provision as their children required special attention and supervision that many providers (both formal and informal) were unqualified or unprepared for. In some cases, the mother looked after the child full time, with some help from grandparents or relatives and respite care. However, in other situations the grandparent was unable to look after the child due to their own age or health, or the fact that the child required full time attention and care. Some parents did have access to other childcare providers such as carers but found limitations in this service as there was not enough staff to look after the children for the number of hours they were entitled to:

“..he is meant to have two carers for x amount of hours a week but they aren't available so I don't get it. They have allocated me seven hours per week but they don't have the staff available”.

Respite care was also mentioned as being available to parents of children with special needs. However, the parents interviewed preferred not to use this service as they felt they should be wholly responsible for their own children.

“..there are respite facilities that I could put my son into. I wouldn't do it. It is freedom of choice but I don't want my son to go into respite care”.

Parents of minority ethnic children

Again, these parents were interviewed in depth to ascertain what specific issues they may have faced in terms of childcare provision. In all cases, these parents and their children lived with their extended families and so felt that they always had options in terms of childcare. The grandmother looked after the children in many cases, if both parents were working and the fact that she lived in the same household eliminated any additional problems such as taking the children to her house or picking them up after the parents were finished work. In some cases, the children's cousins or aunts also helped with childcare. However, some parents also utilised local nurseries or crèches for a few hours a day. There was the problem of language barriers in some cases, although more in terms of the parents than the children. That is, although the children were fluent in English, many of the parents struggled slightly which did make them feel in less control if they left their children at a nursery. Overall, these parents did not experience many problems in terms of childcare as they could rely on their families to help them on a regular basis.

Student parents

Student parents also faced problems finding the most appropriate childcare for their situation given their lifestyle and commitments. In some circumstances, these parents relied on partners and grandparents for childcare, which often involved nights when they were studying. One parent in particular who used after-school clubs and her mother for childcare felt that she was unable to really take part in university life because she was constrained by childcare problems, although this is perhaps more of a lifestyle than childcare problem.

Times at which parents used childcare in the previous year

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the patterns of childcare used over the previous year, a number of questions were asked about the main provider, and the time periods in which they had provided childcare. Where there was more than one child aged 0-14 years in the household, data was collected for up to two children. In this section, where there is more than one child per household, children are referred to as 'Child 1' and 'Child 2.'

Main provider and Child 1

In the majority of cases (96%), respondents' main provider had provided childcare for Child 1 at least once in the past year, that is, in the twelve months preceding the date of interview. Childcare was more likely to be used during term times than school holidays,

regardless of the child's age, although the use of childcare for younger pre-school age children was obviously higher. Table C-5 illustrates.

Differences by parents' working status were also observed, with those working full-time more likely than others to use their main childcare provider at all the periods mentioned. Parents who worked full and part-time used their main childcare provider in more of the periods than parents who were not in paid employment. Table C-6 shows the full results.

Table C-5: Periods over previous year when main provider looked after Child 1, by age of child

Base: Parents whose main provider looked after Child 1 in previous year

	Age of child					Total
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Autumn term 2002	48	65	67	66	65	63
Christmas holidays 2002	31	44	39	39	38	39
Spring term 2003	60	76	75	72	68	71
Easter holidays 2003	46	57	52	50	50	52
Summer term 2003	63	79	78	73	72	74
Summer holidays 2003	57	65	64	69	64	66
Autumn term 2003	82	88	77	79	75	80
October half term 2003	49	55	47	47	47	50
Unweighted base	269	216	349	449	229	968
Weighted base	279	219	350	429	230	964

Table C-6: Periods over previous year when main provider looked after Child 1, by respondent working status**Base:** Parents whose main provider looked after Child 1 in previous year

	Working status of respondent		
	Full-time	Part-time	Not in paid employment
	%	%	%
Autumn term 2002	76	64	51
Christmas holidays 2002	44	41	33
Spring term 2003	81	72	61
Easter holidays 2003	58	58	40
Summer term 2003	84	75	63
Summer holidays 2003	73	72	53
Autumn term 2003	82	79	78
October half term 2003	54	56	40
Unweighted base	293	326	349
Weighted base	307	318	339

Parents were then asked to estimate how many weeks during the previous year they had used their main childcare provider to look after Child 1. A quarter of parents (26%) said that their main provider had provided childcare for between one and two weeks, while just over one in 10 parents (12%) had used their main provider for more than 10 weeks of childcare. Parents of older children (aged 12-14) were more likely to have used their main provider to look after Child 1 for only 1-2 weeks than were parents of 3-4 year olds (37%, compared with 18%). Table C-7 shows the findings in full.

Table C-7: Number of weeks in previous year when main provider looked after Child 1, by age of child

Base: Parents whose main provider looked after Child 1 in previous year

	Age of child					Total
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-2 weeks	29	18	24	29	37	26
3-4 weeks	10	7	12	15	14	13
5-6 weeks	15	15	17	17	12	16
7-8 weeks	23	24	16	16	16	19
9-10 weeks	12	21	16	14	11	14
More than 10 weeks	11	14	14	11	10	12
Unweighted base	269	216	349	449	229	968
Weighted base	279	219	350	429	230	964

Table C-8 shows the number of weeks during each time period over the previous year when main childcare providers looked after Child 1. During term-times, there were as many parents using their main provider for 10 or more weeks as there were using a main provider for only 1-2 weeks. During holidays, main childcare providers tended to be used for shorter time periods.

Table C-8: Number of weeks during each time period when main provider looked after Child 1 over previous year (row percentages)

Base: Parents whose main provider looked after Child 1 in previous year

	Number of weeks Child 1 looked after					
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	10+
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Autumn term 2002	15	12	18	21	18	15
Christmas holidays 2002	20	14	21	26	16	3
Spring term 2003	17	12	18	21	17	14
Easter holidays 2003	16	15	21	26	19	3
Summer term 2003	17	13	18	22	16	13
Summer holidays 2003	20	16	20	23	16	5
Autumn term 2003	20	13	17	21	16	12
October half term 2003	19	13	22	25	16	4

Overall, parents were most likely to require childcare from their main provider on only one day per week or less in the time periods shown above. Just under a quarter (23%) said that they had used their main provider for less than one day a week, while just over a quarter (27%) had used childcare for one day per week, as Table C-9 shows.

Table C-9: Number of days per week during each time period when main provider looked after Child 1 over previous year

Base: Parents whose main provider looked after Child 1 in previous year

	Number of days per week Child 1 looked after							
	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Autumn term 2002	21	26	15	8	4	21	*	3
Christmas holidays 2002	24	26	16	10	4	16	*	3
Spring term 2003	22	27	15	8	4	21	*	3
Easter holidays 2003	24	26	16	10	4	17	*	3
Summer term 2003	21	27	14	9	4	21	*	2
Summer holidays 2003	23	27	14	9	3	18	*	3
Autumn term 2003	23	27	14	9	3	18	*	3
October half term 2003	25	27	15	11	4	14	*	3

Main provider and Child 2

Those parents with more than one child (60%, n=598) were asked whether their main provider had provided childcare for their second child over the previous year. In the majority of cases (94%), the main provider of childcare for Child 1 had also provided childcare for Child 2.

For a majority of parents to whom this applied (84%), their main childcare provider had always or nearly always looked after Child 2 at the same times as Child 1. For a further 3%, their main provider had sometimes looked after Child 2 at the same times as Child 2, and for 5% of parents, childcare for Child 1 and Child 2 had taken place at different times.

Childcare use in the previous week

The proportion of parents using childcare in the previous week was 63% in the current survey and 58% in 2000. Looking at child level data reveals that 69% of children received childcare in the previous week.

Childcare use and household structure

There was a strong relationship between childcare use and the structure of the household (i.e. whether the respondent was from a two-parent or lone parent family and his/her employment status). Lone parents who worked full-time were most likely to have used childcare in the previous week (93%), followed by two-parent households in which both parents worked full-time (78%), and lone parents who worked part-time (74%). In the 2000 survey, again lone parents were most likely to have used childcare in the previous week (88%) with two-parent households in which both parents worked full-time the next most likely (75%).

Table C-10 shows the figures for the current survey with those for 2000 in parentheses.

Table C-10: Childcare use over previous week by household type and employment status
Base: All respondents. Figures in parentheses are the corresponding figures from the 2000 survey

	Lone parent families			Two-parent families				
	Works f/t	Works p/t	Not working	Both work f/t	1 works f/t, 1 p/t	1 f/t, 1 not working	Both work p/t	Neither works
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Used childcare in the previous week	93 (88)	74 (66)	60 (43)	78 (75)	67 (60)	45 (46)	45 (-)	23 (30)
Unweighted bases	63 (80)	64 (100)	100 (208)	176 (264)	285 (353)	245 (240)	9 (-)	31 (56)
Weighted base 2004	68	62	98	188	285	244	9	29

When comparing childcare use by marital status of the parent interviewed, usage was higher among single people than those who were married or living together (74% compared with 61% and 59% respectively). Childcare usage overall had risen since 2000, but particularly among single people and those who were divorced, separated or widowed, as Table C-11 shows.

Table C-11: Childcare use over previous week by marital status of parent interviewed**Base: All respondents**

	Married	Living with partner	Single	Divorced, separated or widowed
	%	%	%	%
Used childcare in the previous week	61 (57)	59 (62)	74 (66)	72 (53)
Unweighted bases	678 (858)	111 (113)	97 (174)	117 (187)
Weighted base 2004	695	95	96	117

The depth interviews also investigated childcare usage between different types of parents. There seemed to be a large amount of overlap between the situations and views of single parents, parents and families living on low incomes, parents and families living in deprived areas, and young parents. In terms of childcare use, some single parents were not in work and were looking after their children full time. This was also true of parents living on low incomes and in deprived areas. In other cases, parents were working part-time while their children were at nursery or crèche, in order to ensure they were available when the child returned from the childcare provider. These groups seemed to be more constrained by their choice of childcare providers, which may be a result of the cost of childcare and the working commitments of the single mother.

Childcare use and employment patterns

As was the case in the 2000 survey, there was little difference in the use of childcare among households with different types of atypical working patterns, as Table C-12 illustrates. Childcare use was not notably different between households with atypical working patterns and those without. As in 2000, this may be due to only one partner in two-parent households having atypical working patterns or the ability of families to juggle their work and childcare commitments.

Table C-12: Childcare use over previous week by household work patterns

Base: All respondents

	Atypical work patterns for either parent					Atypical work patterns for <u>neither</u> parent
	Usually works long hours	Usually works shifts	Usually works at weekends	Works/ studies at home only	Any atypical pattern	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Used childcare in the previous week	66 (59)	61 (63)	66 (58)	63 (57)	62 (62)	65 (64)
Unweighted bases	192 (285)	225 (320)	215 (395)	79 (117)	471 (679)	532 (393)
Weighted base 2004	208	213	214	80	475	528

There was a strong relationship between the availability of family-friendly working arrangements for parents and use of childcare. There was higher usage of childcare in the previous week among parents who had any type of family-friendly arrangement available to them than for those who did not. The figures were broadly similar to the findings of the 2000 survey, although notably, there had been a reduction in the proportion of households who do not have *any* family-friendly working arrangements available to them (50%, compared with 55% in 2000). This indicates that there has been a positive shift in employers' attitudes towards working parents.

Table C-13: Childcare use over previous week by availability of family-friendly working arrangements

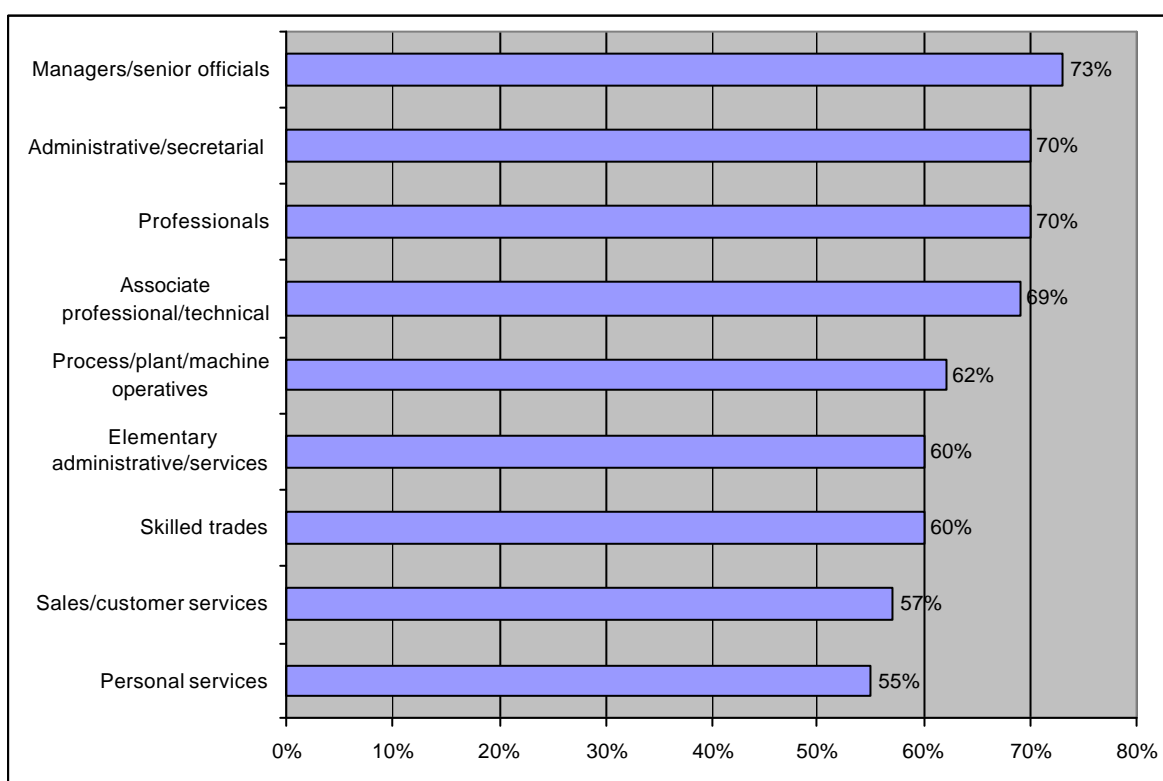
Base: All respondents

	Family-friendly working available for either parent					Family-friendly working for <u>neither</u> parent
	Part-time work	Flexi-time	Working from home	Time off when child/ren ill	Childcare support	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Used childcare in the previous week	67 (68)	68 (72)	68 (66)	71 (68)	74 (70)	50 (55)
Unweighted bases	377 (400)	209 (233)	200 (109)	429 (491)	346 (119)	299 (341)
Weighted base 2004	369	210	204	435	362	293

Childcare use by social class and income

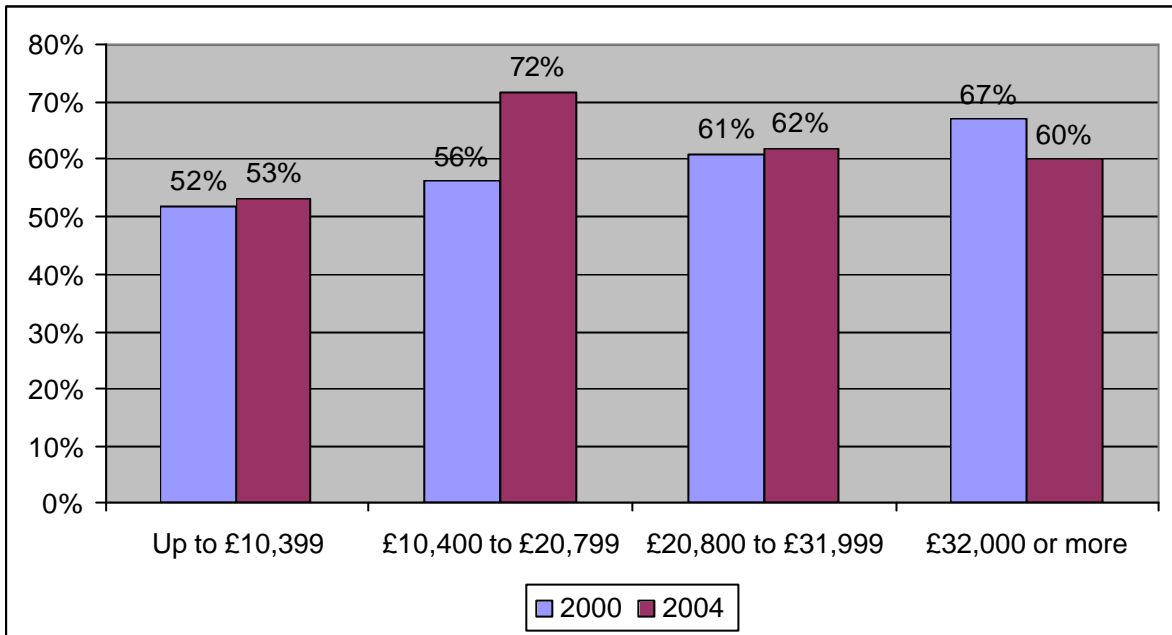
In both 2000 and the current survey, there were links between childcare use and social class, with those in skilled and professional occupations making more use of childcare than those in partly skilled and unskilled jobs. In 2000, childcare use in the previous week among social class groups I, II and III was higher than it was for social classes IV and V (58-62%, compared with 52%). In 2004, social classes were classified differently; however, the same general pattern of results in terms of childcare use was seen. These findings are displayed in Figure C-2. An exception to the pattern was the high use of childcare among those in secretarial and administrative professions. This may be as the majority of our sample were female (85%) and as these professions are traditionally heavily dominated by females, it may be that the majority of respondents in this category required childcare.

Figure C-2: Childcare use over previous week by social class
Base: All respondents



In 2000, there was a strong relationship observed between income and use of childcare. Use in the previous week was 67% for households with a gross income of £32,000 or more, while it was only 52% for households with an income below £10,400. This pattern was not mirrored in 2004; households with an annual income of between £10,400 and £20,799 had the highest levels of childcare usage over the previous week, as Figure C-3 shows.

Figure C-3: Childcare use over previous week by gross household income
Base: All respondents



Types of childcare provider used in the previous week

Parents were asked to state all of the childcare providers they had used in the previous week from categories provided on a showcard. Table C-14 shows the incidence of use of different provider types over the previous week and compares the findings with those from the 2000 survey.

Table C-14: Types of childcare providers used over previous week**Base: All respondents**

	Use in previous week	
	2004 (%)	2000 (%)
None	37	42
Formal providers		
Registered childminder	8	5
Child carer	1	-
Daily nanny	*	0
Live-in nanny	*	0
Babysitter	3	2
Local Authority crèche or nursery	4	4
Private crèche or nursery	5	5
Workplace crèche or nursery	1	-
Local Authority playgroup or pre-school	4	1
Private playgroup or pre-school	4	1
Community/voluntary playgroup or pre-school	1	1
Nursery class attached to a primary school	6	4
Family Centre	*	1
Out-of-School Club (OSC)	7	3
Informal providers		
Ex-spouse or partner	3	2
Child/ren's grandparents	32	27
Child/ren's older sibling	4	4
Another relative, a friend or neighbour	11	10
Other	7	8
Base	1,003	1,336

In fact, the most common response was for respondents to use no childcare providers (37%). However, grandparents were childcare providers for 32% of households, which was a similar proportion to 2004. Childminders were the most commonly used types of formal provider in the previous week, with 8% of parents saying they had used them. There has

been a rise in the popularity of out-of-school clubs over the previous four years, as 7% of the current respondents used OSC compared to 3% in the 2000 survey.

When looking at childcare use by household structure and employment, grandparents were the most common type of main provider used by all subgroups, as was the case in 2000. In the previous week, their role was particularly important for lone parents who were working full-time (53% of this group used grandparents in the previous week, compared with 41% of couples working full-time).

Childminders were the most commonly used formal provider in the previous week, particularly among lone parents working full-time (6%) and couples working full-time (11%). There was also a high percentage of parents using out-of-school clubs; 11% of two-parent families where both parents were working full-time and 15% of lone parents working full-time.

Thirty-one per cent of children had not received any childcare in the previous week. Of the 69% of children who had received childcare in the last week, the most frequently used providers were children's grandparents (29%). In terms of formal provision, childminders were most commonly used (7%).

Table C-15 shows provision in the previous week by age of child.

Table C-15: Types of childcare providers used over previous week – by age of child

Base: All children

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Formal providers					
Registered childminder	9	7	5	6	4
Child carer	*	0	*	1	1
Daily nanny	0	*	1	1	1
Live-in nanny	2	1	1	*	*
Babysitter	3	2	4	3	2
Local authority crèche or nursery	4	7	3	1	1
Private crèche or nursery	9	8	3	1	1
Workplace crèche or nursery	*	1	1	0	0
Local authority playgroup or pre-school	5	8	2	2	1
Private playgroup or pre-school	7	6	4	1	0

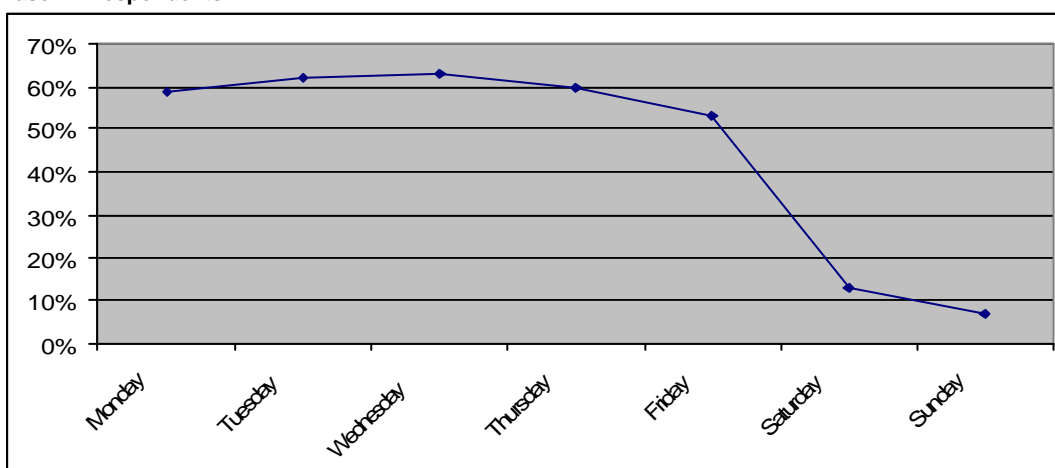
Community/voluntary playgroup or pre-school	2	3	1	1	0
Nursery class attached to a primary school	5	16	5	2	2
Family Centre	*	*	*	0	1
Out-of-School Club (OSC)	2	2	9	9	6
Informal providers					
Ex-spouse or partner	1	2	2	3	3
Child/ren's grandparents	27	24	30	29	25
Child/ren's older sibling	1	*	1	3	10
Another relative, a friend or neighbour	6	7	9	12	7
Other	7	8	7	6	8
Unweighted base	395	336	465	534	267
Weighted base	409	344	473	508	271

Times at which parents used childcare in the previous week

Those parents who had used any type of childcare in the past week (63%, n=723) were asked to state those days in when they used it. Unsurprisingly, childcare usage was higher on weekdays than at weekends, which was likely to be due to the fact that a large proportion of households contained either one or two working parents. Use of childcare peaked early on in the week and declined towards the end, as Figure C-4 illustrates.

Figure C-4: Days of week when childcare used in previous week

Base: All respondents



Parents of children aged 3-4 had higher levels of childcare use on all weekdays than parents with older or younger children. This reflects the fact that older children are at school during this time, while parents of younger children are more likely to look after their children themselves. Those most likely to use childcare at weekends were parents of 8-11 year olds, as Table C-16 reveals.

Table C-16: Days of week when childcare used in previous week by age of child

Base: Parents who used any form of childcare in the previous week

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Monday	60	74	60	54	49
Tuesday	64	77	66	57	51
Wednesday	61	79	67	62	59
Thursday	60	76	62	54	53
Friday	54	65	56	51	44
Saturday	11	8	12	14	12
Sunday	6	4	6	7	5
Unweighted base	221	199	247	294	138
Weighted base	228	203	256	289	146

For those parents using childcare on more than one weekday (n=537), in the majority of cases (83%), the arrangements for childcare were the same on each day childcare was used. There was very little variation by age of child, household structure and employment or household income.

Times of day at which childcare is used

Those parents who said that their childcare arrangements had been the same on each day that childcare was used in the previous week were asked about the start and end times of the childcare received. Overall, childcare was most likely to start between 8am and 10am (38%) or between 3pm and 4pm (22%), which coincides with the start of work for many parents and the end of school for children respectively.

The time at which childcare started differed depending on the age of the child, as Table C-17 shows. For school-age children, childcare was most likely to start between 3pm and 4pm, when the school day ends.

Table C-17: Time at which childcare started by age of child

Base: All respondents who used childcare in last week

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Before 9am	24	14	20	13	11
9am-10am	35	39	22	12	9
10am-11am	3	*	1	*	1
11am-12pm	3	3	3	1	*
12pm-1pm	10	20	9	7	8
1pm-2pm	5	8	3	1	0
2pm-3pm	2	0	2	1	0
3pm-4pm	7	8	32	37	22
4pm-5pm	1	2	6	7	23
After 5pm	2	2	4	1	2
Unweighted base	180	177	191	209	90
Weighted base	187	182	199	205	92

Looking at the overall responses of parents who used childcare in the previous week, childcare was most likely to end sometime after 5pm (24%). Parents who worked either full-time or part-time were most likely to stop using childcare at this time (36% and 21%, compared with only 11% of parents who did not work).

Again, there were variations by age of child, with parents of 5-14 year olds more likely to stop using childcare after 5pm, while parents of 3-4 year olds more likely to stop using childcare between 3pm and 4pm. More parents with children aged 0-2 years than other age groups said that they stopped using childcare between 11am and 12pm, suggesting that their children may have attended a morning session at a playgroup or nursery.

Table C-18 shows the full range of responses.

Table C-18: Time at which childcare ended by age of child

Base: All respondents who used childcare in last week

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Before 9am	0	0	1	3	2
9am-10am	3	1	4	7	3
10am-11am	0	0	0	0	0
11am-12pm	14	19	10	6	6
12pm-1pm	8	8	4	2	5
1pm-2pm	7	5	5	4	4
2pm-3pm	6	5	6	3	2
3pm-4pm	16	29	9	7	4
4pm-5pm	10	7	10	10	14
After 5pm	21	14	24	27	22
Unweighted base	180	177	191	209	90
Weighted base	187	182	199	205	92

Duration of childcare

Of those parents who had used childcare in the past week, three quarters (76%) had received up to 10 hours of childcare per child. Only 12% had used between 11 and 20 hours of childcare, while a minority (5%) had used 21 hours or more.

Childcare was most likely to be used during weekday daytime sessions (18% of respondents), followed by weekend sessions (15%). Parents of 3-4 year olds were most likely to make use of weekday daytime childcare sessions (46% of parents in this category, compared with 25% of parents with 0-2 year olds). Usage of weekday late afternoon sessions was highest among parents with school-age children. The findings by age of child appear in Table C-19.

Table C-19 : Childcare sessions used in last week

Base: All respondents who used childcare in last week

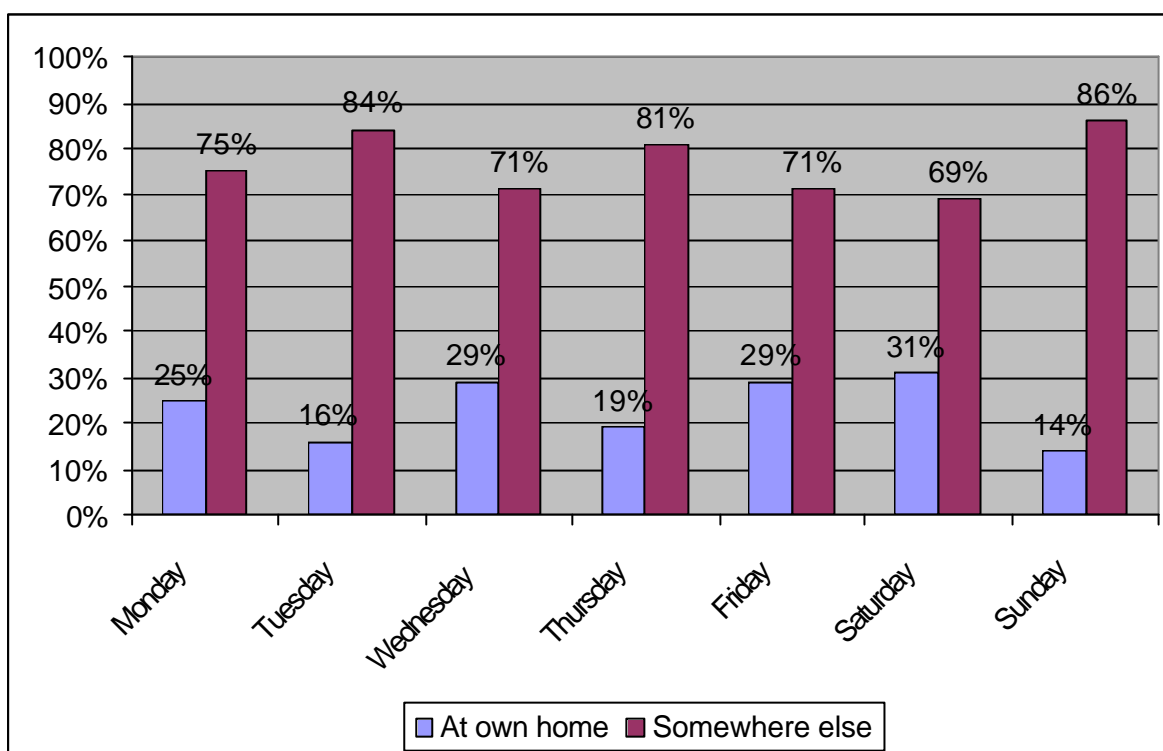
	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Weekday early	0	0	*	1	0
Weekday daytime	25	46	19	11	7
Weekday late afternoon	*	1	4	8	15
Weekday evening	*	*	*	*	2
Weekday night	1	2	1	1	0
Weekend	14	9	14	15	14
Unweighted base	221	199	247	294	138
Weighted base	228	203	256	289	146

Location of childcare in past week

Parents who had used childcare more than four hours of childcare per day were asked whether childcare had taken place at their own home or somewhere else on each of the days it was used.

The majority of childcare had taken place at somewhere other than the respondent's home, which is in line with the low usage of nannies and babysitters compared with other providers. The higher incidence of childcare taking place at somewhere other than respondents' homes on Sundays may be accounted for by informal childcare provision, particularly by grandparents.

Figure C-5: Location of childcare used in previous week
 Base: Parents who used more than 4 hours of childcare per day



In the majority of cases (88% on average) where childcare had taken place at somewhere other than the respondent's home, the child had stayed for the whole period of childcare and had not come home at any point. There were no significant differences by days of the week.

In most of the remaining of cases, respondents did not state whether their child/ren had spent the whole time with the childcare provider or had come home at some point. However, for the minority of parents who said that their child/ren *did* come home at some point during childcare, the reason given was to have lunch.

Childcare arrangements in the previous week for parents with more than one child

Parents with more than one child (n=596) were asked whether the childcare arrangements for up to two of their children had been the same (or almost the same) or different in the past week. Over two-thirds of parents (65%) said that childcare arrangements had been the same or almost the same for both children.

When analysing across subgroups, there were slight variations by employment status. Full-time and part-time workers were more likely to have used the same or almost the same

childcare arrangements for both of their children than non-working parents (74% and 87%, compared with 57%), suggesting that working parents arrange childcare to fit in with their working hours.

Table C-20: Childcare arrangements for parents with more than one child by employment status
Base: Parents with more than one child

	Full-time employment	Part-time employment	Not in paid employment	Total
	%	%	%	%
The same or almost the same for both children	75	69	56	65
Different for each child	25	31	44	34
Unweighted base	158	204	244	606
Weighted base	159	198	239	596

Whether childcare arrangements over the previous week were typical

Of those who had used childcare in the previous week, nine out of ten parents said that their childcare arrangements had been the same as normal. Only 5% said that their child/ren usually had more childcare, and 5% said that they usually had less. There were no significant differences by age of child, but there was some variation by employment status. As Table C-21 shows, non-working parents were slightly less likely than their working counterparts to have used the same amount of childcare as normal in the previous week.

Table C-21: Whether childcare use over previous week was same as normal or different, by household working status

Base: All respondents who used childcare in last week

	Full-time employment	Part-time employment	Not in paid employment	Total
	%	%	%	%
Same as normal	95	89	86	90
Different – usually has more	2	5	8	5
Different – usually has less	3	6	6	5
Unweighted base	237	236	231	704
Weighted base	255	238	229	723

Out-of-school activities

Parents of school-age children were asked whether or not their child/ren had taken part in any out-of-school activities over the previous week. Out-of-school activities included sports practice, youth clubs, Scouts and Guides, music lessons and playing with friends; that is, all activities that did not take place during school hours and are not covered by the definition of childcare.

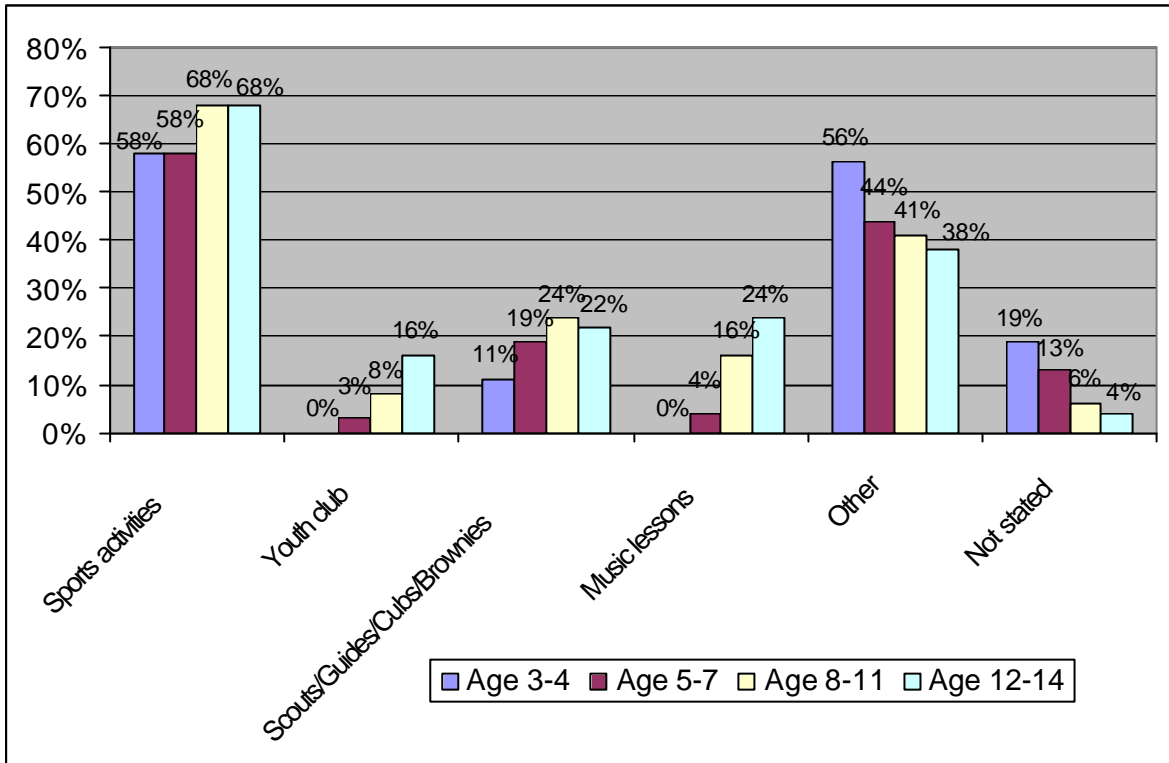
Analysis was undertaken using the total number of school-age children as the base, rather than the number of parents.

Nearly six in 10 children aged 4-14 years (59%) had taken part in some form of out-of-school activity over the previous week. Just over two thirds of those in the 8-11 years age bracket had been involved in out-of-school activities (65%) followed by 58% of 12-14 year olds, and 56% of 5-7 year olds. The 2000 survey showed a slightly different pattern, with 12-14 year olds being the age group most likely to take part in out-of-school activities.

Children whose parents were in either full-time or part-time work were also more likely than children of non-working parents to have taken part in out-of-school activities over the past week (62% and 68% respectively, compared with 45%). These findings mirror those of the 2000 survey, in which two thirds of children in households with working parents were involved in some out-of-school activities.

When asked what type of out-of-school activities had been undertaken, sports were the most frequently mentioned (65% of children), followed by the Scouting organisations (21%). However, there were strong relationships between type of out-of-school activity and age of child, as Figure C-6 illustrates. Children aged 8-11 were most likely to take part in sports activities and Scouting groups, while older children (aged 12-14) were most likely to attend youth clubs and music lessons.

Figure C-6: Out-of-school activities undertaken in the previous week by age of child
Base: All children taking part in out-of-school activities in previous week



The proportion of children involved in three hours of out-of-school activities per week rose from 10% of those aged 3-4 to 17% of those aged 12-14. Younger children were more likely than their older counterparts to spend just one hour a week on out-of-school activities (51% of 3-4 year olds, compared with 43% of 12-14 year olds). This trend parallels that found in the 2000 survey.

Key findings:

There is heavy reliance on informal childcare, with parents most commonly using their child/ren’s grandparents where they were not able to look after their children themselves

Over the last year, two thirds of parents said that their child/ren’s grandparents had been their main childcare provider

In the last week, a third of parents reported that they had not used any form of childcare. Those who had used childcare were most likely to have used grandparents or another family member

Of those using formal childcare, childminders and out-of-school clubs were the most commonly used over the last year and in the last week (13% and 7% of parents respectively had used childminders, while the figures for OSC were 12% and 5%).

Informal childcare usage is higher among younger children (aged 0-4), while formal provision with an educational element (such as OSC) becomes important when children are older

Parents try to arrange both their working and social lives around available childcare provision. The 60% of parents with more than one child were likely to use their main provider for both/all of their children, with childcare usually taking place for all children at the same times

Over the last year, childcare use was higher during term times than in school holidays, regardless of children's ages, although working parents used more childcare at all times than those who do not work

Childcare usage is higher on weekdays than at weekends and for the majority (83%) of parents, arrangements were the same on each day.

Childcare was most likely to start between 8am and 10am (start of working day) or 3pm and 4pm (end of school day) and to end between 3pm and 4pm (for younger children) or sometime after 5pm (for school-age children). Three quarters of parents used up to 10 hours of childcare a week, with the remainder using more

Six in ten school-age children had taken part in an out-of-school activity over the past week, most commonly a sporting activity.

D. Evaluation of childcare providers

Key questions:

What factors influence parents' choice of childcare provider?

How satisfied or dissatisfied are parents with their current childcare providers?

How do both working and non-working parents rate ease of access to their childcare provider?

How do parents rate the standard of childcare and the opportunities for learning provided by their main provider?

While the previous chapter focused on describing the patterns of childcare usage, this chapter explores the factors that influenced parents' choice of main childcare provider, and for providers that were no longer used, why parents stopped using them. It also assesses the accessibility of different types of provider from home and work, and looks at parents' ratings of the standard of childcare and opportunities for learning provided by their main providers.

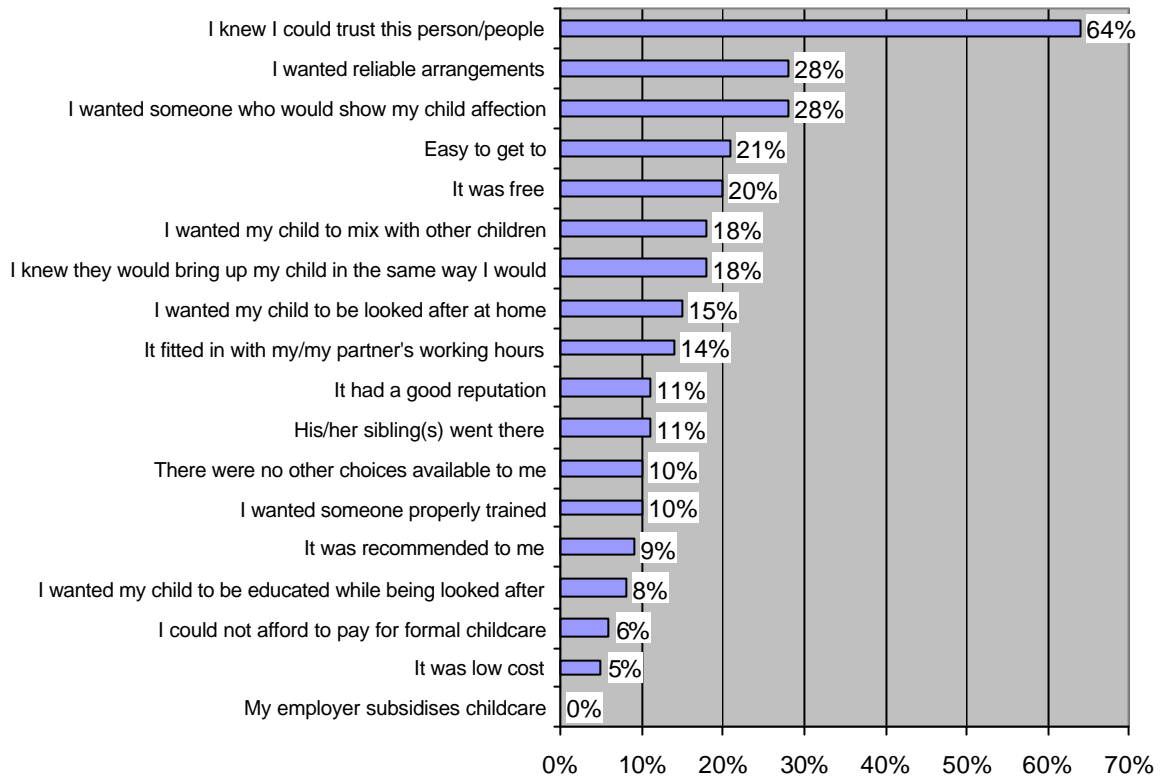
Reasons for using main childcare providers

Parents were asked to state the reasons for choosing their main provider of childcare and results were analysed for each type of provider. Overall, the issue of trust in the childcare provider was paramount, with nearly two thirds of parents (64%) giving this as a reason for choosing their main provider. Over a quarter of parents (28%) said that in choosing their childcare provider, they had wanted someone who would show their child/ren affection.

A fifth (21%) cited ease of getting to the provider as one of their reasons and the fact that the childcare was free was an important consideration for a fifth (20%) of parents. Figure D-1 shows the full range of responses. Parents were permitted to give more than one response.

Figure D-1: All reasons for choosing main childcare provider

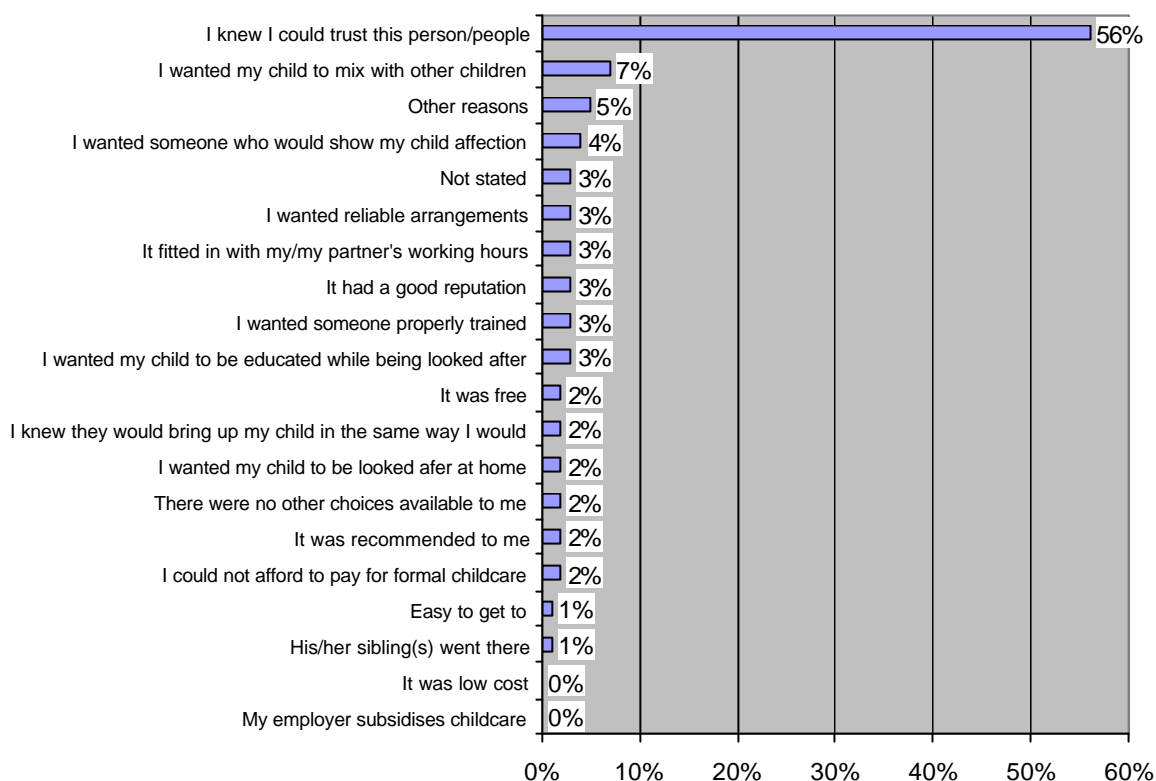
Base: All providers used in previous year



When asked to give the single most important reason for choosing their main childcare provider, overall, trust emerged as by far the most important issue for over half of parents (56%), as Figure D-2 below shows.

Figure D-2: Single most important reason for choosing main childcare provider

Base: All providers used in previous year



In the Part 2 survey of 500 parents, respondents were asked about their main childcare provider over the past year, and why they had chosen this particular provider. The focus of the Part 2 survey was on parental participation in the labour market, thus parents were asked if their choice of main childcare provider enabled them to do any of the activities shown on a list. Parents were also asked whether their choice of other childcare providers enabled them to undertake any of those same activities. The responses are shown in Table D-1.

Table D-1: Reasons behind choice of main and other childcare providers

Base: All respondents Part 2

	Main provider	Other providers
	%	%
To enable me to go to work	54	49
To enable me to attend education/training	8	6
To enable me to work at home (paid work)	2	1
To enable me to study at home	2	1
To enable me to receive medical treatment	8	4

To enable me to shop/deal with other family or personal matters	20	12
To enable me to have time on my own	20	17
To enable me to go out socially	35	47
Other	8	2
Unweighted base	196	196

By far the most common reason behind parents' choice of main provider was to enable them to go out to work, and this was mentioned by over half of parents (54%). A third (35%) said that they had chosen their main provider to enable them to go out socially, and a fifth said it was so that they could have some time on their own, away from their children. A fifth also chose their main provider so that they could shop or deal with other family and personal matters.

Although the data above give an overall picture, parents' reasons for choosing their main provider differed somewhat according to the type of provider.

Informal providers

In the Part 1 survey, those parents choosing informal providers such as grandparents, a former spouse or partner or other relatives as their main childcare provider put their choice down to having trust in the provider, the fact that they knew this provider would show their child affection and the knowledge that the provider would bring their child up in the same way as they would. A high majority (85%) of parents who used their child/ren's grandparents as their main childcare provider said that their trust in them was one of the reasons behind this choice.

The results of the qualitative research supported the findings of the Part 1 survey. Most commonly, the preferred option was for parents to care for their own children full-time, but where this was not possible, their next preferred option was for the child/ren's grandmother to care for their children. It was most common for the maternal grandmother to take up this role. Parents seemed to choose informal childcare such as grandparents or friends as they felt they could trust their relatives and friends to care for and look after their children and bring them up as they would themselves.

Parents in many different circumstances relied on grandparents, either as the main provider of childcare, or for help on a more ad hoc basis. The issue of trust was particularly salient

here. One parent, when asked what factors influenced her decision to choose the right childcare provider for her child, answered:

“Just trust, somebody that I knew. My mum knows how I bring them up – we have got the same values and rules.... I would choose my mum before anybody”.

As an offshoot to these discussions around trust, some parents mentioned the recent child abductions and murders that have been documented in the news recently and said that this had made them wary of leaving their children with a stranger. The distrust that many parents felt towards anybody outside their extended family is perhaps characteristic of the present culture, and is a further reason behind parents' preferences for their child/ren to be cared for – if not by themselves – then by close family members.

In the Part 1 survey, a further important reason behind parents choosing informal providers was affordability. Between a quarter and a third of parents whose main provider was a grandparent, ex-spouse or partner or another relative said that the fact childcare was free or low cost was a reason for choosing this type of provision.

However, in spite of the perceived advantages in terms of trust and the appropriateness of the care provided, parents interviewed in depth cited problems with grandparents helping out with childcare. Some parents felt that their parents were getting too old to take on the responsibility of looking after children and that it could have implications for the grandparents' health. Another issue raised was that if they were looking after them full time, grandparents would be missing out on the special type of relationship they should have with their grandchildren.

Some parents did indicate guilt at the responsibility they were placing on their parents as full time childminders, although they felt they had little choice. Other parents had made the conscious decision not to rely on the children's grandparents as the main provider of childcare in order to preserve the relationship that should exist between grandparent and grandchild. One parent summarised the drawbacks of having grandparents as childcare providers:

“I was very definite I didn't want to use grandparents for our primary childcare because I didn't feel that it was fair on [them]. I see a lot of grandparents completely exhausted and perhaps irritable with their grandchildren because they're taking on this sort of mother role and they're not fit for it. I wanted their grandparents to enjoy them and to be proper grandparents and not to become fed up with them”.

Formal providers

The desire for their child to mix with other children was an important reason behind parents choosing a local authority or private nursery or crèche. This was also the case for parents using a local authority or private playgroup, a community playgroup or a nursery attached to a primary school. In each of these cases, between half and 70% of parents said that wanting their child to mix with others was a reason for choosing their main provider.

Parents choosing a private nursery or crèche were also more likely than those using local authority provisions to cite ease of access as a reason for choosing this type of provision (40%, compared with 30%).

In the depth interviews, parents choosing to send their children to nurseries cited the fact that their child could mix and socialise with other children as an important reason behind this choice of provider.

“He needs to have interaction with other children. That’s why he goes to the playgroup once a week because... he has to learn how to be sociable...”

This opinion was echoed by many parents across all groups. Parents valued nurseries as an environment where children could develop their social skills and become prepared for the transition to school.

“I think all kids should mix. I don’t think...a child left one-to-one - it is going to be a lot harder for them to mix when they go to school.”

Several parents mentioned having a high-staff-to-child ratio as an important factor in choosing which nurseries to send their children to. It was the view of some parents that a necessary element of the nursery would be that the children had one-on-one interaction and communication with a staff member, or perhaps even in the form of a ‘key worker’ who is only looking after a few children:

“I would say that it would be important to have... one person concentrating on the one baby...It’s important that that person - that there’s a relationship there. That she’s happy to go to nursery and also so she’s not always left with people she doesn’t know.”

Another characteristic of nurseries that parents praised was the segregation of children by age group, as this gave children attention and care relevant to their age group.

“...you’ve got your baby section, you’ve got your toddlers, and then you’ve got your pre-school, so it’s all segregated which I think is good. The babies need different attention to toddlers.”

However, some parents had had bad experiences with nurseries or had not chosen to send their child to a nursery after evaluating the type of care provided:

“...when we went in that day, I can still picture, there were at least two babies barely sitting up, and they were in high chairs and the two of them had fallen asleep and there was nobody anywhere near them and I just found that quite upsetting, and it might have been a bad time, I don’t know, but it was just enough to put me completely off.”

While several of the parents interviewed for the qualitative research used childminders or had used them in the past, there was a fairly high degree of suspicion and uncertainty about this type of provider (although this seemed to be primarily among those who had used a childminder in the past rather than those who currently used one). Some parents said they felt that the childminders were simply motivated by money, which perhaps is an unfair criticism of childminders as this is their profession and their way of earning a salary. One parent remarked that:

“I have used childminders in the past. They’re variable because they see it as a business”.

Another issue raised relating to childminders was that parents did not like the idea of one individual having such an impact and effect on their child, when the morals and principles of the childminder may vary from the parent:

“I don’t want anyone else mothering them apart from me because no one will do it the way that I would want it done”.

Another criticism was that a childminder may not show enough patience and fondness towards the child, or that s/he might not look after their children in a way that they approved of.

“..obviously strangers won’t always discipline your children the same way as you would or speak to them the same way and perhaps not invest time in them the same way as you would. That’s actually the disadvantage”.

Parents thus seemed to have an inherent conflict in their view of childminders - on one hand they worry that the childminder would not be fond enough of their children, but on the other hand they worry that the childminder will become too close to their children and perhaps undermine their role as a parent. Grandparents are perhaps seen as more 'safe' in this context, as they are trusted to care for the child but also have their own specific role in the family that does not compromise the role of the parent.

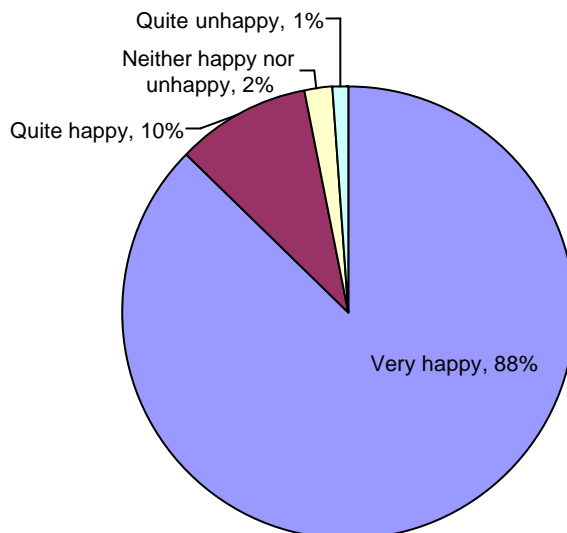
Satisfaction with main childcare provider

Parents were asked whether or not they still used the main provider that they had been using over the past year. Overall, 87% of main providers being used were the same, while 13% were not. Those using a formal provider were more likely to have stopped using this provider than those who relied on informal provision. For example, while 27% of parents had stopped using a childminder as their main provider, only 3% of parents had stopped asking their child/ren's grandparents to provide childcare.

Those parents who said they still used their main provider were asked whether they were happy or unhappy with this arrangement. Almost all (98%) said that they were either very or quite happy. Less than 1% said that they were very unhappy, therefore the figures do not appear on Figure D-3 below.

Figure D-3: Satisfaction with main childcare provider

Base: All providers still looking after child/ren



For those households who had ceased using their main provider of the past year, the main reasons given were that:

- their child had grown too old for that type of provision (33%)
- the household had a change of circumstances/arrangements (19%)
- the provider could not look after the child/ren any more (6%)
- it was too expensive (4%).

Rating of learning opportunities at main childcare provider

For just over a fifth of parents (n=231), the main childcare provision over the previous week had included an educational element. This group of parents was asked to rate the opportunities for learning provided by their main childcare provider. Almost all parents (96%) gave a 'very' or 'fairly' good rating, with only 1% saying the opportunities were 'fairly' poor and nobody saying they were 'very' poor. However, 2% said that they did not know how to rate their main provider's opportunities for learning. The figures varied slightly according to the age of the child receiving childcare, although there were no significant differences.

When asked what types of learning opportunities they thought were provided by their main provider, parents gave the responses shown in Table D-2 below.

Table D-2: types of learning opportunities provided by main provider

Base: All respondents whose main provider had educational element

	%
Arts/crafts/drawing/painting/colouring	33
Written language skills (letters, reading, writing)	29
Play/games/toys	25
Social skills	23
Numeracy/numbers/counting	16
Oral language skills (conversation, stories, listening)	15
Basic early learning (general)	12
Music/singing	12
Learning (unspecified)	11
Excursions/trips/walks	11
Physical activity/sport	9
Computers	8
Education/learning activities	7
Nature/environment/animals/plants/gardening	7
Life skills (hygiene, safety, discipline)	6
Homework	5
Puzzles/jigsaws	4
Role play/acting	2
Pre-school education	2
TV/videos/DVD	2
Dexterity	2
Creativity/imagination	2
Religion	1
Unweighted base	221
Weighted base	231

Comments from the depth interviews show how parents have a knowledge and appreciation of the activities and opportunities for learning provided during childcare. One parent rated the standard of after school care particularly highly, as she felt that her children were being entertained in a safe and fun environment.

“...there is a group of kids, the maximum at the moment is sixteen so the children are playing games and interacting and doing all the things that are fun...at least I know that [my child] is getting looked after in a good way through the after school club..”

The range of activities offered in nurseries and crèches was also praised by a number of parents.

“I think nursery is great. They get taught, they get nursery rhymes, baking, snacks, story time, play time, they are outside...The staff are really good. If there is a problem, they are there straight away and they tell you about it straight away and they don't leave it. It's not that big a group. There are only about ten [children] and there are three teachers.”

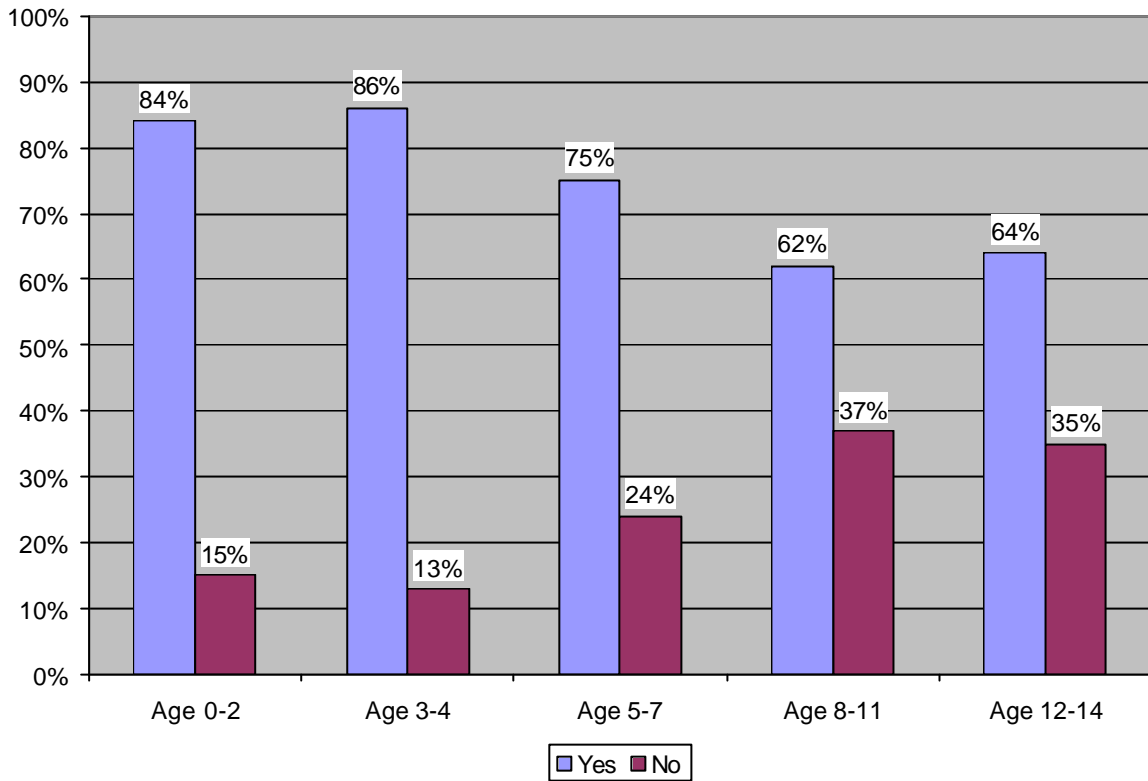
Some also mentioned the fact that nursery provided children with activities and opportunities for learning and socialising that they themselves found it difficult or did not have the time or resources to provide.

“I like how they get them to socialise. She loves all the activities. They do painting and sand and baking and all those kinds of things. I do some of those things but not so much...She comes home with cakes and biscuits that she's made, things that I wouldn't do. So I just love the fact that she's so happy there”.

All parents in the Part 1 survey – regardless of the types of childcare they used - were asked whether they thought it was within the role of a childcare provider to provide opportunities for learning. Almost three quarters (73%) thought that this was within the role of a childcare provider, although there was some variation in response depending on the ages of the respondents' child/ren. Parents of younger children were more likely than parents of older children to hold the above view, as Figure D-4 illustrates. (Note that in each subgroup, 1% of respondents did not answer the question, hence the figures do not add up to 100%).

Figure D-4: Whether or not is within the role of a childcare provider to provide opportunities for learning – by age of child

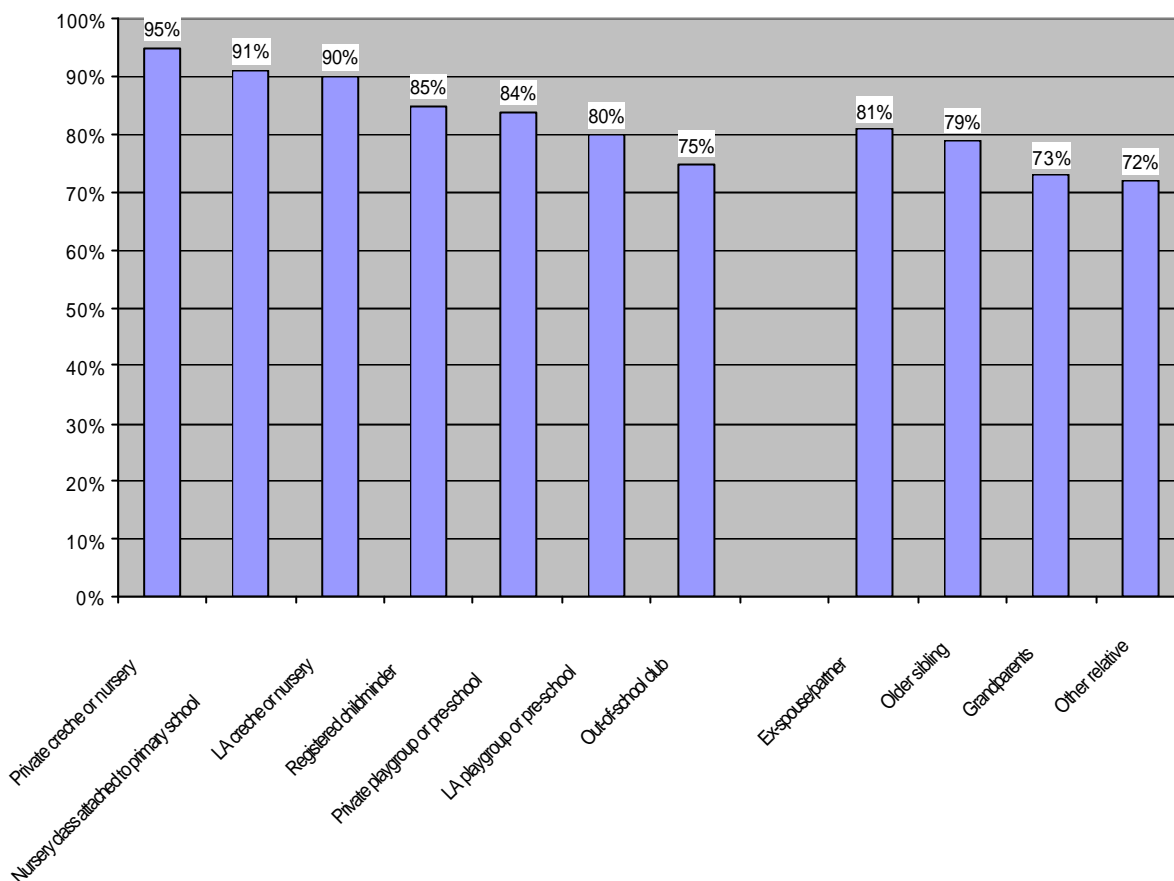
Base: All respondents



When analysing by type of childcare provider, parents were more slightly more likely to say that it was within the role of formal providers to provide learning opportunities than it was for informal providers. Among the formal providers, crèches or nursery schools, playgroups or pre-schools and nursery classes attached to primary schools received the highest number of responses to this end, as Figure D-5 illustrates.

Figure D-5: Whether or not is within the role of a childcare provider to provide opportunities for learning – by provider type

Base: All respondents



The parents interviewed in depth expressed mixed opinions over the activities and education they believed should be provided by a childcare provider. It was the view of some parents that childcare should include an educational element, especially when parents were paying for the service, as they wanted their children to be stimulated. This was the case where parents used childminders, nurseries or crèches.

“I would look for somebody who didn’t just sit them in front of the telly all day. The girl I was using...she sort of entertained them as well. She actually got down on the floor and played with them and kept them amused, which is similar to what I do myself with them. I would say that’s very important. Not just a case of leaving them to get on with it, you know, spending time with them.”

However, views differed according to the type of childcare provision. Some parents thought that there was no need for an educational element to after school care because:

“...ideally what I would like is for them to have fun, not for it to be educational because they are at school [and] they are getting enough [there] in my view”.

In the Part 1 survey, when asked whether they thought their current main provider should provide *more* opportunities for learning, almost seven in 10 parents (69%) said no, indicating satisfaction with the current levels of provision. Indeed, when asked to rate the standard of childcare received from their main provider, satisfaction was extremely high.

The main childcare provider for just under a third of parents (n=311) was a childminder, child carer, nanny, crèche, playgroup, Family Centre or out-of-school club. These parents were asked how they rated the standard of care from their main provider. All respondents (100%) gave a 'very' or 'fairly' good rating. Across subgroups, satisfaction with the standard of childcare followed the same trend.

Key findings:

Trust in the childcare provider was by far the most important factor behind parents' choice of provider, with over half (56%) giving this as their single-most important reason. Reliability and someone who would show their child affection were considered more important than accessibility or cost

Most commonly, parents would prefer to look after their own children, but where this was not possible, grandparents were the next preferred option because they could be trusted and it was felt that they would bring up the children in the same way as the parents would themselves

The distrust many parents felt towards allowing anyone outside their extended family to care for their child/ren is perhaps characteristic of the present culture

Parents choosing formal childcare did so because they wanted their children to mix with others of their own age, develop social skills and be educated

Three quarters of parents thought that it was within the role of a childcare provider to provide educational opportunities, with the expectation of this being higher for formal provision and for younger children

The majority of parents (98%) rate their current childcare providers highly, which is unsurprising given that the decision-making process behind choosing a provider is thorough and based on parents' ideals

E. Unmet demand for childcare

Key questions:

How often do childcare arrangements break down at short notice?

What alternative arrangements do parents make in these circumstances, and does this cause problems?

Why have childcare arrangements broken down in the past, and how can this be avoided in future?

How often have parents needed childcare over the last year (and week) and been unable to obtain it?

On which days and at what times have parents been unable to obtain childcare?

What are the reasons for this?

This chapter explores those occasions when there is unmet need for childcare, and there are two main sections to this. First, we look at how often childcare arrangements became unavailable at short notice over the previous year, the reasons for this and whether this breakdown in arrangements caused problems for parents.

Second, we discuss those occasions during the past year and week – aside from those when usual childcare arrangements have become unavailable - when parents have wanted or needed childcare and have been unable to obtain it. These occasions are defined as 'unmet demand.'

Breakdown of usual childcare arrangements in the last year

Parents who had used any form of childcare during the last year were asked whether their usual arrangements had ever broken down at short notice. For the majority of parents (72%), childcare arrangements had never broken down at short notice during this period, and a further 21% reported a breakdown in childcare arrangements less often than once every two months. Only 8% of parents reported a more frequent breakdown in their childcare arrangements, and half of these said that it had only occurred once every two months. Table E-1 shows that these overall results were not significantly different from those of the 2000 survey.

Table E-1: Frequency of breakdown in childcare arrangements in the last year (%)**Base: All respondents**

	2004	2000
Never	72	76
Less often	21	16
At least every 2 months	4	3
At least once a month	3	3
At least once every other week	1	1
At least once every week	*	1
Weighted base	1,003	1,171

Those parents (28% of the total; n=277) who said that their usual childcare arrangements *had* become unavailable at some point over the past year were asked when their arrangements had *last* become available at short notice, and what they had done under the circumstances. Just over a quarter (27%, n=75) of parents who said that their childcare arrangements had broken down at some point over the past year reported their last breakdown as being in the past month, with a further 16% (n=43) saying that their childcare arrangements had last become unavailable at short notice between one and two months prior to the interview.

More positively, nearly half of parents overall (48%, n=133) said that it had been three months or longer since their childcare arrangements had broken down at short notice.

When asked what actions they had taken when their usual childcare arrangements last broke down, six in 10 parents (61%) said that they looked after their child/ren themselves, with four in 10 (39%) making alternative arrangements.

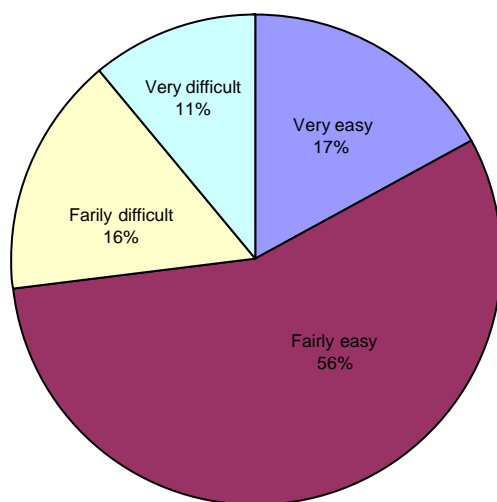
Those parents (61%; n=168) who had taken care of their child/ren themselves when childcare arrangements became unavailable at short notice were asked to what extent this had caused them problems. Of these, 11% said that it had caused serious problems, 43% said that it had caused some problems and the remainder (46%) said that it had not caused any problems.

Of those experiencing 'serious' or 'some' problems (54%; n=91), the main reasons given were not being able to go to work or having to take time off work (53%), having to rearrange or disrupt their work routine (22%), or having to cancel or change an appointment (5%).

Those parents who had made alternative arrangements for their child/ren when their childcare arrangements became unavailable at short notice were asked how easy or

difficult this had been. This applied to 39% of parents whose childcare had become unavailable at short notice (n=106). Nearly three quarters of these (73%) said that it had been very or fairly easy, with 27% saying it had been fairly or very difficult. Figure E-1 displays the findings.

Figure E-1: How easy or difficult was it for you to make alternative childcare arrangements?
Base: Those who made alternative arrangements when had unmet demand



Those who said it was easy to arrange alternative childcare (n=77) were asked why and the most common response was that family members were available to stand in, with 18 asking grandparents, 30 asking other relatives, friends or neighbours, while 13 asked their partner and 11 said that there were childminders or carers available.

Similarly, those who said it was difficult to arrange alternative childcare (n=29) were asked why. The most common reasons were that the parent had no one they could ask to help, or that they had had to take time off work.

Parents whose childcare arrangements had broken down at short notice at least once during the past year (28%, n=277) were asked to state why they thought this had happened. The most common reasons given for a breakdown in childcare arrangements were illness (either of the child or the carer – 39%), that the usual carer had other commitments or was busy (20%), strikes or industrial action (16%) and weather conditions (7%).

When asked if the parent thought that there were any ways that such a breakdown could be avoided in future, a quarter (26%) thought that there was no solution and that the breakdown was unavoidable. A further 56% said they did not know how a breakdown could be avoided in future. Two per cent thought it could be avoided if staff were paid a better wage and similar proportions thought that better communication or improved flexibility would help in the future.

In general, parents accept that occasional disruption to their childcare is inevitable. The comments made do not seem to reflect a structural problem with the way that childcare is delivered; more that when breakdowns do occur, they are due to external factors which cannot be changed.

Unmet demand for childcare in the last year

Aside from those times when childcare arrangements had broken down, parents were asked whether there had been any occasions during the last year when they had wanted or needed childcare, but had been unable to get it. It was suggested that 'unmet demand' might include times when parents had not been able to find anyone suitable to look after their child/ren, the child/ren had been ill or the parents had not been able to afford childcare.

The majority of parents (79%) said that they had not experienced any unmet demand for childcare during the past year. A further 14% of parents said that they had experienced unmet demand infrequently (less often than every two months). Only 6% said that they had experienced more frequent problems, either once every two months (2%), once a month (2%) or once a week (2%). These results are in line with the findings of the 2000 survey, as Table E-2 demonstrates.

Table E-2: Frequency of unmet demand for childcare in the last year (%)

Base: All respondents

	2004	2000
	%	%
Never	79	74
Less often (than every 2 months)	14	15
At least every 2 months	2	5
At least once a month	2	3
At least once every other week	*	2
At least once every week	2	2

Weighted base	1,003	1,336
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While income was a factor contributing to unmet demand in the 2000 survey – with lower income groups reporting more frequent unmet demand – this was not borne out in the current survey. Those with a household income of up to £10,399 were no more likely to report frequent unmet demand (of at least once every other week) than those in higher income brackets.

The main reasons given by parents who experienced unmet demand for childcare are shown in Table E-3 below and are compared with the reasons given in the 2000 survey.

Table E-3– Reasons for unmet demand (%)

Base: All those who had unmet demand in the past year

	Total	Total 2000 survey
My usual arrangements have not always been available to me	40	41
I cannot find anyone suitable to do it	27	42
My child/ren have been ill	23	28
I cannot afford it	14	33
There are not enough childcare places	13	12
I have had transport difficulties	5	10
My child/ren is/are too young for the available childcare	4	8
Childcare unavailable for the hours I want	2	-
My child/ren is/are too old for the available childcare	1	6
Base	190 (unweighted) 210 (weighted)	348 (unweighted)

Four in 10 parents who had experienced unmet demand for childcare said that this was because their usual arrangements had become unavailable, which is a similar proportion to the 2000 survey.

In the depth interviews, some parents raised the problem of having a childminder decide to leave and stop looking after their children. The process of finding an appropriate childminder had been an arduous and lengthy task for some parents, so that losing that childminder created many difficulties including, in one case, the mother having to give up work to look after the children. After having a childminder leave, some parents lost faith in

their reliability and were not keen to repeat the long process of finding somebody suitable who then left their position, especially if this was at short notice.

One parent, when asked why she did not find another childminder, replied: *“Not after getting let down like that at the last minute”*. It did seem that these parents were no longer willing to rely on one person (outwith their family) for their childcare provision.

Some parents also cited problems with childcare arrangements when they wanted to go out and socialise in the evening. There was heavy reliance on using family members to care for their child/ren, and when family were not available, this caused problems for the parents.

In the Part 1 survey, only just over a quarter of parents (27%) said that they had been unable to identify a suitable childcare provider, compared with over two-fifths (42%) of parents in 2000. Although the proportion of parents experiencing this type of unmet demand has decreased, it was still an issue, as it was raised during the depth interviews. Some parents said that they had experienced unmet demand as there were not enough childcare places in nurseries or crèches in their area, or because they could not find a suitable childminder to care for their children. There was a perception amongst some parents that the number of available childminders was decreasing, due to the new restrictions and expectations of the job.

“..There’s less and less of them. Less and less people willing to do it. And from what I hear from the childminders that I speak to, there is so much red tape now and they think, ‘It’s not for me.’”

Almost a quarter of parents responding to the Part 1 survey (23%) had experienced unmet demand when their child/ren had been ill. Some parents interviewed in depth explained that in this situation, they would prefer to be at home with their child when he or she was unwell. Additionally, parents using formal childcare providers also commented that the provider was sometimes not willing to look after an ill child.

“Another thing you have to worry about is when they are sick, because nurseries won’t take them when they are sick and the mother’s instinct is that you want to be with them”.

In these circumstances, some parents mentioned having to take time off work, whether by taking holidays or by reporting in as sick. Some parents did express discomfort and guilt about having to take time off. However, one mother said that she had come to accept that

she would experience problems juggling her work and family and that she now prioritised what was most important to her.

“...now I have realised I am a mother first and if [child] needs me I have to cancel [appointments], they have to be disappointed. I can't afford to get so stressed out about it”.

The flexibility of employers when parents were taking time off work during school holidays or when their children were ill varied quite considerably. Some parents had experienced problems with their employer, and felt they were not given the appropriate support and adaptability when they had childcare problems.

“I think employers should be more flexible when it comes to the children, especially when something is wrong with them whether it just be a wee accident or not, or something more long term, they should be more flexible that way”.

“Because of what I do, they wouldn't expect me to say ‘No, I can't come in, or no I can't cover such and such,’ but having said that they are quite flexible so if I work extra I can go in late one day or leave slightly earlier...”

However, other parents had more flexibility regarding their working hours, which they found to be of real benefit:

“..it doesn't matter which days I go in as long as I do the 16 hours a week which is quite handy really, especially when [the children] are ill”.

While only 14% of parents said that they had not been able to afford suitable childcare in the Part 1 survey, more than double this percentage gave this reason in 2000 (33%). One issue that was raised in the depth interviews was the problem of finding appropriate childcare during the school holidays, especially over the summer break when children are off school for six weeks. One parent described the expense of childcare during this period as being, *“another mortgage for the summer”*. This problem was magnified by the fact that various after school clubs or nurseries tied to schools were not open during the school holidays so some parents commented that they had to find alternative arrangements for a six week period over the summer.

In both years, only a small percentage of parents put down unmet demand to there simply not being enough childcare providers, or enough of the right type of providers (13% this year; 12% in 2000). However, while the percentage overall was small, it was a major issue for particular groups of parents, especially those with children who have special needs, those with older children and those living in rural areas, as well as single parents.

In the depth interviews, parents of children with moderate to severe special needs remarked that there was not enough suitable provision for their child that would allow their child to mix with other children their age, and for the parent to have some respite.

“..[child] being a special needs [child], there are not enough clubs, there are not facilities, there is not enough help definitely in that respect with [child] outwith my family”.

Parents of children with less severe special needs had experienced unmet demand for childcare because some providers were unwilling to take their children due to their behavioural problems.

“I think when they saw his behaviour they weren't able to cope with it”.

It was suggested by one parent that some mainstream nurseries should be able to cope with children with less severe special needs so that these children could mix with their siblings and communicate with other children. It was believed that this would be a beneficial experience for all children involved.

“ ..(we) need things for children with disabilities to integrate them as best as they can, because people don't understand”.

Parents of children who were slightly older (i.e. aged 12-14 years old) raised some salient issues in the depth interviews, which related to unmet demand for childcare. It was felt that there was not enough provision for older children, and that the majority of childcare providers only catered for children up to 9 or 10. Some parents felt that there needed to be more clubs and organisations for the older children, where their parents would feel reassured that they were being looked after but where the children could be entertained in a way that was suitable for their age group:

“I would make the most of an opportunity if [child] was going to a club and enjoying it...I don't think there is a facility for the 12, 13, 14 age group”.

However, one parent who used an after-school club for their children mentioned that the children felt bored and uninspired by the club and that they would have preferred to go back to their own house or play with their friends. This stresses the need for provision not only to be available, but to be appropriate.

“..they used to go to the after school club but they are at the age now where they don't want to know, think it is boring and when they come to a certain age, some of these things aren't cool anymore”.

Parents living in rural areas who were interviewed in depth said that they felt constrained by their choice of childcare provider, as in some situations they only had one or two formal options available to them. Thus, some parents were unable to gain access to their first choice of childcare provider as it was unavailable in the local area.

“I would consider using a childminder if there was one available round about but at the moment there is not”.

It was also remarked that as there were so few providers in rural areas, each provider's reputation was fairly well known and therefore the providers with good reputations never had any spaces for children as they were fully booked. Parents in rural areas also said that they had to rely more heavily on family and friends to help them with childcare due to their limited options.

However, some parents living in a rural area felt that the benefits of raising their children in that area outweighed the cost of limited childcare options, such as the good community spirit and the inner network of support:

“The area has benefits, It's a nice place to bring up kids so I don't see the area as a problem”.

In the case of single parents, some had experienced many instances of unmet demand for childcare as they could not rely on their ex-partner to share responsibility for childcare. One parent felt that the government should be doing more for single parents to help them with the problem of unmet demand.

“I think they should especially help single parents because it is hard enough just being on your own”.

Unmet demand for childcare in the last week

In addition to being asked about unmet demand in the past year, parents were asked whether there had been occasions in the previous week when they had wanted or needed childcare but had been unable to get it. The majority of parents (96%) said that they had not experienced unmet demand during the past week, the same figure as for the 2000 survey.

For the 4% (n=43) of parents who had experienced unmet demand for childcare in the past week, this was more likely to occur on weekdays than at weekends. There was no unmet demand recorded on Sundays.

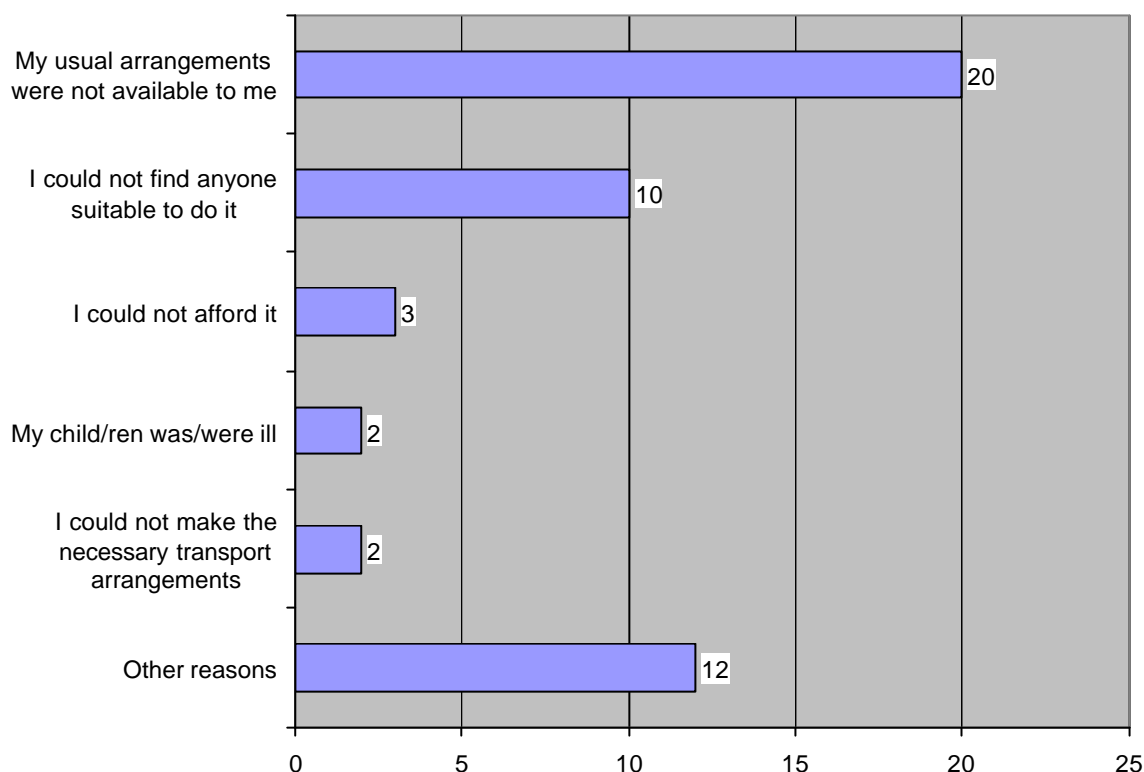
Parents experiencing unmet demand were most likely to start wanting or needing childcare between 8am and 10am (10 out of 43 parents), and to stop wanting or needing it either between 3pm and 4pm (7 out of 43 parents) or after 7pm (7 out of 42 parents). These findings are unsurprising, as they coincide with the start and end of a working day, and the end of school time.

Of those 43 parents experiencing unmet demand, 28 had wanted or needed up to five hours of childcare, while 12 had needed between six and 10 hours and just 4 had needed 11 or more hours. Almost all of these (42 of 43 parents) said that they wanted or needed childcare for the whole of that period.

The main reasons given by parents who reported unmet demand in the past week are summarised in Figure E-2. They are given as numbers rather than percentages because of the low base size (n=43).

Figure E-2: Reasons for unmet demand in the last week

Base: Those who had unmet demand for childcare in last week



Key findings:

For almost three quarters of parents, their usual childcare arrangements had never broken down at short notice during the last year, and for a further fifth, childcare arrangements had broken down less frequently than every two months

Of the 28% of parents who said that their childcare had broken down at short notice at some point during the last year, six in ten had looked after their child/ren themselves and four in ten had had to make alternative arrangements

Looking after their child/ren themselves when their usual childcare arrangements had broken down had caused problems for just over half of parents (54% of n=168). Problems centred around taking time off work or rearranging their work routines

Three quarters of the 106 parents who had made alternative arrangements when their usual childcare arrangements had broken down said that this had been very or fairly easy. Usually, family members, friends or neighbours were available to stand in

There does not seem to be a structural problem with the way childcare is delivered: in general, parents accept that occasional disruption to their childcare is inevitable and are able to arrange alternatives

Eight in ten parents had not experienced any 'unmet demand' for childcare in the last year (that is, times - other than when their usual arrangements had broken down - when they wanted or needed childcare and had been unable to get it)

The main reasons for the unmet demand experienced by a fifth of parents were that their usual arrangements had not always been available, they had not been able to find anyone suitable or their child/ren had been ill. Some parents reported that the number of childminders available in their area was on the decrease

When children were ill, parents generally preferred to look after them themselves, but some experienced problems with taking time off work to fulfil this role. Parents with family-friendly working arrangements expressed less discomfort and guilt over taking time off to look after (a) sick child/ren

Only 4% of parents (n=43) reported unmet demand for childcare over the last week, and the most commonly given reasons were that their usual arrangements were not available, or that they could not find a suitable provider

F. Childcare use and labour market participation

Key questions:

What are the employment and activity profiles and patterns of the parents responding to the survey?

What are working parents' attitudes towards their working hours, journey time to work and childcare arrangements?

How do different types of childcare arrangements help parents to go out to work?

For non-working parents, what are the incentives and disincentives to go to work or undertake education or training?

What expectations do non-working parents have if they intend to work, train or undertake education in the future?

The main aim of this chapter is to explore parents' labour market participation – mapping out specific details such as working hours, reasons for working or not working, and the incentives and disincentives – and discussing how parents manage their childcare in this context. As this was the focus of the Part 2 survey of 500 parents, this chapter draws mainly on data from that survey.

The first half of the chapter is concerned with describing patterns of and attitudes towards employment for working parents, while the second half explores the expectations and views of non-working parents. In each section, both the views of two-parent and lone parent families are considered.

Parents' working status

In the Part 2 survey of 500 parents, respondents were asked to provide details of their main activity during the day - that is, whether they were working full or part-time, studying, training or anything else. Three in 10 (30%) of respondents overall worked full-time, with over a third saying that they work part-time (37%).

Mothers were more likely to be working part-time, while fathers worked full-time, and mothers were far more likely than fathers to be looking after the home and family full-time.

Table F-1 : Respondents' current working status, by household and respondent type

Base: All respondents

	Household type		Respondent type				Total
	2- parent family	1- parent family	Mother (2- parent family)	Single mother	Father (2- parent family)	Single father	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Working full-time	31	25	24	25	74	20	30
Working part-time	37	36	42	33	7	40	37
Government training scheme	0	1	0	1	0	0	*
Unemployed looking for work	2	8	*	8	7	20	3
Looking after home and family	24	25	27	30	5	0	24
Retired	1	0	0	0	2	0	*
Student	2	3	2	3	0	0	2
Other	4	2	4	0	5	20	3
Base	392	106	271	76	42	5	502

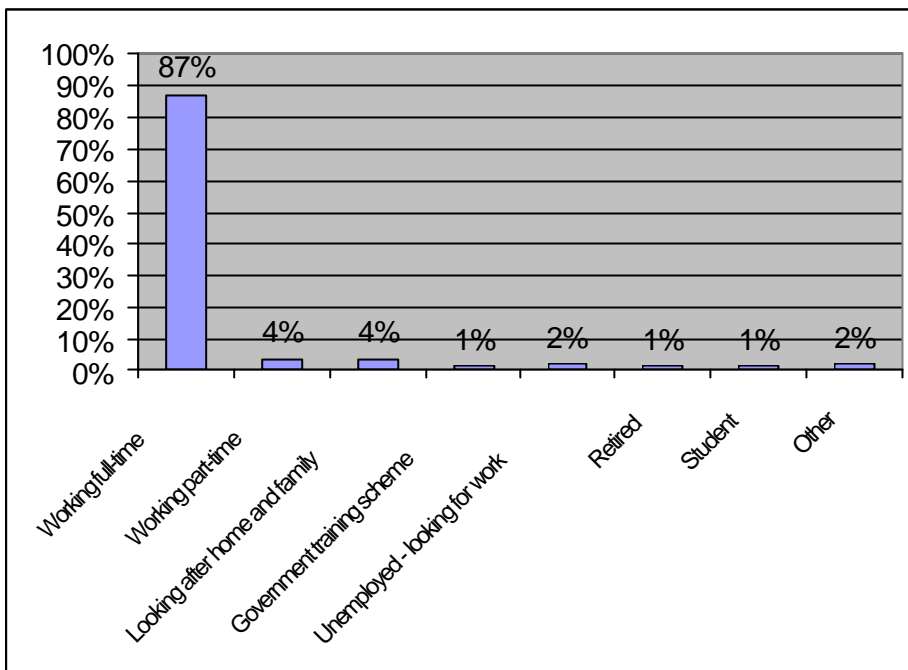
The 78% (n=392) of respondents who lived with a spouse or partner were also asked to provide details on that person's working status. The majority (87%) of respondents' partners were in full-time employment, with a further 4% working part-time. Most respondents were female, meaning that the majority of their male partners or spouses were working. The full findings are shown in Figure F-1 .

Of the 66% of respondents in either full or part-time paid employment (n=333), the majority (95%) said that they currently had one job, while the remainder had more than one job. Lone parents were slightly more likely to have more than one job than were respondents from two parent families.

The vast majority of respondents whose partners were working (97%) said that their partner currently had one job.

Figure F-1: Current working status of respondents' partner

Base: All respondents living with a spouse or partner



Those respondents not in work (33%, n=165) – who included the unemployed, retired, students, those on training schemes and those looking after home and family – were asked whether they had done any paid work in the previous week, and just 4% said that they had.

Of those whose partners were not currently in work (n=36) only three had done any paid work in the previous week.

Working respondents (including those who had worked during the last week, n=339) were asked whether they had ever had any breaks from employment of one month or more. Seven in 10 (71%) had had a break at some point, and these were more likely to be women than men (76% compared with 46%). As the most common reason for an employment break was maternity leave, this is unsurprising.

Of the non-working partners (n=33), 15 had last been in employment between 1999 and 2004, while 12 had last been in paid work before 1998.

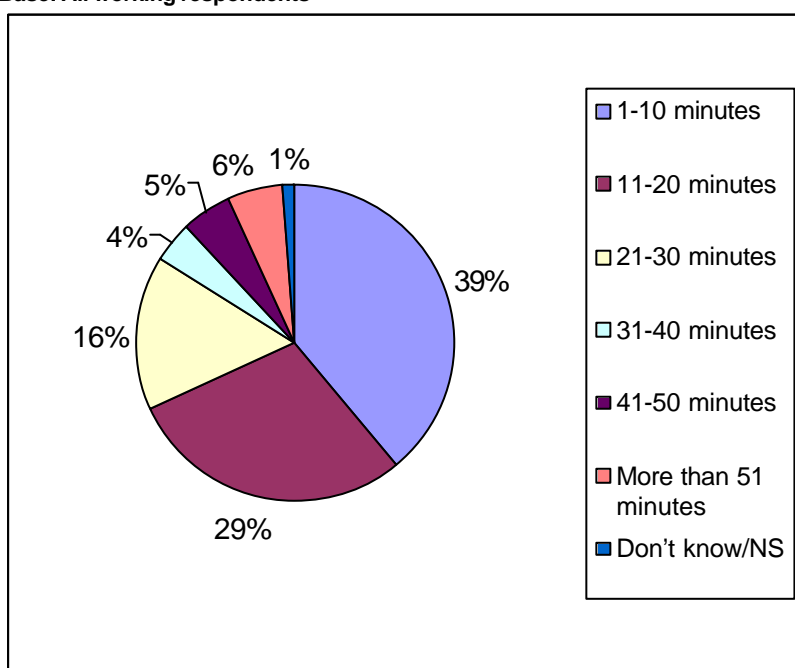
Over half of respondents who had had a break from employment had returned to work sometime between 1999 and 2004, while the remainder had returned before 1998 (61% and 39% respectively).

Working respondents were also asked whether they ever worked from home. Just 5% said that they worked from home all the time, while 10% said they worked from home some of the time. Most commonly, respondents said that they never worked from home (85%).

Respondents with partners were also asked whether their partner ever worked from home. Of those partners in paid employment (n=359), just 4% worked from home all the time, 12% worked from home some of the time and the majority (84%) never worked from home.

Journey times from home to the workplace varied from one minute to over 51 minutes, although four in 10 (39%) had a journey time of 10 minutes or less, and a further three in 10 (29%) said that their journey took between 11 and 20 minutes. While 16% said that their journey time to work took 21-30 minutes, for 15% of respondents, their journey time to work was 31 minutes or more. There were no significant differences across subgroups.

Figure F-2: Respondents' journey time from home to work
Base: All working respondents



Journey times to work were on average longer for respondents' partners than they were for respondents themselves. A quarter of respondent's partners (24%) had journey times of 1-10 minutes, while the same proportion (24%) spent between 11 and 20 minutes getting to work, and a further fifth (22%) having a journey time of 21-30 minutes. While 11% of respondents' partners had a journey time between 31 and 50 minutes, 17% spent more than 51 minutes on their journey. As the majority of respondents' partners worked full-time

(87%), it is clear that in many cases, they are the household's highest income earner, thus they may have to travel further afield to find suitable jobs.

The majority of respondents in paid employment (81%) worked similar hours on all or most working days. Similarly, 79% worked on the same days of the week each week, while only 21% said they worked on different days each week.

Eight in 10 of respondents' partners (80%) worked similar hours each day, and 81% worked the same days each week.

Of those respondents who were not currently working (n=165), two thirds (62%) said that they were last in paid employment between 1999 and 2004, while the remainder (33%) were last in paid employment before 1998. (6% of respondents did not answer this question).

Factors affecting parents' decisions over participation in the labour market

All parents in the Part 1 survey of 1,003 respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they thought were the main factors affecting their decision to work, study, train or stay at home to look after their children. Each respondent was permitted to state up to three factors, and issues such as finance, career, childcare, child-related and social factors emerged as being important. The overall list is shown below in Table F-2.

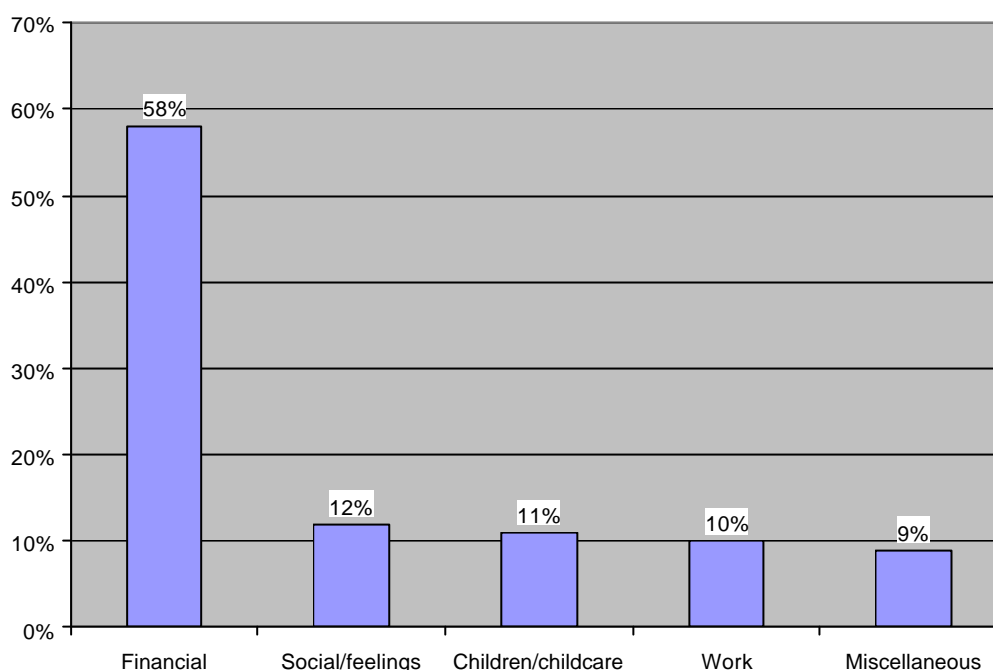
Table F-2: Main factors affecting parents' decisions to work/train/study/stay at home
Base: All parents

		%
Parents who are working, studying or training		
Financial factors	General financial reasons	68
	No choice/have to/need to work	3
	Do not want/cannot survive on benefits	1
	Single parent/on my own/main breadwinner	1
Career-related factors	Career reasons	8
	Job prospects/ambition/get a better job	2
	To keep up work skills	2
	I have my own business/self-employed	1
Childcare-related factors	I have childcare/someone to look after the children	3

	Children are at school	1
	Wanted child to mix with other children/peer group	1
Social factors	Needed adult company/to be sociable/meet people	11
	Self-esteem/fulfillment/sanity/good for me	9
	Break from the children/gets me out of the house	5
	Education/self development/intellectual stimulation	5
	Independence	4
	An outside interest	1
Full-time stay-at-home parents		
Child-related factors	Wanted to bring up/look after children myself/spend time with children	6
	Child is too young/pre-school age	2
Weighted base		1,003

Parents were then asked to state what they thought had been the *single* most important factor in their decision to work, study, train or stay at home as a full-time parent. Overall, as Figure F-3 shows, financial reasons had been the main factor behind parents' decisions with 58% of parents quoting this.

Figure F-3: Most important factor affecting parents' decisions to work/train/study/stay at home
Base: All parents



'Miscellaneous' factors included the location of childcare and workplace, flexibility of working or childcare arrangements, and the simple satisfaction among parents of choosing what they wanted to do.

Working parents' views on employment

In the Part 2 survey of 500 parents, respondents in paid employment were asked to state the reasons behind their decision to work, and were permitted to give more than one response. As was the case in the Part 1 survey, financial reasons were popular, with parents saying that they have no choice because they need the money (12%) or that that working was essential because their partner either did not earn enough (25%) or did not work (5%).

When parents were interviewed in depth, some felt they had no choice but to work as they needed two salaries each month. In some circumstances mothers were working nightshifts so they could look after their children during the day when their partner was at work, which they did not believe to be an ideal situation:

"...it is terrible that you have to make the choice of leaving them with inadequate childcare or doing what I do and I am permanently shattered or you have to work enough hours to pay through the nose for some kind of decent childcare."

However, the desire to participate in the labour market was also a major factor. The majority of parents said that they enjoyed working or that they would feel useless without a job (65% and 20% respectively). This feeling was echoed in the depth interviews with parents. When asked about their decision to work rather than look after their children full-time, some mothers said that they enjoyed their work and preferred having both a career and a family to staying at home. When asked about the cost of childcare while working, one mother said:

“It is a lot of money but I would still rather do that than be at home. I would rather work”.

The availability of flexible working arrangements was also cited by some parents as being a reason behind their working (although this would be specific to their particular job), and these arrangements included being able to work from home, working flexi-time and not having to work during school holidays. Table F-3 shows the full list of reasons given.

Table F-3: Reasons behind parents' decisions to work
Base: All working parents

		%
Financial factors	I have no choice because I need the money	12
	I have no choice because my partner/spouse does not work	5
	I have no choice because my partner/spouse does not earn enough	25
	I like to have my own money	45
	I need to keep contributing to my pension	25
Career-related factors	I enjoy working	65
	I would feel useless without a job	20
	My career would suffer if I took a break	15
Flexible working-related factors	I can work from home some of the time	4
	I can work from home most/all of the time	3
	My partner/spouse can work from home some of the time	1
	My partner/spouse can work from home most/all of the time	*
	I don't work during school holidays	10
	My partner/spouse doesn't work during school holidays	2
	I can work flexi-time	11

	My partner/spouse can work flexi-time	2
Social factors	I want to get out of the house	38
Other	Other reasons	5
	None of these reasons	2
Base		333

Of all the reasons given above, parents were asked to state the *single* most important factor which had encouraged them to work. A fifth (19%) said that they like to have their own money. Although a financial reason, this suggests that their decision to work had been based on choice rather than necessity, in order to maintain a desired standard of living. A quarter (26%) of respondents said that they worked because they enjoy it, thus reinforcing the above findings.

However, for 16% of parents, their main reason for working was because their spouse did not earn enough money.

Parents responding to the Part 2 survey were presented with a series of statements about their employment situations and were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each. The overall results for each are shown in Table F-4.

Table F-4: Extent of agreement/disagreement with employment statements

Base: All working respondents

		Agree	Disagree	Neither/ nor	Base
		%	%	%	
1	My job does not offer good prospects	32	58	10	333
2	In my job I can use my skills, knowledge and experience	85	10	5	333
3	In my job I don't have enough freedom to do the job as I want to	18	66	15	333
4	<i>My job is well paid</i>	43	35	21	333

Below, each of the statements are analysed in turn.

1. My job does not offer good prospects

Over half of respondents (58%) did not agree with the above statement, with 11% strongly disagreeing. A third did agree that their job does not offer good prospects, and this was particularly the case for those who worked longer hours (64% of those who worked 45 or more hours a week agreed that their job did not offer good prospects).

2. In my job I can use my skills, knowledge and experience

The majority of respondents (85%) agreed that they could use their skills, knowledge and experience within their job, and 30% strongly agreed. Just 10% disagreed with this statement. There were no significant differences by sub-group.

3. In my job I don't have enough freedom to do the job as I want to

There was disagreement with this statement from two thirds of parents (66%), thus the majority feel that they *do* have enough freedom in their job. Again, there were no significant differences between sub-groups.

4. My job is well paid

Over four in 10 parents (42%) agreed that their job was well paid, with 35% disagreeing. Nine per cent strongly disagreed that their job was well paid. However, a fifth of respondents (21%) did not give an opinion either way.

Overall, the findings showed that parents feel positive about their jobs and are happy with their working conditions, prospects and pay.

Childcare arrangements that help parents to work

Working parents in the Part 2 survey were asked whether there were any aspects of their chosen childcare that helped them to work. The main reasons given could be grouped into those aspects associated with:

- the childcare provider, their availability, cost and quality
- flexible working arrangements which allowed parents to have more choice about their childcare provider and the times their children were cared for, as well as the time they themselves spent with their children
- the age of the children; generally, older children and those at school required less frequent childcare and for shorter periods of time than their younger counterparts.

Table F-5 shows the list of responses in full.

Table F-5: Aspects of childcare that help parents to work**Base:** All working parents

		%
Childcare arrangements	I/we have reliable/cheap/free childcare	26
	I/we have good quality childcare	36
	My partner/spouse is able to help with childcare	16
	The child/ren's father/mother is able to help with childcare	3
	Relatives are able to help with childcare	48
	Friends are able to help with childcare	9
Working arrangements	I/we have childcare which fits with my working hours	33
	I/we have childcare which fits with my partner/spouse's working hours	11
	I work when my spouse/partner is not working so s/he can look after then children	7
	I can work flexi-time	1
	My employer provides/pays for childcare	1
	My partner/spouse's employer provides/pays for childcare	0
Age of children	My child/ren is/are at school	32
	My child/ren is/are old enough to look after themselves	3
Other	Other reasons	1
	None of these reasons	11
Base		333

Of the factors mentioned above, parents were asked to state which they thought had been the *most* important in helping them to work. The main reasons given were the quality of childcare (29%) and the fact that relatives were able to help out with childcare (18%). Both of these reasons indicate that working parents feel reassured if they know their children are being cared for by a person they trust and who will provide the appropriate level and quality of care. The issue of trust was an important factor in parental choice over childcare provider, as Chapter D illustrated.

Whether working parents feel they had a real choice over whether or not to work

In both the main and Part 2 surveys, the issues of finance and actually *wanting* to work were the major factors affecting working parents' decisions to work, whether this was full or part-time. When working parents responding to the Part 1 survey were asked whether they

felt they had a real *choice* in deciding whether or not to work, four in ten said that they *did* feel they had a choice, while the remaining six in 10 did not.

When asked why they felt they had a choice over whether or not to work, financial reasons (that is, going to work because they needed the money) emerged as the most commonly cited factor (48%), although other issues such as wanting to work were also important (15%). Respondents were permitted to give more than one answer, and the full list is shown in Table F-6.

Table F-6: Reasons why parents felt they had a choice over whether to work or not
Base: All working parents

Parents who felt they did have a choice	%
My decision/choice/I wanted to work	15
I can afford not to work/husband works/financially secure	14
To keep up or better standard of living	8
Fits in with childcare arrangements	2
Self-esteem/independence	2
<hr/>	
Parents who felt they did not have a choice	
Need the money/income	48
I am the main breadwinner/single parent	3
Didn't want to rely on state benefits	3
Family business/self-employed	1
<hr/>	
Other	6
Unweighted base	633
Weighted base	641

Whether or not working parents felt they had a choice over their decision to work varied according to the age of their child/ren. While 47% of parents with children aged 12-14 years said that they *did* feel they had a real choice over whether or not to work, this was true for only 33% of parents with children aged 0-2 years. This is likely to be linked both to the higher costs of childcare (such as nurseries, crèches or childminders) for younger children, and the fact that 12-14 year olds only need after-school care or can take part in extra-curricular activities.

An interesting point was raised during the depth interviews, which was that some parents apply a 'five year gap' in terms of when they have children. This is when parents will not have another child until their first child is old enough to go to school, as they cannot afford to pay childcare costs for two children.

This difference in parents' perceptions in terms of whether they have a real choice to work or not which appears to be linked to the age of the child, is also related to the preference of many parents to look after their children full-time when their children are very young. A common opinion amongst many parents was that they did not want to leave their child when they were a baby or aged till around three years old. The two main reasons for this were that the parents felt they would be missing out on the first experiences of their child, and that this would be something that they could never re-live or get back. Secondly, they felt the child benefited from having their mother when they were such a young age, as this gave the child consistency:

"I think it's a bit cruel to go and leave your wean at that time, because the first few years of their lives they're needing their mum, I would say".

There were also differences by household type and working status. Lone parents were more likely than couples to say that they did *not* feel they had a choice over whether or not to work (74% compared with 55%).

Both lone parents and couples who worked part-time (or were in a two-parent household where the other partner worked full-time) were more likely to say that they had a real choice over their decision to work than did parents working full-time. This is an interesting finding in the context of employers' flexibility over working hours; parents working full-time may feel that this is the only option open to them or may not have seriously considered working part-time because it is not part of their employer's culture.

Table F-7: Did parents feel they had real choice over whether or not to work, by household working status**Base:** All working parents

	2 parents		1 parent	
	Both work f/t	1 works f/t, 1 p/t	Works f/t	Works p/t
	%	%	%	%
Yes	38	50	19	33
No	62	49	80	67
Don't know	*	1	1	0
Unweighted base	176	285	63	64
Weighted base	188	285	68	62

During the depth interviews, parents of children with special needs were asked about their decisions to work or stay at home. This group of parents had specific problems and issues relating to their decision to work. One parent felt that she had no option of working as there was not suitable childcare available for her daughter, and that she could not be a reliable employee due to the unpredictability of her situation:

"I can't go out to work at the moment because it wouldn't be fair on an employer because she can change from day to day so it would be silly to take on a job at the moment whether it be part-time or not and for school holidays you really need to be there as well".

An overwhelming majority of working parents in the Part 1 survey (89%) said that overall, they were happy with their decision to work. There were no significant differences by age of child, household type or working status.

Respondents who did not work were also asked whether they were happy with their decision to not work. Three quarters (73%) said that overall, they were happy with their decision, compared with 21% who were not and 6% who said that they did not know. There were no significant differences by age of child, but lone parent households were less likely to be happy with their decision than were respondents from two-parent households (32% of lone parents said that they were not happy, compared with 15% of parents in households where they did not work but their partner did).

The explanations for this are complex as the decision over whether or not to work is tied up in financial circumstances, the availability and cost of childcare and parental preferences over how their child/ren should be reared. Lone parents may not have decided that they do

not *want* to work, but having weighed up the financial benefits of working or not working and offset these against the costs of childcare, may have concluded that working was not a viable financial option.

During the depth interviews, parents were also asked about their decision to work (whether full or part-time) and the motivating factors behind this decision. The conflict that mothers face between working and being a full-time mother was raised by many parents, who then made differing decisions about this situation. This conflict was perhaps accurately summed up by one mother who commented that:

“Well I just think you can’t have everything. I can’t have a glittering career with loads of opportunities and also have a family that I see a lot”.

Some mothers felt that their career and earnings from working full-time were not a priority in their life, and that as they had decided to have children, they should then take the responsibility of raising and looking after those children:

“Yes I could go and get a job somewhere full-time and work full-time to get these kinds of things but then I am not spending time with my family. Why have children and pay somebody else to watch them – that is the way I feel....”

This was also a reason why some mothers worked part-time instead of full-time. It seemed to be a compromise that parents were making in order to spend adequate time with their children but also earn enough to keep their children in the type of lifestyle that they wanted for them:

“I think each to their own and everybody has slightly different views, but to me the children would always come first but I wouldn’t see them if I worked full-time”.

However, many parents when interviewed in depth indicated their frustration at juggling their work in order to earn a decent salary with their time available to spend with their children. Some of the student parents felt particularly frustrated as they were attending university or college, working part-time, studying at night and still attempting to spend considerable time with their children:

“..I don’t see why I should have to spend all my time to study and work. At the end of the day I’m still their mum and I deserve to spend a bit of time with them”.

The above quotation highlights an important point, that parents were not simply concerned that their children would feel neglected or feel their parents were not there enough, but that

parents also miss out and feel cheated if they cannot spend as much time as they would like with their children.

Other parents had started out working full-time when they had children but found they were spreading themselves too thinly, and not experiencing a sense of satisfaction or achievement in any area of their life. One parent commented that:

"I was stressed at work and I was worrying about the way I was bringing the children up. I also realised that they're only young once and if you don't invest in them when they're young then you might wreak problems in later life".

In some cases, the mother looked after her children full-time, although many different reasons were cited for this. In certain cases, the mother had made the choice to look after her children full time as she felt her children would benefit most from having their mother at home.

It was also the case that some mothers stayed at home as it would not have been financially viable or effective for her to work as their wages would have been taken up with the cost of childcare. In rural areas, where there was a shortage in jobs and where many people were working for the minimum wage, this was a particularly common situation.

"It wouldn't be worth my while (to work). I'd be going there doing the work for nothing because I would have to pay the childminder".

Amongst those parents who chose to stay at home and care for their child full-time, it was suggested that parents should be provided with some form of supplement to acknowledge their decision to not work but be a full-time parent:

"I definitely think if a mother has a child she should be able to look after it for a couple of years without having nothing (i.e. money), since she has sort of been forced out of work".

Parents' planned labour market activities over the next year

Both working and non-working parents responding to the Part 2 survey were asked what their plans were regarding employment over the next year. For working parents, around a fifth (21%) said that they did not wish to make any changes to their current situation. Among those who did foresee change, the main aspirations were to undertake (more) learning or

training (39%) and to get a pay-rise (41%) within their current company. Fourteen per cent of parents also said that they would hope to get a promotion.

Parents planning to change their job said that they would like to find a different job with better career prospects (14%), find a job nearer home (5%) and find a less stressful job (4%).

A number of parents aimed to change their working hours over the next year. While 17% said they would like to work more hours or find a full-time job (of 30 or more hours a week), 14% wanted to work fewer hours or days or to find a part-time job. Two per cent of parents wanted to stop work altogether in the next year.

There were some differences by the age of parents' youngest child. While a quarter of parents (26%) whose youngest child was aged between 0 and 4 planned to undertake (more) learning or training in the next year, this was the case for almost half of those whose youngest child was of school age. This indicates that parents feel they have more time to concentrate on their careers when their children reach school age. In Chapter J, there is further evidence to suggest that parents prefer to stay at home (or at best, have their spouse, partner or another close relative) to look after their children while they are young, while childcare responsibilities lessen as their children get older.

Table F-8 lists the responses by age of child.

Table F-8: Working parents' plans for the next year - by age of child

Base: All working parents

	Age of child					Total
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Do some (more) learning/training	26	37	40	42	52	37
Get a pay rise	36	37	42	46	42	41
Get a promotion	14	13	14	12	15	14
Find a different job with better career prospects	17	13	16	11	9	14
Find a job nearer home	7	9	2	2	3	5
Find a less stressful job	2	2	4	5	9	4
Work more hours/days	12	17	14	14	3	13
Find a full-time job	0	7	2	6	3	4
Work less hours/days	14	15	12	6	9	11
Find a part-time job	1	6	4	2	3	3
Stop working	3	6	2	1	0	2

Other planned changes	2	7	5	2	0	3
None of these reasons	23	19	19	23	15	21
Base	90	54	57	98	33	333

Non working parents were also asked about their labour market plans for the next year. When asked whether or not they were likely to undertake any learning or training, half (51%) said that this would be very or fairly likely. Non working parents who were not unable to work due to illness or disability (n=146) were asked about the likelihood of their looking for a paid job over the next year. Just under half (44%) said that this would be very or fairly likely.

Table F-9: Likelihood of non-working parents undertaking learning, training or looking for a paid job over next year

Base: All non-working parents

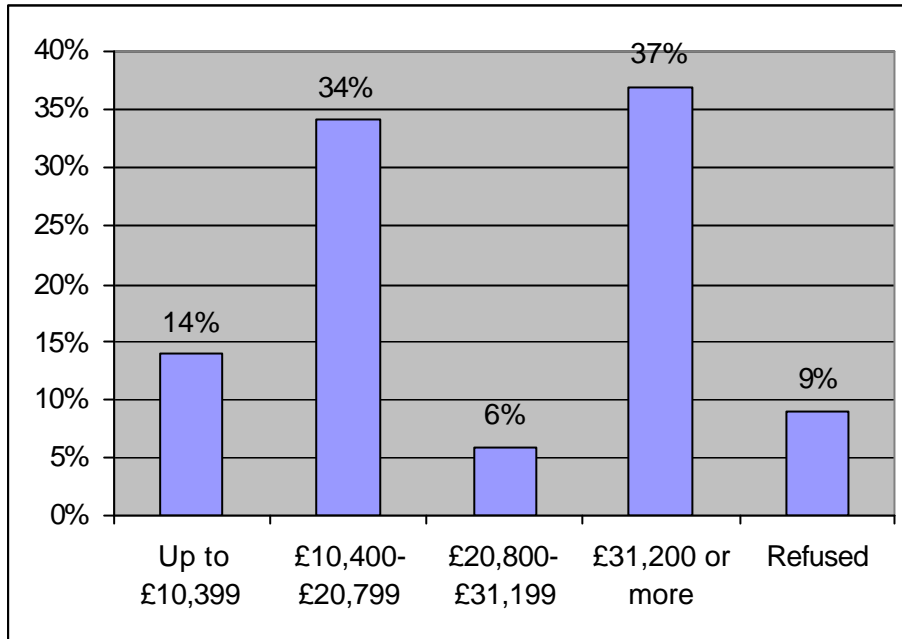
	Learning or training in next year	Look for paid job in next year
	%	%
Very likely	27	23
Fairly likely	24	21
Not very likely	22	27
Not likely at all	27	29
Base	165	146

A quarter those (23%) who said they would be likely to look for a paid job in the next year said that they would look for a full-time job. Over two thirds (69%) said they would look for part-time work, while a minority (6%) said that either would be suitable. Nearly half of respondents (45%) stated a preference for a term-time job, while 30% said that they would look for an all year round job, and a quarter (25%) would find either option acceptable.

The reasons given for wanting to return to work were similar to those given by working parents when they were asked what their reasons were for working. The main motives for non-working parents to return to work were financial (either because they needed the money or liked to be financially independent), career-related (they feel useless without a job or think their career will suffer if they don't go back) and personal preference (they enjoy working, want to get out of the house or miss the company of colleagues).

Non-working parents were asked to estimate what they would expect to earn if they did return to work in the next year.

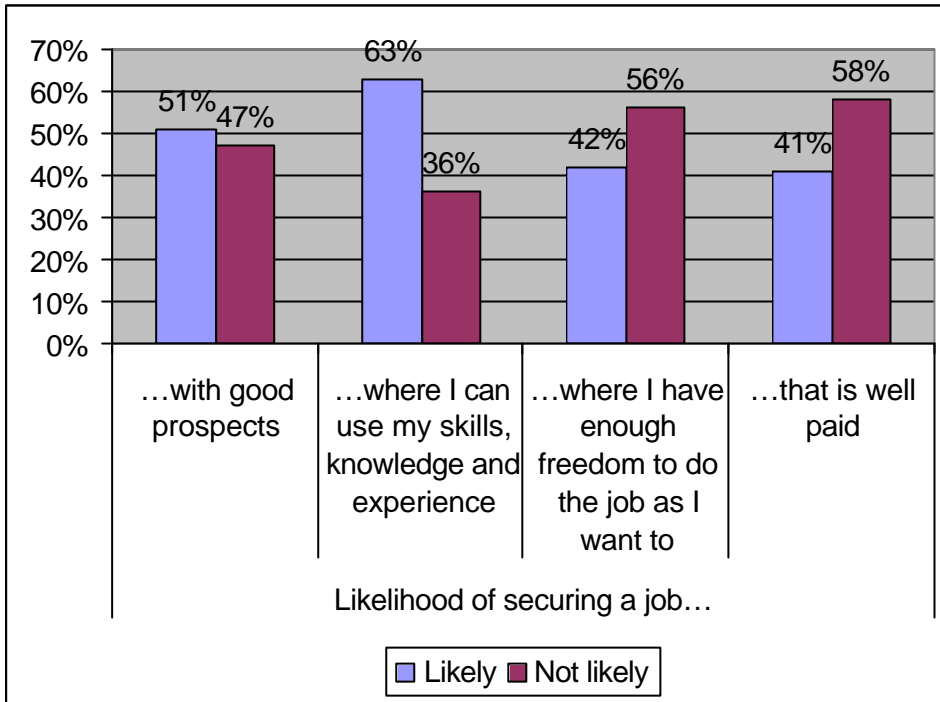
Figure F-10: Expected salary of non-working parents looking for a paid job over next year
Base: All non-working parents



Parents who said they would be unlikely to look for a job in the next year were asked about the likelihood of their going to work one day in the future. Of these (n=82) 70% said that they were very or fairly likely to return to paid work in the future. The majority of these estimated that this would be sometime between 2004 and 2008, while the remainder thought that it would be after 2008.

Non-working parents who *did* plan to look for a paid job in the next year were asked to estimate the likelihood of the job having a number of qualities. These qualities were based on the series of statements about their employment situations asked earlier of working parents. Non-working parents were overall slightly less optimistic about the likelihood of a job in the future having the four qualities listed below, than were working parents about their *actual* employment situations. The overall results for each job quality are shown in Figure F-4.

Figure F-4: Likelihood of securing a job with various qualities
Base: All non-working respondents



Most positively, two thirds (63%) of non-working parents thought that it was likely they would get a job in the next year in which they could use their skills, knowledge and experience, and 21% thought it was ‘very’ likely. Just over half of respondents (51%) thought it likely that they would be able to secure a job with good prospects, with 12% saying this was ‘very’ likely.

Four in 10 parents (42%) expected to get a job in which they would have enough freedom, and 58% did not think it likely that they would secure a well-paid job.

Overall though, the findings show an optimism and positive attitude towards job-hunting in the next year, and there are expectations that the job will have the desired qualities.

Key findings:

Three in ten parents work full-time and just under four in ten works part-time. Mothers were more likely to be working part-time while fathers worked full-time, and mothers were far more likely than fathers to be looking after the home and family full-time.

Nearly eight in ten respondents have a partner or spouse and the majority (87%) of these were working full-time.

Just 5% of working respondents worked from home all of the time while 10% worked from home some of the time. The majority (85%) did not have the option of working from home and thus have to make childcare arrangements that fit in with their work.

The main driver behind parents' decision to work was financial, although career reasons were also important, as were social reasons – needing to mix with people, having intellectual stimulation and maintaining self-esteem.

Parents were generally positive about their employment situations, agreeing that their job offered good prospects, an opportunity to use their skills, knowledge and experience and enough freedom to do the job as they wished.

The most important aspects of childcare arrangements that helped parents to go to work were reliability of the provider and the quality of childcare. Parents felt reassured if they knew their children were being cared for by a trustworthy person who provided the appropriate level and quality of care. Flexible working arrangements also helped parents organise their childcare.

Four in ten parents felt that they did have a choice over whether to work or not. Those choosing to work said that they had wanted to, while those choosing not to work said that this was because they could afford not to. Of the six in ten parents felt that they did not have a choice over whether to work or not, the most commonly given was that they needed the income.

Three quarters of non-working parents were happy with their decision not to work. Lone parent households were less likely to be happy – they may not have decided that they don't want to work, but may have concluded that working was not financially viable when weighed against the costs of childcare.

Half of non-working parents planned to look for a paid job or undertake learning or training over the next year. Salary expectations were high among this group, but this did include previously working mothers who may have taken maternity leave from a well-paid job.

G. Attitudes to local childcare provision

Key questions:

How do parents find out about the types of childcare that are available in their local area?

Is there too much, too little or the right amount of information about childcare provision?

Do parents think that there are too many, too few or the right amount of childcare and nursery education places in their local area?

What are parents' views on the quality of childcare and nursery provision in their area?

The main aim of this chapter is to explore parents' attitudes towards different aspects of childcare provision in their local area. The first half of the chapter deals with information provision. Parents were asked how they access information about childcare and what they think about the amount and quality of the information available.

In the second half of the chapter, we examine parents' views on the number of childcare and nursery education places in their local area; what they think about the quantity and quality of childcare providers.

Sources of information about childcare

Parents were asked whether, over the last year, they had used any sources of information to find out about childcare or nursery education provision in their area, and if so, what sources they had used. Responses were chosen from a pre-coded list.

Half of parents (50%) had not used any sources of information to find out about childcare or nursery education in their local area. Just over three in 10 (32%) had received information through word of mouth, while other main information sources were the local authority (15%) and local newspapers (7%).

When comparing results with the 2000 survey, the proportion of parents not using *any* information sources has increased (50%, compared with 40% in 2000).

When looking at how information was obtained by household structure, there were some variations. Lone parent families were more likely than two-parent families to have not used any information sources over the last year (57% compared with 48%) while respondents

from two-parent families were more likely than lone parents to have used word of mouth as an information source, possibly because of wider social networks (35% compared with 24%). Table G-1 illustrates these findings.

Table G-1: Sources of information used by household structure

Base: All parents	2 parents	1 parent
	%	%
None	48	57
Word of mouth	35	24
Local Authority	17	11
Local newspaper	7	7
Children's information services	5	2
School, college or nursery	4	2
National organisations, e.g. SOSCN or Citizen's Advice Bureau	3	4
Internet/website	4	1
Yellow Pages	2	2
Employment service / Job centre	1	3
Other	9	8
Unweighted base	776	227
Weighted base	775	228

Parents were also asked during the depth interviews how they found out about local childcare provision. As in the Part 1 survey, parents said they relied on word of mouth and mentioned speaking to family members living in the area and other mothers who they knew about what childcare provision they had used in the past. Certain parents said that they preferred this method of gaining information about childcare as they could rely and trust the opinions of people they chose to speak to and felt that they were receiving valuable and realistic information.

This was an issue even more pertinent in rural areas, where there was a close knit community and the respondents knew the majority of other parents in the local area.

"It's hard to say about information because what you find in a small community like this is everybody tends to know everything just by word of mouth really... I know enough. I don't know how somebody living in a big city would feel....but I know what's going on in this town basically".

It was also the case in these areas that there was limited provision and so there were not as many options for the parents to investigate.

Other methods of gaining information were through local authorities and health visitors. Some parents mentioned contacting the local council for a list of registered childminders and nurseries in the area. However, one parent was unimpressed with the list she received, as it was not up to date.

“I phoned the council and there were about twenty names on it, but a lot of the people on it, although they were registered as being childminders, they had stopped childminding years ago”.

Some parents also mentioned childcare provision being advertised in local papers or libraries and community centres. Other parents had received information from schools, whether it be leaflets sent home with their older children or adverts on notice-boards in the school. When parents did receive lists of childcare providers, it was common for parents to phone and visit the different providers and question them on many aspects of their service.

Younger parents and single parents did not mention as many methods used to gain information on local childcare provision as did older parents and couples. They tended to rely more on health visitors and other parents providing them with information. In some cases, these parents did not use any type of formal childcare as they relied on grandparents and friends helping them, and so they were not particularly interested in finding out about formal provision, as they were under the impression that they would not be able to afford it. Some of these parents also said that they were unaware where to start looking for information.

“I’m not sure if there’s anything out there or how to go about finding out about it”.

Some parents of children with special needs had accessed any available information they could find that was relevant or tailored to their child. One parent did suggest that doctors should be more aware of availability in terms of childcare provision as the doctors are the point of contact for many parents. Another parent indicated that she had carried out a thorough search of the area in an attempt to find suitable childcare and help for her son who had behavioural problems and learning difficulties:

“I’ve been everywhere with him. Everything I can think of that could maybe help, help him, I would go, I would do it”.

Whether the right amount of information is available

Following the questions on information sources in the Part 1 survey, parents were asked whether they thought there was too much, too little or the right amount of information available about childcare and nursery education in their local area.

Overall, almost half of parents (48%) thought there was too little information available, with only 1% saying that there was too much. While almost a third (32%) thought information levels were about right, nearly a fifth (19%) said that they did not know.

Parents were asked a further question about the levels of information provision on the following aspects of childcare:

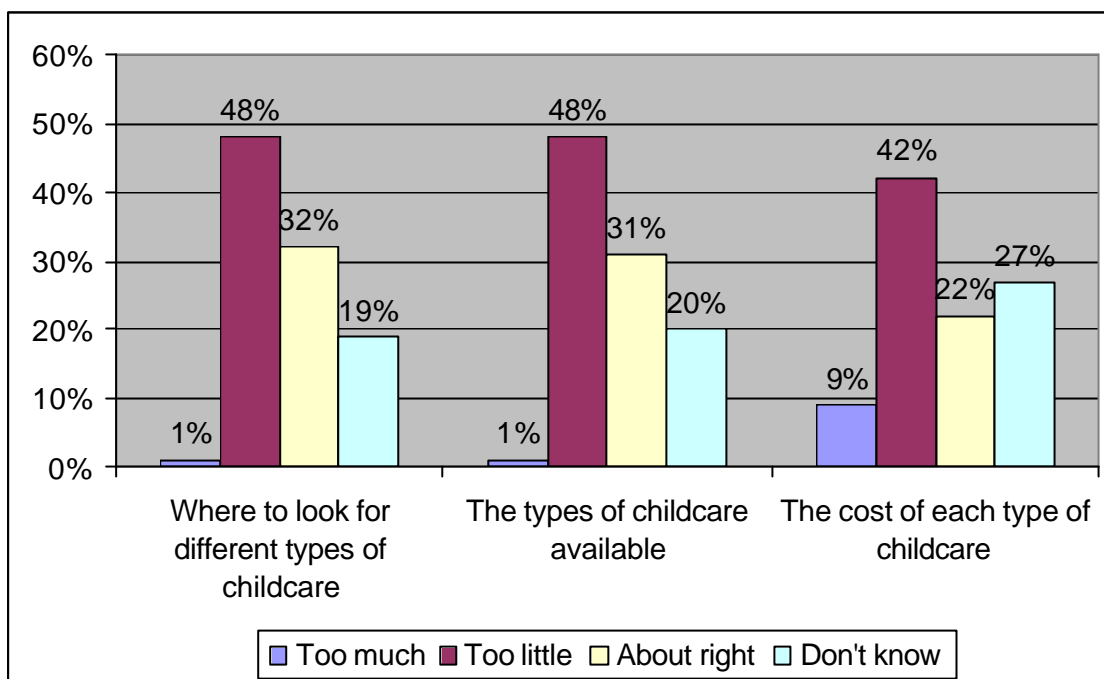
- where to look for different types of childcare
- the types of childcare available
- the cost of each type of childcare.

When looking at each aspect of childcare outlined above, in all cases, nearly half of parents felt that there was too little information available. Between 22% and 32% said that information levels were about right, while only a minority said there was too much information available. In all cases, between a fifth and a quarter (19% to 27%) of parents did not feel able to make a judgement.

Figure G-1 shows the responses for each question.

Figure G-1: Whether there is adequate information on different aspects of childcare

Base: All parents



Further information required by parents

All parents were asked what more they would like to know about childcare or nursery education in their local area. More than one response could be given. The most common answer was that parents would like more information about what types of childcare are available and where and details of childcare provision (30% together). Twelve per cent wanted more information in general, while 10% said they would like information about the costs or about what financial help is available.

These responses were supported by the views of parents in the depth interviews – the general opinion was that up-to-date information on available provision in the area would be welcomed. However, it was also acknowledged that this information may already exist, but that parents did not always know where to look for or access it. One parent suggested that information should be widely available and accessible to everybody:

“I think it should be more generally available to everybody everywhere really so people know exactly what their choices are before they even have children”.

‘Childcare Link’ service awareness and usage

Since the 2000 survey was undertaken, the Scottish Executive has launched *Childcare Link*, a freephone service and website which provides information on local and national childcare. It was hoped that this service would help to fill some of the information gaps

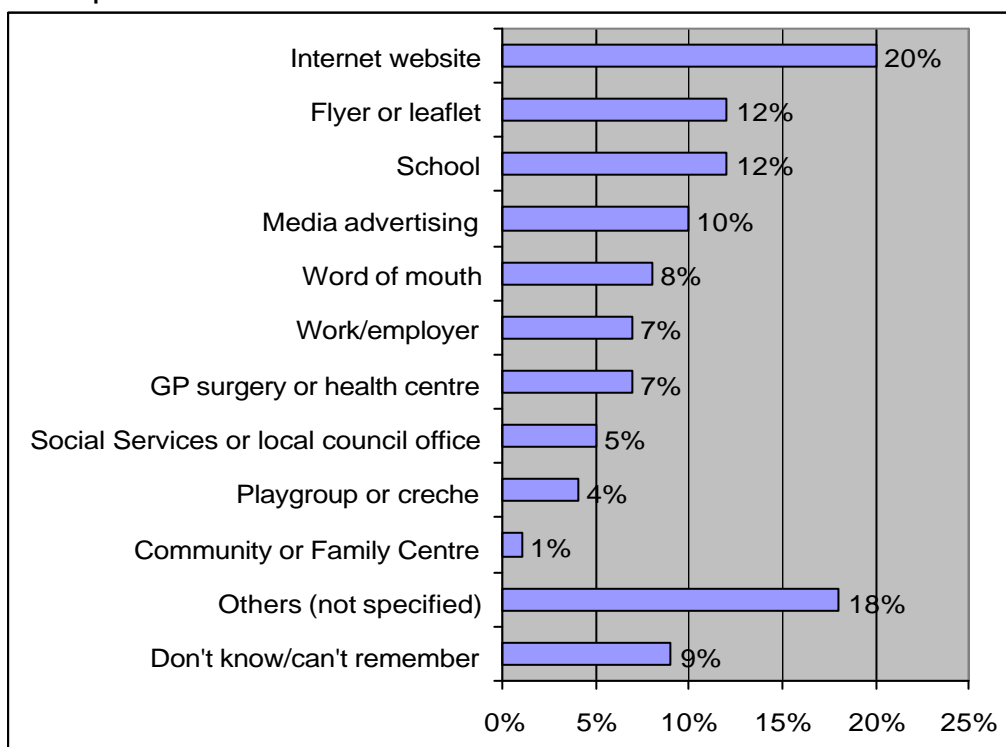
identified by parents in the 2000 survey. However, when asked whether they had heard of the *Childcare Link* service, less than one in 10 parents (9%) responded positively. 89% of respondents had not heard of the service, while 2% were unsure or couldn't remember.

Parents who had not heard of *Childcare Link* were shown a flyer and pen advertising the service. When given this visual prompt, a further 3% of parents said that they were aware of *Childcare Link*. Given that a flyer advertising the service was the second most popular method by which parents had found out about *Childcare Link* (see Figure 16), there is potential for further advertising of the service in this way to raise awareness and usage.

Parents who said that they were aware of *Childcare Link* (n=116) were asked how they heard about it or where they had seen it advertised. Figure G-2 shows the various media through which parents found out about the service.

Figure G-2: Where parents heard about *Childcare Link*

Base: All parents aware of *Childcare Link*



This same group of parents were asked whether they had ever used the *Childcare Link* service. Three in 10 of those aware of the service had used it, while almost seven in 10 had not and 1% were unsure.

All respondents were asked whether they would use the *Childcare Link* service in the future. Just over a fifth (22%) said that they would 'definitely' use it, a further two-fifths (39%) said that they would 'maybe' use it, and just over a third (34%) said that they would not use it. Five percent of parents said that they didn't know whether they would use *Childcare Link*.

When looking at potential usage by respondent's highest educational qualification, those with a first or higher degree were more likely than other groups to say that they would 'definitely' use *Childcare Link* in the future. More importantly from an advertising perspective, between 37% and 45% of parents in each subgroup said that they would 'maybe' use the service in the future, and these are the groups that need to be targeted (see Table G-2).

Table G-2: Potential future usage of *Childcare Link* by respondent's highest academic or vocational qualification

Base: All parents

	First or higher degree	Highers or equivalent	Std grades 1-3 or equivalent	Qualifications below Std grade 1-3 or no qualifications
	%	%	%	%
Yes – definitely	31	22	20	21
Yes – maybe	37	40	45	38
No	31	32	32	35
Don't know	1	7	4	6
Unweighted base	182	139	208	343
Weighted base	204	148	197	326

In the depth interviews, most of those parents who had used the internet to search for information on childcare had used the 'Childcare Link' website. There were mixed views on the standard of the website, with some parents considering it to be helpful and informative and other parents thinking it was lacking in important information:

"I went on the childcare website...but it didn't have enough information I didn't think. It didn't have information like whether you bring packed lunches or whatever".

It was also remarked that the website was not comprehensive enough as it did not include all the nurseries in the area, and it would be useful if the private and the state nurseries

were included together. It was suggested that it would be useful to incorporate a discussion board on the website where parents could air their views on the quality of the childcare provision they had personal experience of.

Perceptions of quantity of childcare and nursery education places in the local area

Parents' perceptions of the quantity of childcare and nursery education places available in the local area were sought through the Part 1 survey.

Almost half of respondents (46%) believed that there were not enough childcare places and a quarter (25%) said that they did not know. Twenty nine per cent thought that there were about the right number of childcare places, and less than 1% of parents thought that there were too many. The findings are in line with those from the 2000 survey, in which 49% of parents believed that there were not enough childcare places and 24% said that they did not know.

When asked about nursery education places, almost four in 10 parents (38%) thought that there were about the right number in their local area, but a similar proportion (36%) thought that there were not enough. Only 1% of parents thought that there were too many nursery education places and a quarter (25%) did not know. Respondents in 2000 were not asked about nursery education places. Table G-3 shows the opinions of parents on the quantity of both childcare and nursery education places in their local area.

Table G-3: Assessment of number of childcare and nursery education places

Base: All parents				
	Childcare places		Nursery education places	
		%		%
Not enough		46		36
About the right number		29		38
Too many		*		1
Don't know		25		25
Weighted base		1,003		1,003

Perceptions of quality of childcare and nursery education places in the local area

In addition to the questions on the number of childcare and nursery education places, respondents were also asked their views on the quality of local provision.

Over half of parents (55%) thought that the quality of childcare provision was 'very' or 'fairly' good (equal to the 55% giving this opinion in the 2000 survey). Only 10% thought that provision was 'very' or 'fairly' poor.

However, over a third of parents (36%) said that they did not know how to rate the quality of childcare provision in their local area, a result which was in line with that of the 2000 survey (32%). This is because - as shown in Chapter C - many parents have little experience of formal childcare provision and rely on informal providers.

Ratings on the quality of nursery education places in the local area were also very positive. Over two thirds of parents (67%) thought that the quality of nursery education was 'very' or 'fairly' good, with only 5% saying it was 'fairly' or 'very' poor. However, almost three in 10 (29%) said that they did not know how to rate the quality of nursery provision.

Table G-4 shows the opinions of parents on the quality of both childcare and nursery education places in their local area.

Table G-4: Assessment of quality of childcare and nursery education places

Base: All parents

	Childcare places	Nursery education places
	%	%
Very good	22	37
Fairly good	32	30
Fairly poor	7	4
Very poor	3	1
Don't know	36	29
Weighted base	1,003	1,003

Key findings:

Half of parents had not used any sources of information to find out about childcare or nursery provision in their local area. A third relied on word of mouth and other main

information sources were the local authority (15%) and local newspapers (7%). Informal sources of information were more popular because parents felt they could rely on and trust the opinions of people they chose to speak to.

Almost half of parents thought that there is too little information available on where to look for different types of childcare, the types of childcare available and the costs of each type of childcare. Most commonly, parents would like more information on the types of childcare available in their local area and the costs; however, there was acknowledgement that information may already exist, but parents do not always know where to look for it.

Only one in ten parents had heard of 'Childcare Link' and this was usually through the website or a flyer. However, when the function of 'Childcare Link' was explained, over three-fifths of parents said that they would 'definitely' or 'maybe' use it in the future.

Almost half of parents believed that there are not enough childcare places and four in ten thought that there are not enough nursery education places in their local area. However, around a third in each case believed that the number of childcare and nursery education places was about right.

Just over half of parents thought that the quality of childcare provision was good, and two thirds of parents gave this opinion about nursery education. However, a third of parents in each case said that they did not know how to rate the quality of provision.

H. Costs and affordability of childcare

Key questions:

How much did parents pay for childcare and nursery education in the last week, and what did this money cover?

Do parents consider their current childcare provider(s) to be good or poor value for money?

How easy or difficult do parents find it to meet the costs of childcare?

Would parents like ideally to receive more childcare hours per week?

What impact would a theoretical increase in childcare costs have on different parental groups?

What are parents' estimates of the costs of different types of childcare providers?

This chapter explores how much money parents in Scotland pay for childcare and nursery education, and how affordable they find various types of provider. Data from both the Part 1 survey and follow-up are included.

Parents responding to the Part 2 survey were also presented with a series of scenarios asking them what they would do if their childcare costs increased. This was to give an understanding of how parents currently balance the costs of childcare against other aspects of their income and outgoings, and how this balance would change if they had to pay more for childcare. The effects of a decrease in childcare costs were also investigated, as well as the effects on parents' lifestyles of being able to access more and better childcare.

Finally, this chapter looks at parents' perceptions of the current costs of different types of childcare. Parents with children aged 0-2, 3-5, 8-11 and 12-14 were asked to estimate the costs of different types of childcare provider over given time periods.

Costs of childcare

Two thirds (65%) of parents responding to the Part 1 survey of 1,003 respondents did not pay for their childcare. As we have seen in previous chapters, there is a preference for, and reliance upon, informal providers, particularly close family members.

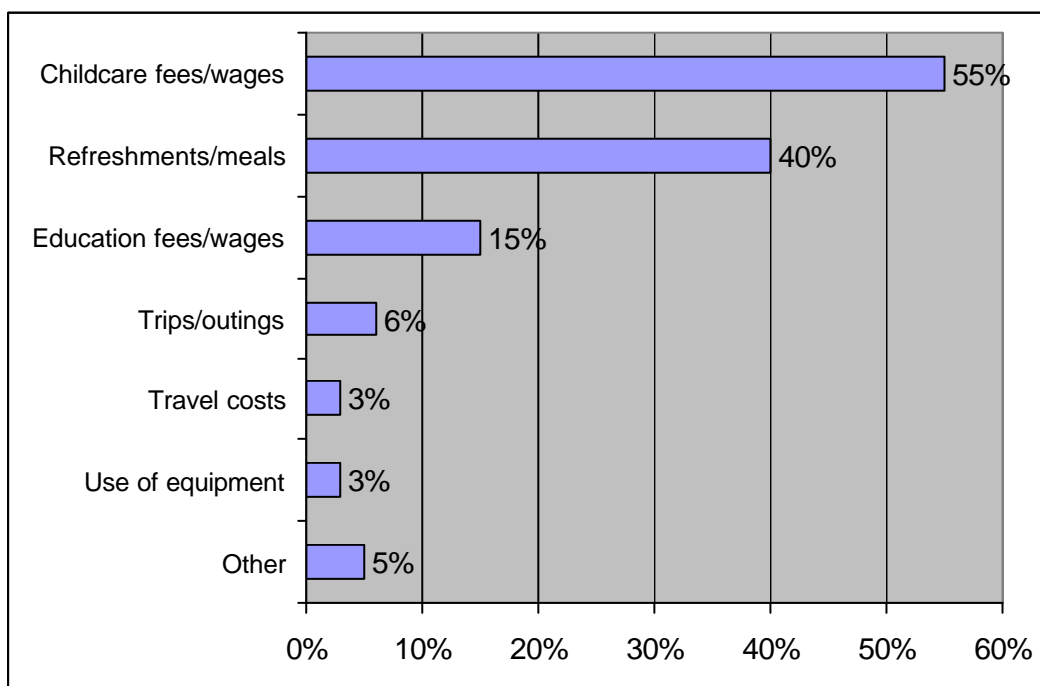
The depth interviews revealed that parents using informal providers such as friends and grandparents did not usually pay them for their help on a regular basis. It was more common for parents to buy gifts or take their parents/friends out for a meal to repay them in kind. Some parents who did not use formal childcare felt that they should be receiving some form of financial help to pay their informal providers, as the family tax credit only applies to formal childcare that occurs every week.

Parents of pre-school children were more likely to pay for childcare than those with children at school (49% compared with 29%). This supports the general patterns of childcare usage described in earlier chapters, which showed that parents with pre-school children use more childcare overall, more frequently and for more hours than those with children of school-age.

The remaining 35% of parents (n=641) said that they do pay for childcare provision, and were asked to state what these costs covered from a given list. Parents were permitted to give more than one response, and the results are shown in Figure H-1 below.

Figure H-1: What money for childcare provision covers

Base: All parents who pay for childcare



Parents of pre-school children were more likely to have paid for childcare than were those with school-age children, which reflects the different types of provision used for children in

different age groups. While 49% of parents with children aged 0-5 paid for childcare, this was true for only 29% of parents with children aged 5-14 who were at school. Table H-1 shows that across all age groups, the main costs of childcare were fees or wages and refreshments and meals, but that this was the case for a larger proportion of parents with pre-school children than it was for those with children of school age.

Table H-1: What money for childcare provision covers – by age of child

Base: All parents who pay for childcare

	Pre-school children aged 0-5	School children aged 5-14
	%	%
Childcare fees/wages	52	34
Refreshments/meals	44	28
Education fees/wages	14	10
Trips/outings	6	3
Use of equipment	2	3
Travel costs	2	3
Other	5	3
Weighted base	265	305

In the depth interviews, a common feeling amongst many parents paying for childcare was that the cost was far too high. The feeling of frustration towards the cost of childcare in relation to the monthly salary was apparent regardless of income. Non-working parents felt that they were not being encouraged or supported to go back to work, as the cost of childcare would consume most or all of their wages.

Some parents living on low incomes who relied on informal childcare felt certain that they could not afford to pay for childcare, and if they had not been able to rely on informal sources then they may have been unable to have a family. Many felt that their childcare costs should be reduced, as currently, the costs would outweigh the financial benefits of working.

“I think if there is an emphasis on getting people to go back to work then the balance has to be right [between] the money that is needed to pay for childcare and the money that people earn. Ideally I would think people up to a certain income would not have to pay for childcare or have to pay very little”.

Parents on low incomes also felt that many childcare options were unavailable to them due to cost, for example, private nurseries. There was also the perception that private nurseries were superior to council nurseries, as they had better facilities and were better subsidised:

"If you have got funds, everybody would send their children to a private school or private nursery because they get taught a lot better...there is a lot of difference, but if you can't afford it, you can't afford it".

In some cases, parents had sent their children to private nurseries for a short period of time, but had not been able to sustain it:

"That was crippling when I was working, when I was paying for private childcare it was so expensive...when I was with their dad, it was quite a [decision] to go back to work because of losing most of my wages on childcare which is a bit soul-destroying".

One parent described the cost of a private nursery as *"horrendous, absolutely horrendous"*.

There was a perception amongst parents on lower incomes that they could not possibly afford private childcare, and that those who could must be on very high incomes. In some cases, lower income parents had sought information on private childcare and realised it wasn't a viable option for them, but in other cases, single and lower income parents had disregarded the idea based on their *perceptions* of cost. This would be an important area to address in policy, as many of these parents did not have the correct information about – for example - council run nurseries, which they may have been able to afford. Later in this chapter we look at parents' perceptions of the costs of different types of childcare provision.

Some parents living on higher incomes felt that they were being penalised for having a good salary and so were receiving no help from the government.

"..if you are in good work and you are in a job that you studied for and you are in a career then the choices are really quite limited – to keep pursuing your career and pay childcare every month or give up your career".

"I also think that child allowance or child benefit, I think that should be means tested. I think it is ridiculous that I get the same for my children as one of the secretaries at work".

However, other parents living on higher incomes who felt comfortable with their childcare costs sympathised with those living on lower incomes, and wondered how they would be able to cope with the cost. One parent suggested that to make the cost of childcare relative

to your salary would be fair, and to have the government provide incentives to cover the additional cost.

An interesting issue raised was the situation of parents on middle-incomes perhaps facing the most difficulty, as they did not qualify for benefits and yet still struggled with the cost of childcare against their wages.

"I think if you're on a very small wage you get help with your childcare. If you're on a really high salary it doesn't worry you. You've got this in between where you're not getting help but you're working for nothing at the end of the day".

Student parents felt that they should be receiving more help towards their childcare costs, as they were unable to work full-time and yet in many cases still required childcare full-time. One student parent when asked if she thought childcare should be better subsidised replied:

"I almost think it should be free, especially to anybody in education. If you're getting a grant, I think it should be free....I think it's really overpriced. And I think someone's making a lot of money out of it".

However, a number of parents thought that the cost of their childcare was good value for money, as their child was being cared for and looked after which made the parents feel at ease. This opinion was quite common in relation to after-school clubs, where many parents spoke positively about the convenience and the cost of the club.

Some parents did say that although they felt their childcare costs were too high, they were more than willing to pay for childcare if their child was happy.

"It (summer club) is quite expensive, but if that's what you have to pay for them to be looked after and get the facilities that they have there then so be it".

Other parents did recognise that the government could not and should not be responsible for *all* childcare costs as it was part of the parents' own role to provide childcare. However, the issue of cost for lower and middle-income families is one that needs to be addressed in policy.

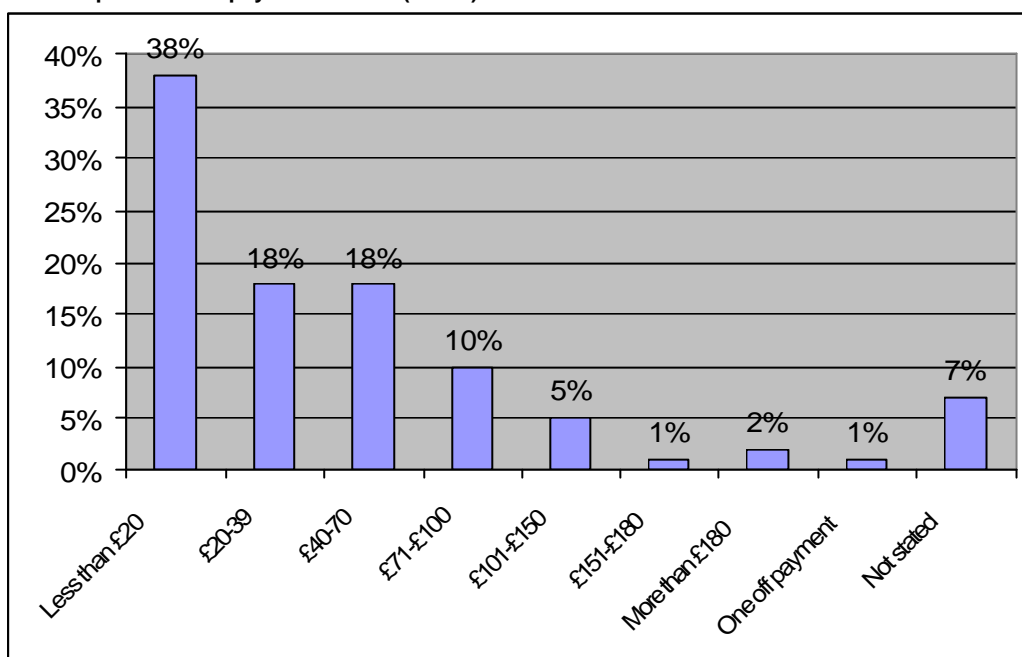
"I don't know what the answer would be. You can't expect the government to give you free childcare but it does just seem that lower income families are always the ones battling against it".

Weekly childcare costs

Parents responding to the Part 2 survey of 500 were asked to provide details of their childcare costs for up to two of their children, and these were calculated into an average weekly figure.

Figure H-2: Average weekly amount paid for childcare

Base: All parents who pay for childcare (n=193)



Nearly four in 10 parents who paid for childcare paid less than £20 a week, while nearly two in 10 paid between £21 and £39, and the same proportion paid £40 to £70 a week. Just one in 10 paid between £71 and £100 a week.

The majority (98%) of parents said that the amount stated was the amount they would normally pay for childcare in a week. Only 1% said that they would usually pay more, and no-one said that they usually pay less.

Impact of an increase in the cost of childcare

Of those parents who said that the amount paid for their children represented a normal week (n=177), almost three quarters (72%) found it easy to pay for their childcare. However, a quarter of parents (26%) said that they found it difficult to meet the costs, and a further 2% found it very difficult.

Parents in the above group were presented with a series of scenarios about the impact an increase or decrease in the costs of childcare would have on their lives. The scenarios were based on childcare costs increasing or decreasing by a quarter.

The majority (81%) of parents said they would carry on using their current childcare arrangements if childcare costs increased by a quarter. However, 8% of parents said that they would have to reduce the number of hours or days of childcare they received, and 7% said that they would have to stop using childcare altogether. Thus, cost is not the main concern for the majority of parents when choosing paid childcare, and as illustrated in Chapter F, parents' main concern is that the quality of care their children receive is good, so that they are able to work or undertake other activities and have peace of mind that their children are being looked after in an appropriate way.

However, for a minority (n=27), the current cost of childcare is an issue, and if costs were to increase further, this would have a major impact on their options regarding the type of childcare provider they use. The most commonly cited impact was on parents' employment status; 9 of the 27 respondents said that if childcare costs increased by a quarter, they would have to work fewer hours or days in order to look after their children themselves. Four respondents felt that they would have to give up work altogether. Five respondents said that they would have to spend fewer hours on learning or training, give it up completely, or not be able to undertake planned training or learning.

For a number of other parents, their employment status would change in the opposite direction if childcare costs increased by a quarter. Six parents said that if this were the case, they would have to find a better paid job or a different job.

There were no significant differences in parents' ability to afford current childcare or theoretically more expensive childcare by employment status. This indicates that parents choose childcare based on a number of factors, including their ability to pay, and that their choice is a balance between their ideal childcare type (in terms of quality of care) and how much this costs.

Impact of a decrease in the cost of childcare

The same group of parents (n=177) were asked what they expected would happen if their current childcare costs *decreased* by a quarter. The majority (84%) said that they would not change their childcare arrangements.

However, 5% of parents said that if childcare costs decreased by a quarter, they would try to work more hours or days, and 5% also said that they would undertake some (more) learning or training. This suggests that currently, parents in this situation care for their own child/ren part of the time, and that a decrease in costs would mean that they could afford to pay a provider for more hours of childcare.

Impact of securing 'better' childcare

When asked what they would do if they could get 'better' childcare, three quarters of parents (76%) said that they would not change their current arrangements, showing that parents are generally satisfied with the arrangements they have, and that choice of childcare provision is given considerable thought.

For those parents who would change an aspect of their lives if they could get better childcare, the proposals included:

- Working more hours or days (7%)
- Doing something else with the free time (7%)
- Looking for a new job (6%)
- Undertaking some (more) learning or training (5%)
- Enabling the respondent's spouse or partner to do something else with his/her free time (2%).

Impact of receiving more hours of childcare a week

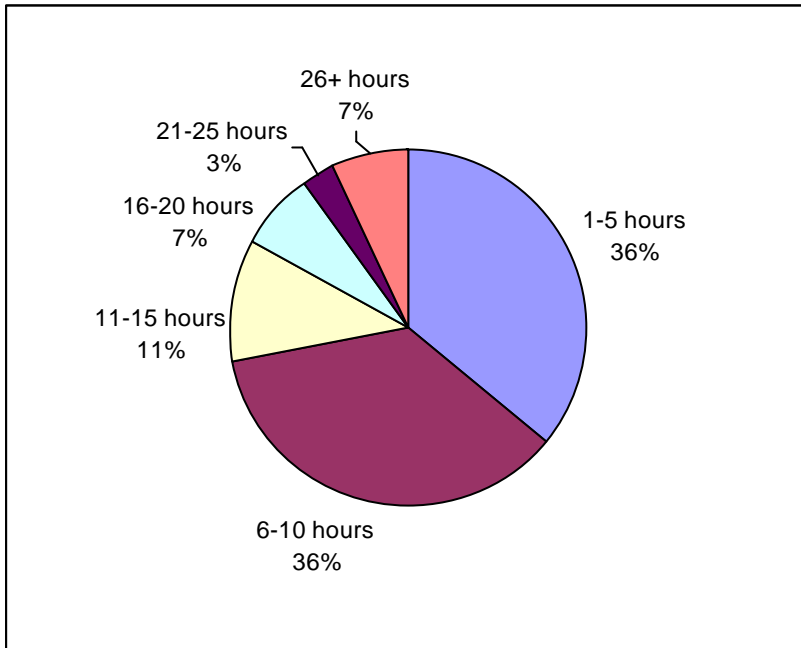
All parents responding to the Part 2 survey were asked whether, ideally, they would like to receive more hours of childcare a week than they currently use. While a quarter (24%) said that they would like more childcare, three quarters of parents (74%) were satisfied with the arrangements they have in place. (3% said that they did not know).

Lone parents were more likely than respondents from two-parent families to say that they would like more hours of childcare (32% compared with 21%), presumably to ease the burden of having to care for their child/ren without the help of a spouse or partner.

Those who said they would like to receive more hours of childcare a week were most likely to say they would benefit from between 1 and 5 extra hours (36%) or 6 to 10 hours (36%), as illustrated in Figure H-3.

Figure H-3: Number of additional hours of childcare required a week

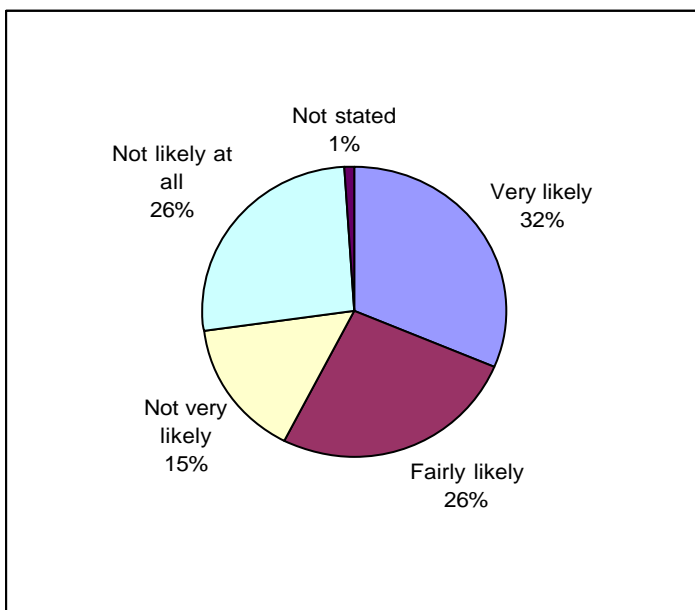
Base: All parents who would like to receive more hours of childcare a week (n=118)



Parents were then asked – if given the additional childcare they wanted or needed – how likely they would be to pay £3 an hour for this. Almost six in 10 parents said that they would be likely to pay £3 an hour for the additional childcare they required, with over half of these saying that they would be ‘very likely’ to pay this amount.

Figure H-4: Likelihood of parents paying £3 an hour for additional hours of childcare required

Base: All parents who would like to receive more hours of childcare a week (n=118)



Those who said they would be unlikely to pay £3 an hour for the additional childcare they wanted (n=49) were asked if they would be willing to pay a subsidised rate of £1.50 an hour. Just over three in five of these parents (n=33) said that they would be likely to pay this reduced rate, with more than half of these (n=13) saying that they would be very likely to pay this amount.

If parents were able to get the additional hours of childcare they wanted at a cost which was acceptable to them, they cited a number of ways in which their role in the labour market would change, as Table H-2 illustrates.

Table H-2: Impact of receiving additional hours of childcare required

Base: All parents who would be likely to pay £3 or £1.50 an hour for additional childcare

	%
I would work more hours or days	28
I would do some (more) learning or training	28
I would look for a new job	20
My partner/spouse would do some (more) learning or training	5
My partner/spouse would work more hours or days	3
My partner/spouse would look for a new job	3
Other	12
None of these	21
Base	117

The findings from this section indicate that cost is not the most significant factor when parents choose paid childcare provision. A high quality of care is seen as being essential than cheaper childcare in order for parents to feel they can increase their working hours, take up learning or training or do something else with the free time. This is linked to the issue of parents needing to have trust in their childcare provider, as discussed in Chapters D and F.

Parents' perceptions of costs of various types of childcare provider

Parents responding to the Part 2 survey were asked to estimate the likely cost of different childcare providers. It may be the case that over-estimating the costs of childcare may act as a barrier to even consider using certain types of childcare. This section therefore tested the knowledge of parents with children in different age groups on types of childcare that they had *not* used over the previous year.

Parents of pre-school children were asked to estimate the weekly costs for a 2 year old and a 4 year old of a registered childminder, a private nursery or crèche and a local authority nursery or crèche for a standard week (that is, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Parents of school-age children were asked about the likely weekly cost for an 8 year old and a 12 year old of a registered childminder and an out-of-school club, for three hours a day after school, Monday to Friday.

All parents who had not used a babysitter in the past year were asked to estimate the cost of an evening session (7pm to midnight), an overnight session (10pm to 8am) and a weekend session (8am to 6pm on Saturday or Sunday) for a child aged 2, 4, 8 or 12 years.

Parents in 2004 were permitted to give a 'don't know' option, whereas this was not the case in 2000.

Costs of provision for pre-school children

Table H-3 shows the findings for parents with at least one child aged 0-2, and compares them with the findings from the 2000 survey.

A private nursery was estimated to be the most expensive childcare option in 2004, with 77% of parents believing that it would cost over £101 per week for a 2 year old. In the four years since the 2000 survey was undertaken, parents' perceptions of the cost of private nursery provision had risen: 62% of parents thought that it would cost £121 or more per week, compared with 44% in 2000.

Perceptions on the cost of local authority nursery provision had also changed over time. In 2004, nearly half (48%) of parents believed that local authority nursery provision would cost between £81 and £140 a week, compared with 26% in 2000. Indeed, in 2000, 71% of parents believed that local authority nursery provision for a week would cost anything up to £80, while this was the case for only 24% of parents in 2004.

Perceived costs of a registered childminder had also risen between 2000 and 2004. While 69% of parents in 2004 expected a childminder to cost more than £121 a week, this was true for 43% of parents in 2000. Nearly half of parents in 2000 (46%) believed that a childminder would cost £61 to £100, compared with under a quarter (22%) in 2004.

Table H-3: Estimated weekly childcare costs (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) for pre-school children aged 2 years**Base:** Parents with a child aged 0-2 who did not use these types of provision in the previous year

	2004			2000		
	Child-minder	LA nursery	Private nursery	Child-minder	LA nursery	Private nursery
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Less than £40	0	6	2	2	34	*
£40-£60	3	10	1	9	19	3
£61-£80	3	8	0	16	18	12
£81-£100	19	17	8	30	9	16
£101-£120	21	11	15	21	13	26
£121-£140	21	19	18	10	4	20
£141-£160	12	7	18	9	2	10
More than £160	15	3	26	3	2	14
Don't know	6	20	13	-	-	-
Base	131	138	120	132	138	119

The patterns were similar for parents of children aged 3-5 years. They were asked to estimate the weekly costs of a registered childminder, local authority nursery and private nursery for a 4 year old child. Private nursery provision was again deemed to be the most expensive option in both 2004 and 2000, with 79% of parents in 2004 and 70% in 2000 estimating that weekly provision would cost £101 or more.

However, in 2000, 29% of parents believed that private nursery provision would cost £61-£100 compared with just 8% in 2004, (although a tenth of respondents in 2004 said that they did not know how much private nursery provision would cost for a week).

Local authority nursery was seen as a cheaper childcare option in both survey years. However, 70% of parents in 2000 estimated local authority provision to cost anything up to £60 a week, compared with only 27% in 2004. Note that a fifth of parents in 2004 did not give an estimate at all, however.

As was the case for parents of 0-2 year olds, the cost of childminders was deemed more expensive in 2004 than in 2000. While over 30% of parents in 2000 expected a registered childminder to cost anything up to £80 a week, this was the belief of just 7% of parents in 2004. A comparable proportion in both years thought that a childminder would cost £81-

£120 a week (40% in 2004; 41% in 2000), but more parents in 2004 than 2000 estimated the cost to be £121 or more (42% compared with 30%). Table H-4 shows the findings.

Table H-4: Estimated weekly childcare costs (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) for pre-school children aged 4 years

Base: Parents with a child aged 3-5 who did not use these types of provision in the previous year

	2004			2000		
	Child-minder	LA nursery	Private nursery	Child-minder	LA nursery	Private nursery
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Less than £40	1	13	1	*	55	1
£40-£60	1	14	2	9	15	*
£61-£80	5	9	4	21	11	10
£81-£100	16	11	4	18	4	19
£101-£120	24	13	14	23	7	20
£121-£140	16	10	16	9	4	21
£141-£160	15	6	23	13	4	10
More than £160	11	4	26	8	2	19
Don't know	10	20	10			
Base	154	136	147	93	65	81

Costs of provision for school-age children

Parents of at least one primary school child aged 5-11 were asked to estimate the costs of a childminder and an out-of-school club for three hours after school on weekdays.

A comparable proportion in each survey year believed that a childminder would cost between £41 and £50 (24% in 2004, compared with 19% in 2000). However, while half (49%) of parents in 2004 estimated that a childminder would cost more than £51 a week, this was only the case for % of parents in 2000. Only 15% of parents in 2004 believed that a childminder would cost less than £51 a week, compared with 40% of parents in 2000. However, it must be borne in mind that 13% of parents in 2004 did not give an estimate.

Although the parents surveyed here had not used an out-of-school club in the past year, *overall* usage of this type of childcare provision has increased since 2000. Promotion of OSC provision and its benefits has also been part of the Childcare Strategy, thus we might expect that parents in 2004 may have more accurate perceptions of the costs.

Just over half (51%) of parents in 2004 believed that it would cost anything up to £40 for three hours provision each weekday for an 8 year old child, compared with 78% in 2000. However, a fifth (19%) of 2004 respondents said that they did not know how much an out-of-school club would cost. Table H-5 illustrates the results for each year.

Table H-5: Estimated weekly childcare costs (three hours after school, Monday to Friday) for primary school children aged 8 years

Base: Parents with a child aged 5-11 who did not use these types of provision in the previous year

	2004		2000	
	Child-minder	Out-of-school club	Child-minder	Out-of-school club
	%	%	%	%
Less than £20	1	11	2	31
£21-£30	5	20	17	32
£31-£40	9	20	21	15
£41-£50	24	13	19	11
£51-£60	16	8	24	7
£61-£70	17	3	9	2
More than £70	16	6	8	2
Don't know	13	19	-	-
Base	258	231	302	298

The perceptions of parents with at least one 12-14 year old child were broadly similar to those with 5-11 year olds. The same proportion of parents (38%) in each survey year estimated the cost of a childminder for three hours each weekday after school to be £41-£60. However, a larger proportion of parents in 2004 than 2000 believed that childminding provision would cost more than £61 (37% compared with 25%).

While 58% of parents in 2004 believed that it would cost up to £40 to send a 12 year old to an out-of-school club for three hours a day on weekdays, 72% of parents in 2000 gave this estimate. Sixteen per cent of parents in 2004 did not give an estimate.

Table H-6: Estimated weekly childcare costs (three hours after school, Monday to Friday) for secondary school children aged 12 years**Base:** Parents with a child aged 12-14 who did not use these types of provision in the previous year

	2004		2000	
	Child-minder	Out-of-school club	Child-minder	Out-of-school club
	%	%	%	%
Less than £20	1	11	2	33
£21-£30	5	24	18	24
£31-£40	7	23	17	15
£41-£50	21	13	16	18
£51-£60	17	6	22	4
£61-£70	21	3	13	3
More than £70	16	3	12	3
Don't know	13	16	-	-
Base	116	99	302	140

Costs of babysitters for pre-school children

Parents of children of ages 0-2 years and 3-4 years were asked to give their estimates of the costs of babysitting for children aged 2 and 4 correspondingly. Table H-7 shows the responses for 2 and 4 year olds and compares the results of the 2004 and 2000 surveys.

Table H-7: Estimated costs of babysitters at non-standard times**Base:** Parents with a child aged 0-2 or 3-5 who did not use a babysitter in the previous year

	2004		2000	
	Child aged 2	Child aged 4	Child aged 2	Child aged 4
	%	%	%	%
Evening				
Less than £10	4	2	17	13
£10-£20	44	41	61	63
£21-£30	33	32	15	18
£31-£40	10	11	4	2
More than £40	1	4	3	4
Don't know	8	10	-	-
Overnight				
Less than £20	4	6	17	12
£20-£30	16	17	33	33
£31-£40	24	17	20	21
£41-£50	16	26	21	21
£51-£60	8	8	9	7
£61-£70	4	6	1	3
More than £70	10	5	1	3
Don't know	18	17	-	-
Weekend				
Less than £20	3	3	16	10
£20-£30	18	19	34	32
£31-£40	27	21	23	22
£41-£50	19	23	14	19
£51-£60	7	11	6	12
£61-£70	8	3	4	4
More than £70	5	6	4	2
Don't know	12	12	-	-
Base	135	145	131	152

Evenings (7pm-midnight)

In 2000, 78% of parents believed that it would cost anything up to £20 for a 2 year old, and 76% believed it would cost this amount for a 4 year old. However, in 2004, perceptions of the cost of babysitting had risen, with 48% of parents believing it would cost anything up to £20 for a 2 year old and 43% citing this amount for a 4 year old.

In 2004, 44% of parents estimated a cost of more than £20 for an evening of babysitting for a 2 year old compared with 22% of parents in 2000. For a 4 year old, the respective proportions believing it would cost more than £20 were 47% in 2004 and 26% in 2000. However, a fifth (8-10%) of parents in 2004 did not give an estimate.

Overnight (10pm-8am)

The perceived costs of overnight babysitting had also risen between 2000 and 2004. While 53% of parents in 2000 believed that overnight babysitting for a 2 year old would cost £20-£40, this was true for only 40% of parents in 2004. For a 4 year old, 54% of parents in 2000 estimated a cost of £20-£40, compared with 34% in 2004.

For costs over £41 and up to £70 for a 2 year old, estimates were similar for 2000 and 2004, although a larger proportion of parents in 2004 believed that babysitting overnight would cost £71 or more (10% compared with only 1% in 2000). In the case of overnight provision for a 4 year old, 40% of parents in 2004 estimated a cost of £41-£70, compared with 31% of parents in 2000.

Again, it must be borne in mind that 18% of parents of 0-2 year olds and 17% of parents of 3-5 year olds did not give an estimate in 2004.

Weekends (8am-6pm, Saturday or Sunday)

Perceptions of the cost of weekend babysitting had also risen between 2000 and 2004. While half (50%) of parents of children aged 0-2 believed that the cost of babysitting for a 2 year old on a weekend day would cost less than £20, only 21% of parents in 2004 gave this response. Similarly, for parents of children aged 3-5, 42% of parents in 2000 estimated a cost of under £20 for a 4 year old, compared with only 22% of parents in 2004.

A similar proportion of parents in 2004 and 2000 believed that babysitting on a weekend day would cost £31-£50. For a 2 year old, the figures were 46% (2004) and 37% (2000), and for a 4 year old the estimates were 44% (2004) and 41% (2000).

Costs of babysitters for school-age children

Parents of children of ages 5-11 years and 12-14 years were asked to give their estimates of the costs of babysitting for children aged 8 and 12 correspondingly. Table H-8 shows comparative results from 2004 and 2000 for 8 and 12 year olds.

Evenings (7pm-midnight)

The perceptions among parents about the costs of a babysitter for an 8 year old and a 12 year old showed a similar pattern. While three quarters (74%) of parents in 2000 believed that an evening babysitter would cost less than £20, this was the perception of just half (49%) of parents in 2004. For a babysitter to provide evening care for a 12 year old, 70% of 2000 respondents believed the cost would be under £20, compared with just 43% of parents in 2004. However, 14% of parents for each child age group in 2004 did not give an estimate.

Overnight (10pm-8am)

Perceived costs of a babysitter overnight were also deemed higher in 2004 than in 2000. A quarter (25%) of parents responding to the 2004 survey believed that overnight babysitting for an 8 year old would cost under £30, compared with nearly half (46%) in 2000. Similarly, 24% of parents in 2004 estimated the cost to be under £30 for a 12 year old to be cared for overnight, compared with 34% in 2000.

However, nearly a quarter (23%) of parents in 2004 did not give an opinion, indicating that there is great uncertainty about the cost of this type of care, possibly because it is not used as often as evening babysitting.

Weekends (8am-6pm, Saturday or Sunday)

The largest proportion of parents in both 2004 and 2000 perceived the costs for an 8 year old to receive babysitting on a weekend day to be between £20 and £40. While 45% of parents in 2004 gave this estimate, this was true for 58% of parents in 2000.

For 12 year olds, a similar pattern was seen, with estimates most likely to fall between £20 and £40 (42% in 2004 compared with 54% in 2000). However, a fifth of parents in 2004 (19% for 8 year olds and 21% for 12 year olds) did not give an estimate.

Table H-8: Estimated costs of babysitters at non-standard times**Base:** Parents with a child aged 8-11 or 12-14 who did not use a babysitter in the previous year

	2004		2000	
	Child aged 8	Child aged 12	Child aged 8	Child aged 12
	%	%	%	%
Evening				
Less than £10	2	5	14	12
£10-£20	47	38	60	58
£21-£30	27	30	17	17
£31-£40	8	6	6	11
More than £40	3	8	3	2
Don't know	14	14	-	-
Overnight				
Less than £20	6	5	12	9
£20-£30	19	19	34	35
£31-£40	21	20	24	25
£41-£50	13	13	16	11
£51-£60	8	6	9	15
£61-£70	4	5	3	3
More than £70	6	9	3	2
Don't know	23	23	-	-
Weekend				
Less than £20	7	4	8	9
£20-£30	21	24	34	28
£31-£40	24	18	24	26
£41-£50	13	14	17	16
£51-£60	8	7	10	16
£61-£70	4	5	3	1
More than £70	4	7	5	4
Don't know	19	21	-	-
Base	248	104	287	130

Key findings:

Two thirds of parents do not pay for childcare, and this is because there is a preference for, and reliance upon, informal provision, particularly from close family members.

Parents of pre-school childcare use more childcare overall, more frequently and for more hours than those with school-age children, and are also more likely to pay for their childcare.

The third of parents who do pay for childcare said that the majority of the costs covered childcare fees and wages and refreshments or meals. Education fees, trips and outings, use of equipment and travel costs accounted for a small percentage of childcare costs.

Parents paying for childcare generally felt that the costs were too high, regardless of their income. Non-working parents felt that they were not being encouraged or supported to go back to work, as the high costs of childcare would consume most of their wages.

*Parents on low incomes felt that the cost of many formal childcare options was prohibitive, and thus they have to rely on informal providers. Importantly for policy, some childcare options were disregarded because of **perceptions** that the costs would be high; however, many parents did not have the correct information about all types of provision.*

Just under 40% of parents pay under £20 a week for childcare, while 18% pay between £20 and £39, and a further 18% pay between £40 and £70. Almost three quarters found it easy to meet the costs of childcare, but a quarter found it difficult.

The majority (80%) of parents said they would carry on using their current childcare arrangements if childcare costs increased by a quarter. Cost is not the main concern when parents choose childcare; issues such as trust in the provider and quality of care rank as far more important.

For a minority of parents, an increase in childcare costs of a quarter would mean they would have to reduce the number of hours of childcare used (8%), or stop using childcare altogether (7%).

If costs of childcare were to decrease by a quarter, the majority (84%) of parents would not change their current arrangements. However, for 5%, a decrease in cost would mean that they could afford more hours of childcare and free up their time to work more hours or undertake learning or training.

Three quarters of parents would not change their arrangements if they could get 'better' childcare, showing that parents are generally satisfied with the arrangements they have. Choice of childcare provider is clearly given considerable thought.

A quarter of parents said that they would like to receive more hours of childcare a week, particularly lone parents, presumably to ease the burden of having to care for their children without the help of a spouse or partner.

Of the 118 parents who said they would benefit from more hours of childcare a week, six in ten would be prepared to pay an additional £3 an hour for the additional childcare. Of the 49 parents who would not be prepared to pay this amount, nearly three quarters would be prepared to pay a reduced rate of £1.50 an hour.

If parents were able to get additional hours of childcare at an acceptable cost, their roles in the labour market would change somewhat. Six in ten would work more hours or undertake (more) learning or training and two in ten would look for a new job.

Two thirds of parents of 0-2 year olds estimated the costs of a private nursery for a pre-school child to be more than £121 a week, compared with under half in 2000. For parents of 3-5 year olds asked the same question, the figures were 65% and 50% respectively.

Among parents of 5-11 year olds, a comparable proportion (around a fifth) estimated the costs of a childminder for a school-age child for three hours after school each day to be between £41 and £50. The perceptions of parents of 12-14 year olds were broadly similar.

Overall usage of out-of-school clubs has increased since 2000, thus we might expect parents in 2004 to have more accurate perceptions of the costs. Half of parents in 2004 estimated three hours of OSC provision each day after school to cost up to £40, compared with 78% of parents in 2000.

Parents' perceptions of the cost of babysitting for a pre-school child have risen since 2000, and this was the case for evening, overnight and weekend babysitting. Perceptions among parents about the costs of babysitting at non-standard times for school-age children show a similar pattern.

I. Parental ideals: formal and informal childcare

Key questions:

How does the decision-making process behind choosing a childcare provider work?

What are the key drivers of demand for childcare?

What would be parents' ideal childcare arrangements if choices were not constrained by availability or cost?

How do formal and informal childcare providers compare?

What are parents' views on the merits and disadvantages of formal versus informal childcare?

What would be parents' preferred childcare arrangements within the boundaries of cost and availability?

The previous chapters have described in detail the types of childcare used by parents in Scotland, the patterns of usage, costs and how parents cope with unmet demand for childcare. Additionally, the relationships between childcare use and labour market participation have been explored, as well as attitudes towards childcare provision in the local area. The report has so far highlighted that there is a range of childcare options used by parents, from informal provision by grandparents to formal provision through childminding or nursery provision. Many parents use a combination of formal and informal provision. The complex mix of childcare provision reflects the complexity of parents' decision-making process when choosing childcare.

Patterns of childcare are complex because choices are made in the context of parents' circumstances – their household structure, working status, age of their child/ren, the types of childcare available to them in their local area and the ease of access to and costs of different types of provision. Underlying all of these factors are personal preferences such as whether to use formal or informal childcare providers.

The first section of this chapter explores the factors that influence parents' choice of childcare through an explanation of the drivers of demand for childcare. The remainder of the chapter looks at what parents' *ideal* childcare arrangements would be if their choices

were not constrained by cost or availability, and what their *preferred but realistic* childcare provision would be based on their current circumstances.

Drivers of demand for childcare

A number of key factors drive the type and volume of childcare that parents wish for their children, including the preferred attributes of childcare provision, the availability of preferred childcare and parental employment status. Figure I-1 maps the types of decisions that each parent must go through to determine the mix of childcare that is appropriate for their child. This is an illustrative model, as parents may have slightly different decision-making processes depending on their individual circumstances.

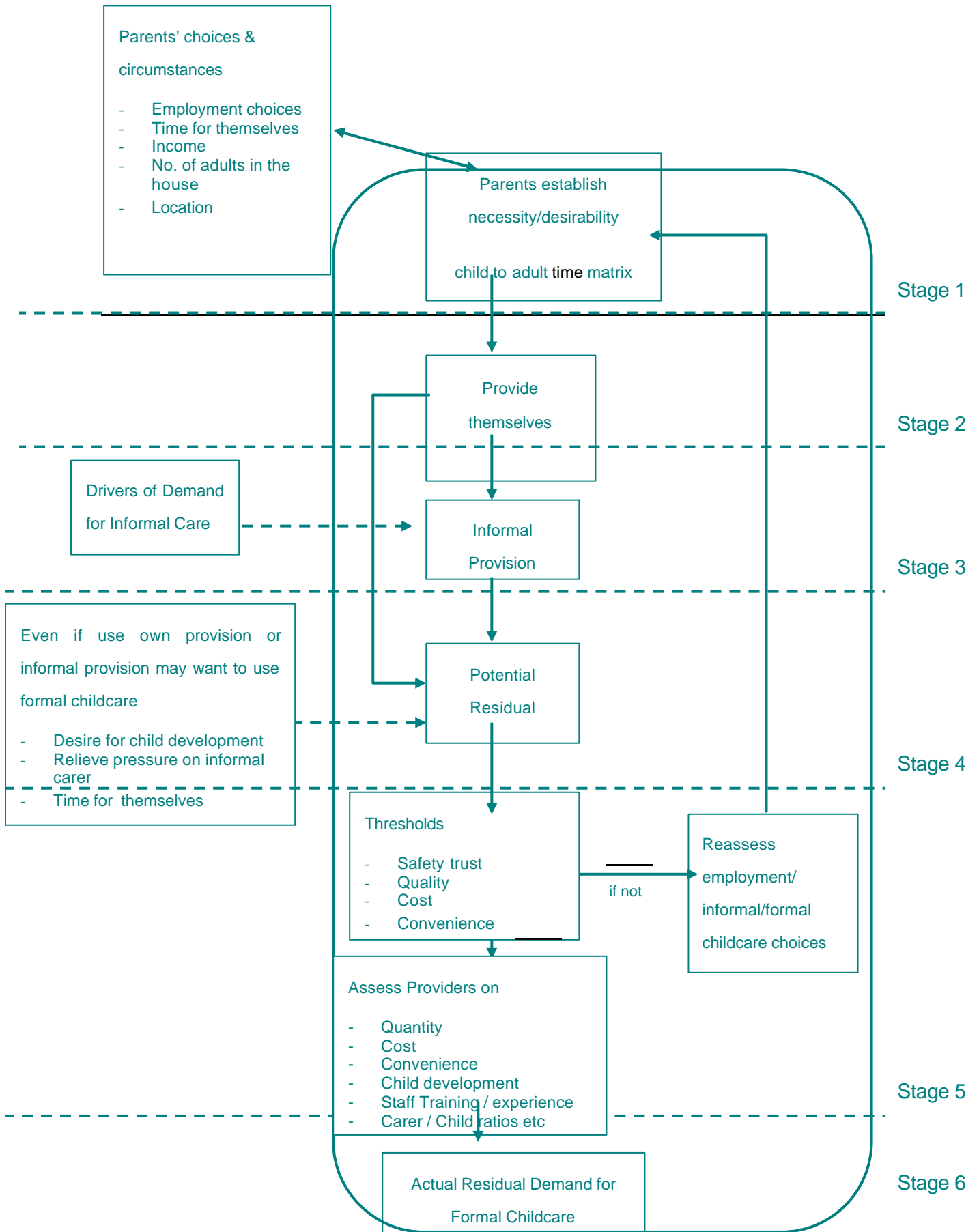
As a starting point, parents need to decide the amount of time that they wish their child to spend with adults, both what is necessary and what is desirable. Parental preferences may vary, depending on factors such as the age of the child. For example, parents of an infant child will likely want their child to be supervised by an adult at all times, while the parents of a teenage school child may be happier (and see it as desirable) for their child to play with other children, unsupervised, for part of the week.

In deciding on childcare provision, the aim of parents is to satisfy the target child to adult time matrix (stage 1 in Figure I-1). Key decisions are to provide the childcare themselves (stage 2); to use informal childcare (stage 3), or to use formal childcare (stage 4)⁸.

Many parents will see it as important to have their child looked after by someone they know. If finances permit, one adult might not work (at least for part of the time) and look after the child. This may especially be the case for the first year or two of the child's life, when parents want to develop a close bond with the child. Alternatively (or concurrently), if parents must work, they may come to an arrangement with a close relative (grandparents, brothers, sisters) to look after the child for at least some of the time. This may also reflect a desire for their child to have interaction with others, for developmental reasons, particularly for older children.

Figure I-1: Parental decisions when choosing preferred type of childminder

⁸ Seventy three percent of respondents used informal care in the last year and thirty nine percent of respondents used formal care in the last year.



Parents generally prefer to use informal provision ahead of using formal childcare provision because this type of provision may be more readily available (e.g. grandparents may live close at hand) or because of the cost of formal childcare. However, the key consideration in leaving a child with someone else is how much a parent trusts the carer – inherently, how safe a child will be with someone. Parents know and trust their relatives and friends and are much more likely to leave their children with these friends and relatives. Nearly three quarters of parents use informal provision.

Given the preference for care by parents or informally by friends or relatives, the potential demand for formal childcare provision is the residual – providing for those parents who must work and do not have easy access to childcare by friends or relatives (stage 4). While this is the main driver for formal childcare, additional demand derives from parents wanting their child to develop through formal care (both educationally and through contact with other children) or to relieve the pressure on their informal providers.

In order for this potential demand for formal childcare to translate into actual purchases of formal childcare provision, parents assess the available provision to see if it meets their own thresholds (stage 5), i.e. the extent to which an establishment meets parents' minimum standards of:

- Safety / trust – do parents feel their child will be safe in this establishment (this is a primary consideration).
- Quality – do parents think the establishment will provide a quality service
- Cost – is the establishment within their price range
- Convenience – is the establishment within an acceptable travelling distance and offers the childcare at times they need, e.g. early morning. (Distance is less of a consideration – parents may travel further to reach a childcare provider if the provider meets all of the parents other requirements.)

The minimum thresholds will vary from parent to parent. If key elements of these thresholds are not met then the parents will seek another establishment. In some cases, there may not be any formal childcare provider within their local area that meets all of parents' minimum demands and parents must therefore reassess their lifestyle choices: this may include altering how long they work each week, or not working at all.

Once parents have decided the amount of formal childcare they desire, they will assess different providers on: the quantity of childcare available; the cost of childcare; the convenience of the location of the provider; the opportunities for child development or educational support; and the adult to child ratios. Parents will choose the provider that best meets the individual preferences for these measures (stage 6).

Formal childcare provision is a small part of the whole childcare market. This is important to the policymaking process - government schemes can be created to give parents the incentive to use formal childcare provision, but parents will only participate in these schemes if using formal childcare fits in with their lifestyle choices and if the formal childcare providers meet the parents' minimum thresholds. As the survey has shown, many parents' preferences will favour informal care if available. Consequently, government can influence the volume and (more importantly) the quality of formal childcare to promote increased participation rates, but this will only have a limited impact on the market as many parents will continue using informal childcare provision. Increasing the volume and quality of formal childcare establishments can be a policy objective, but any policy should be formulated within the context of the large volume of informal childcare provision.

Ideal childcare provision

In the main survey of 1,003 parents, we explored parents' views on what their *ideal* childcare choices would be if the issues outlined above were not prohibitive factors. Parents gave their views on their overall ideal provider, and also which type of formal provider they would choose, if only formal provision were available.

The question about ideal childcare provision was asked for each selected child, rather than on a household basis, as parents might choose to select different ideal arrangements for different children, thus child-level rather than household-level data are reported in this chapter. As was the case in Chapter C (Patterns of childcare use), the data are reported on by age of child, household structure, parents' employment status and social class.

Ideal and realistic preferred childcare arrangements by provider type

Parents were asked to imagine that all of the childcare options listed in Table I-3 were available and affordable to them, and were asked to choose their ideal provider. They were also asked later what their preferred but realistic choice of childcare would be, given what was available to them and what they could afford.

Overall, the findings show that parents would prefer to look after their own children in an ideal situation, organising their work in such a way that would allow this. Where this situation is not realistic, then grandparents, followed by other relatives, are seen as the ideal providers of childcare, with parents putting lowest priority on using childcare providers who are not family or friends.

This feeling was also echoed in the depth interviews to some extent, as parents did want to look after their children for the majority of the time. However, parents considered a wide range of childcare arrangements to be their ideal. The ideal option raised by parents throughout the depth interviews, was working part-time in order to have independence and interaction with other adults while also having adequate time to spend with their child. An additional benefit of this arrangement perceived by some parents was that the child could attend nursery part-time and so have the opportunity to interact with other children and develop their social awareness. However, money was one factor constraining parents from acquiring this arrangement:

“If money wasn’t an option, I wouldn’t be working full-time. Ideally I would work part-time although I would still like her to go to nursery I think, because it teaches them a lot, (and they have) interaction with other kids”.

One student parent said that she thought her current childcare arrangements were ideal as she got to spend quality time with her children, but also had her own interests and independence which she felt benefited all her family:

“I quite enjoy my time away from my children, to be honest, I really do. I think you need it you know, it doesn’t make you a bad parent. You need time for yourself, that’s natural...and they get quality time when I do see them. Because they’ve got time away from me, they enjoy the time I have with them even more”.

Another parent who agreed there should be a balance between her looking after her children and them being in formal childcare, felt that a more collaborative approach between parents and staff within the nursery would be a positive move:

“ (a) nursery where the parents have a certain amount of input but staff are trained to have a safe environment...but I still wouldn’t out them there full-time because they are my kids and it is not for me to farm them out for eight hour days”.

Where parents said that they would prefer informal provision, their spouse or partner was the most common choice (22%, in line with 24% in 2000), followed by the child's grandparents (17%, not significantly different from 20% in 2000).

The nature of informal childcare and the advantages of trust and reliability were cited as reasons for preferring family rather than formal childcare providers:

"I know that these people are trained but how much time do they spend with that child if they have three other children or their own children. Having somebody else's child is not the same as having your own child, or a relative that is a member of the family as they treat them differently".

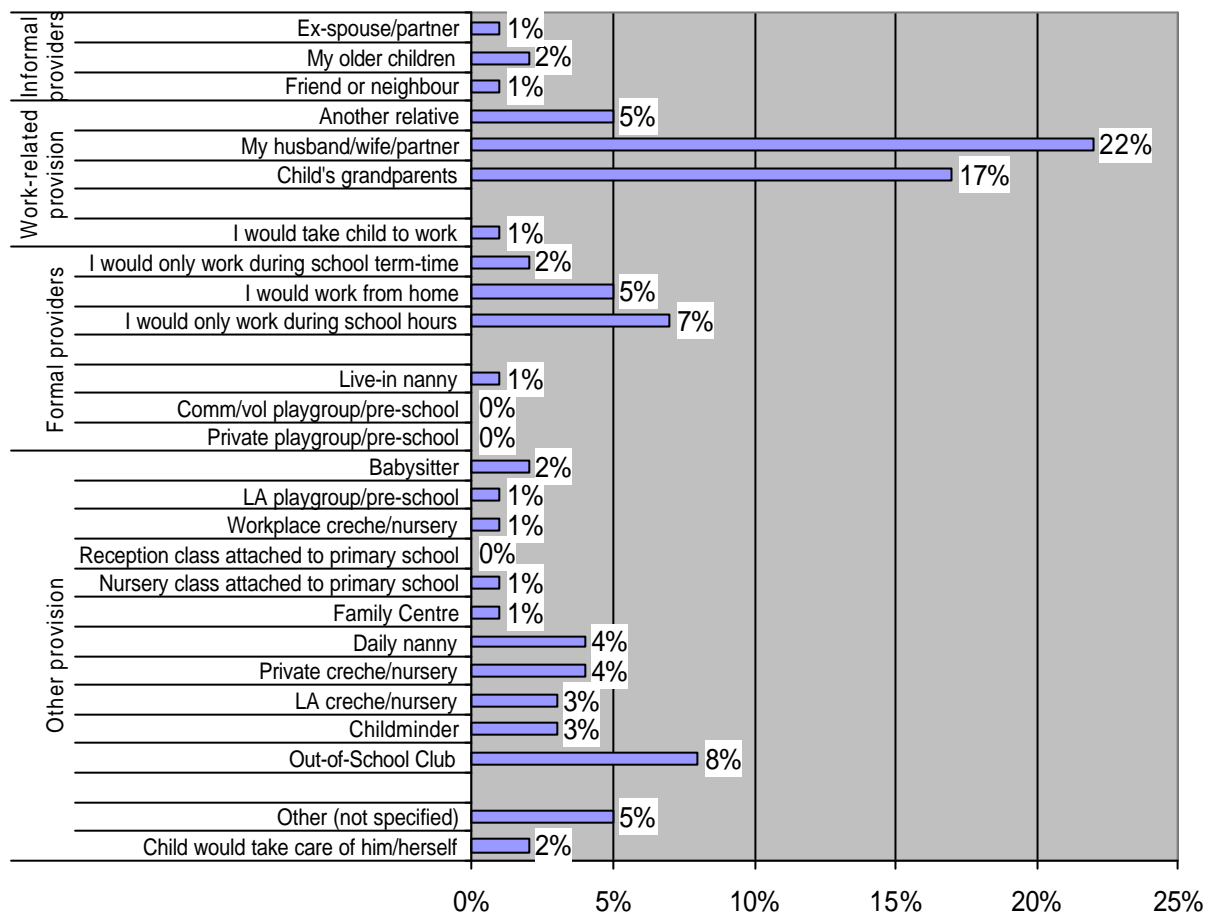
Many parents also preferred the old-fashioned ideal of having their children brought up by and cared for by family rather than anyone outside the family. There was a common wariness towards strangers, which seemed to be fuelled by stories of kidnaps and paedophiles in the media. Thus, to many parents (regardless of their current circumstances) their ideal childcare arrangements would be informal.

Almost one in 10 parents (9%) said that they would like to work during school hours and term times only, compared with 15% in the 2000 survey. A further 5% said that they would work from home (not asked in 2000).

Of those parents who stated a preference for formal childcare provision, an out-of-school club was the most popular choice, as was the case in the 2000 survey, although it was chosen by just 8% of parents in the current survey and 7% of parents in 2000.

Figure I-2: Ideal choice for childcare provision

Base: All children



During the depth interviews, a common opinion between many parents was that a work crèche or nursery would be ideal:

“It is very expensive for mothers to go out working and ideally you would like to have a crèche in your own work, and people who have got that, I don’t think they have the same stress”.

It was also suggested that these crèches and nurseries within the workplace should be subsidised by both the government and the organisation. It was noted that many companies now offer a range of benefits such as lower rate mortgages, pensions, and healthcare, and yet they don’t offer childcare facilities:

“I think there needs to be a much bigger take-up, almost an obligation that an employer has to be involved in your childcare arrangements, whether that’s providing something or whether it’s subsidising something or whatever”.

When parents were interviewed in depth, some interesting differences emerged in terms of ideal providers that were related to the age of the child, suggesting that the requirements of the type of care varied dependent on age. As mentioned previously in relation to mothers' labour market participation, it was the view of many parents, that ideally, the mother would stay at home and look after her children, at least until the children reached two or three:

“Well, I’ve always said I wanted to stay with him until he was roughly about two and a half to three anyway because I think mums should be with them for the first wee while”.

The ideal childcare arrangements for older children mainly consisted of after school clubs or youth clubs. Some parents commented that although their children (aged 12 years and over) felt they could look after themselves for a few hours after school, the parents wanted the peace of mind related to their children being in a structured and organised environment where they could be entertained. One mother detailing the ideal childcare arrangements when her son was twelve years old said:

“I suppose the ideal thing would be an after-school club, probably that would be all that I would need... At least if they’re at the school it’s an organised thing, there’s more than one person in charge of them. It’s stimulating because they’re doing educational stuff”.

Other parents of older children mentioned the ideal situation as having a childminder to come to their home for the few hours after school so the children could come home to their own house and have the freedom to do what they liked while being supervised:

“To have somebody that came here and be here for them coming home from school and stayed here with them, that would be brilliant because then the kids are not going to be disrupted. Ideally that would be if I could trust somebody”.

Parents of children with special needs were asked during the depth interviews what their ideal childcare situation would be. This was an important issue, as these parents are constrained by the specific needs of their child and many mainstream childcare options are unavailable to them. As mentioned previously, the parents of some children in this group said their ideal would be a more integrated approach, so that their child could attend mainstream nurseries with their siblings and other friends. This would require certain members of staff being qualified to deal with the types of need that the children have, and perhaps someone who was medically trained to be aware and able to cope with any

situations that arose. Other parents within this group said that their ideal childcare arrangements would be for themselves to be the primary carer, but with a little help and support from other services.

Parents were asked to give reasons behind the first choice of childcare provider given above, as outlined in Table I-1.

Table I-1: Reasons for first choice of childcare provider

Base: All children

	Net %
Work-related reasons	4
Family-related reasons	32
Child-related reasons	15
Childcare provider-related reasons	11
Financial reasons	2
Unweighted base	1,597
Weighted base	1,584

Parents whose first choice of provider for their child/ren would be a relative were asked if that person lived in the same household as them, or somewhere different. A third (34%) said that the relative they would choose as their child/ren's ideal provider did live in the same household as them.

There were some differences by age of child, with households containing younger children more likely to have the relative who would be considered an ideal childcare provider living there. Table I-2 illustrates these findings.

Table I-2: Whether ideal provider lives in same household, by age of child

Base: All children whose parents say ideal provider is a relative

	Age of child					Total
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, lives in same household	48	46	31	25	26	34
No, lives in a different household	40	32	37	33	28	34
Not stated	12	22	32	42	45	33

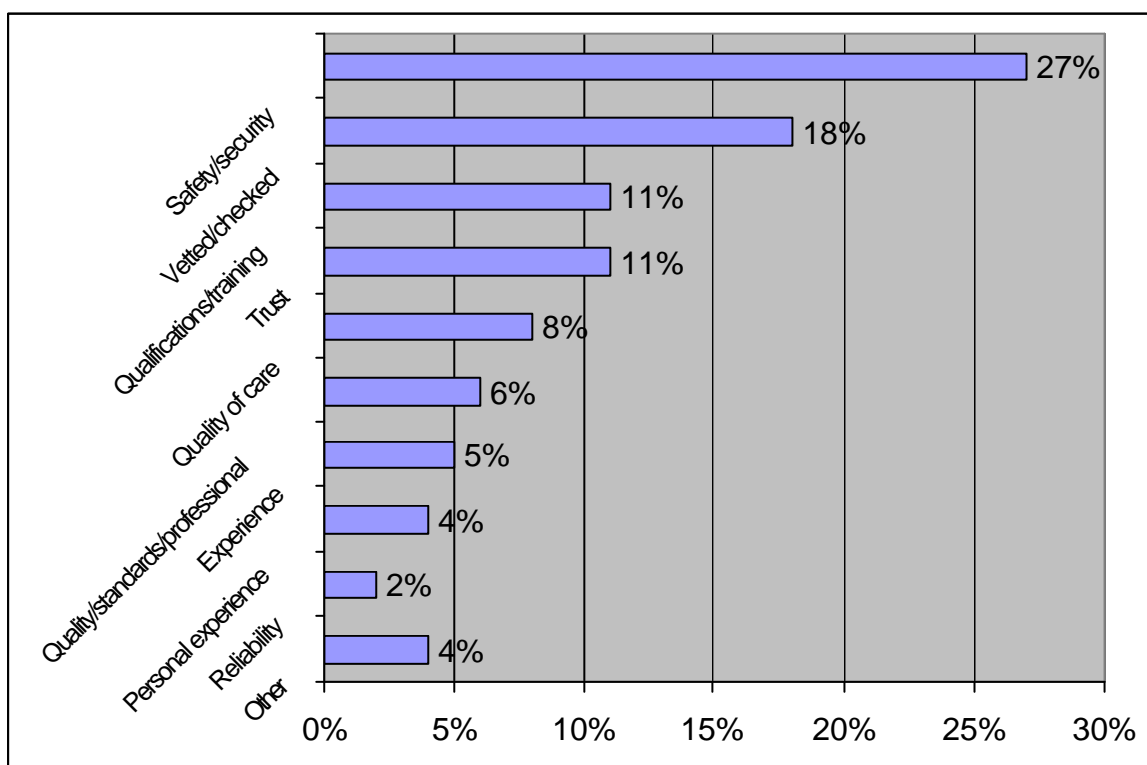
Unweighted base	134	98	154	228	104	718
Weighted base	135	98	153	226	113	725

Respondents who chose a childminder, child carer or nanny as their ideal provider (n=134) were asked whether they would prefer the provider to be registered or unregistered. The majority (86%) said that they would prefer a registered provider for their child/ren, while only 2% said they would prefer an unregistered provider. Twelve per cent of parents said that their decision would depend on the individual childminder, suggesting that factors other than registration were important to parents' ideals.

Of those who would choose a registered childcare provider as their ideal, the reasons were as shown in Figure I-3

Figure I-3: Reasons for choosing a registered childcare provider

Base: All children whose ideal provider is registered childminder/child carer/nanny



‘Preferred but idealistic’ childcare arrangements

When parents were asked what their *preferred but realistic* childcare arrangements would be, there were some notable differences. In ideal circumstances, childcare would be

provided by the respondent's spouse or partner for 22% of children, while realistically, this was only possible for half that proportion (10%).

This is a significant finding in terms of policy: if the preference among respondents is for their spouse or partner to provide childcare but it is only a *realistic* choice for half of them, then in those cases where respondents are *not* using their spouse or partner to provide childcare, it is likely to be because both partners are working.

This issue is complex because, except in cases where people choose to work but can afford not to, the reality is that parents are working for financial reasons and using other types of childcare outside their immediate household. This points to other factors like issues around income, cost of housing and socio-cultural reasons (such as the need to compete with others in their peer group) that are making the situation whereby one parent works and the other stays at home to rear children unrealistic. The whole policy basis of providing childcare which enables parents to go out to work is thus undermined.

Table I-3 compares the ideal and realistic preferred types of childcare for all children.

Table I-3: Ideal versus realistic preferred choice for childcare provision by provider type

Base: All children

	Ideal	Realistic preferred
	%	%
Informal providers		
Child's grandparents	17	16
My husband/wife/partner	22	10
Another relative	5	5
Friend or neighbour	1	2
My older children	2	2
Ex-spouse/partner	1	1
Work-related provision		
I would only work during school hours	7	8
I would work from home	5	5
I would only work during school term-time	2	2
I would take child to work	1	1
Formal providers		
Out-of-School Club	8	13

Childminder	4	6
LA crèche/nursery	3	5
Private crèche/nursery	4	5
Daily nanny	4	6
Family Centre	1	2
Nursery class attached to primary school	1	3
Reception class attached to primary school	*	1
Workplace creche/nursery	1	1
LA playgroup/pre-school	1	1
Babysitter	2	*
Private playgroup/pre-school	*	1
Comm/vol playgroup/pre-school	0	1
Live-in nanny	1	0
Other provision		
Child would take care of him/herself	2	4
Other (not specified)	5	2

Ideal and realistic preferred provision by age of child

Table I-4 shows that informal provision would be the ideal choice of parents for all children aged between 0-14. The respondent's partner and the child's grandparents were the most popular choice across all age ranges, with between a fifth and a quarter of parents choosing their spouse or partner as their idea childcare provider, and 14% to 20% of parents choosing their child/ren's grandparents.

The findings were similar to those of the 2000 survey, and Table I-4 shows the latter (where data were comparable) in parentheses.

Table I-4: Ideal childcare provision by age of child

Base: All children

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
My husband/wife/partner	23 (23)	24 (29)	19 (23)	21 (24)	22 (25)
Child's grandparents	13 (21)	14 (20)	18 (19)	20 (20)	20 (19)
Another relative, friend or neighbour	5 (4)	3 (4)	6 (7)	8 (7)	5 (6)
My older children	0 (1)	0 (0)	2 (0)	3 (1)	6 (3)
Ex-spouse/partner	2 (1)	0 (0)	* (1)	1 (0)	2 (0)

I would only work during school hours/term times	6 (4)	6 (11)	15 (18)	10 (21)	6 (18)
I would work from home	4	4	6	6	7
I would take child to work	2	1	1	*	*
Out-of-School Club	1 (0)	2 (1)	12 (11)	13 (11)	10 (7)
Daily nanny	4 (5)	4 (5)	4 (5)	3 (4)	5 (3)
Childminder	4 (6)	5 (7)	2 (4)	4 (2)	1 (2)
Private creche/nursery	11	7	1	0	0
LA creche/nursery	6	7	1	*	1
Babysitter	1 (1)	2 (0)	2 (1)	2 (3)	4 (2)
Live-in nanny	2 (1)	1 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)	0 (2)
Nursery class attached to primary school	1 (1)	5 (1)	2 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
LA playgroup/pre-school	2	5	*	0	0
Workplace creche/nursery	2	*	1	0	0
Family Centre	1 (1)	0 (1)	1 (0)	* (0)	* (2)
Reception class attached to primary school	*	1	0	0	0
Comm/vol playgroup/pre-school	0	0	0	0	0
Private playgroup/pre-school	1	1	*	0	0
Other (not specified)	6	7	4	5	5
Child would take care of him/herself	2 (1)	1 (1)	2 (1)	2 (0)	4 (2)
Unweighted bases	325 (387)	240 (279)	359 (452)	477 (583)	208 (371)
Weighted base (2004 only)	335	243	352	454	215

In a realistic but preferred situation, the ideal childcare provider was more likely to be a child's grandparents than the respondent's spouse or partner (16% compared with 10%), and this was applicable for children of all ages. Only 9% of children aged 0-2 and 18% of those aged 3-4 would be cared for by respondents' spouses or partners, compared with 23% and 24% respectively in ideal circumstances.

While grandparents were the ideal choice of provider for only 13% of children aged 0-2, this rose to 19% in realistic but preferred circumstances, which is likely to be due to respondents' partners (their first choice) being unavailable for childcare due to work.

Ideal provision by household structure and employment

Variations in parents' ideal choice of childcare provider were analysed according to the household structure and employment circumstances of respondents. As Table I-5 shows, both lone parents and respondents from two-parent families would choose their child/ren's grandparents as their ideal childcare provider, although the proportion choosing this option was higher among lone parents (29% of those working, compared with 15% of working respondents from two-parent families). This is due to respondents from two-parent families being more likely to choose their spouse or partner as their children's ideal childcare provider.

Figures from the 2000 survey showed the same trends as described above, although the data were not directly comparable due to different categorisation of household employment circumstances.

Table I-5: Ideal childcare provision by household structure and employment**Base:** All children

	Lone parent families			Two-parent families			
	%			%			
	Works f/t	Works p/t	Not working	Both work f/t	1 works f/t, 1 p/t	1 f/t, 1 not working	Neither works
My husband/wife/partner	12	6	9	23	22	29	24
Child's grandparents	29	25	20	15	20	10	13
Another relative, friend or neighbour	4	7	7	2	5	5	3
My older children	4	0	5	3	1	1	0
Ex-spouse/partner	4	4	2	1	1	0	0
I would only work during school hours/term times	12	13	3	7	12	9	7
I would work from home	13	5	7	10	4	2	0
I would take child to work	0	*	1	1	2	*	0
Out-of-School Club	3	15	10	7	7	7	0
Daily nanny	4	4	4	5	3	4	3
Childminder	1	2	5	6	3	1	0

Private creche/nursery	0	4	6	2	3	4	13
LA creche/nursery	2	0	2	2	2	4	7
Babysitter	4	4	1	1	3	2	0
Live-in nanny	2	0	2	*	1	3	3
Nursery class attached to primary school	0	0	3	2	2	1	2
LA playgroup/pre-school	0	4	4	0	1	1	2
Workplace creche/nursery	0	1	0	*	1	2	0
Family Centre	0	0	0	0	0	1	11
Reception class attached to primary school	0	0	0	0	0	*	0
Comm/vol playgroup/pre-school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private playgroup/pre-school	0	1	0	0	1	*	0
Other (not specified)	4	2	3	10	3	7	6
Child would take care of him/herself	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Unweighted base	86	96	154	269	472	422	52
Weighted base	92	90	151	283	470	418	50

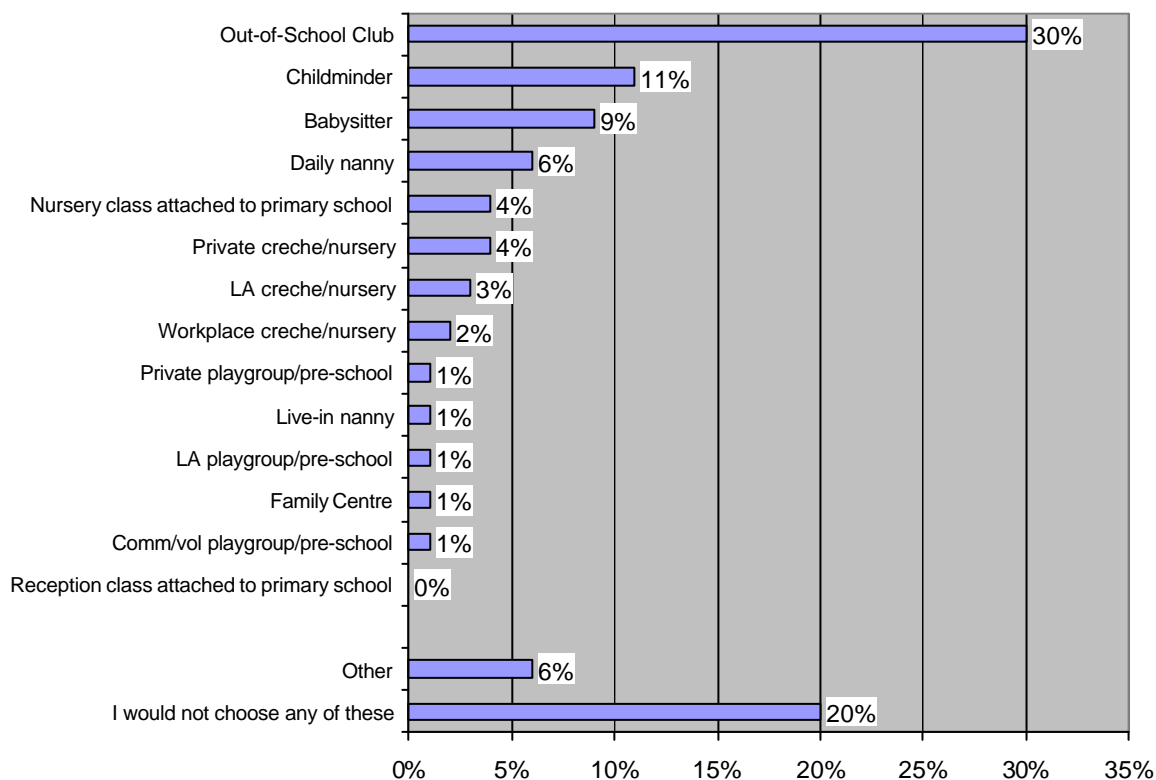
As was the case in 2000, clear patterns between choices of ideal provider were not found in relation to respondents' working status, and this may be due to the fact that some parents might choose to change their working patterns as well as childcare arrangements in an ideal situation. Of those not currently working, 3% of lone parents and 7% of non-working couples said that ideally, they would work during school hours or term times, and 7% of lone parents said that ideally, they would like to work from home. This suggests that non-working parents might be encouraged to work if working arrangements were more flexible. It also suggests that many parents working full-time would work less hours if they could in order to fit together work and childcare more effectively. The net effect of flexibility would therefore be fewer hours worked.

Ideal formal childcare provider

While parents did not directly state a preference for informal provision (or even 'free' childcare), it is clear that, given a choice without the prohibiting factors of availability or cost, most parents would choose a family member – particularly themselves, their spouse or partner or their child/ren's grandparents – to look after their child/ren.

Parents whose ideal childcare provider can be described as 'informal' were asked what type of provider they would choose if only formal provision were available. The most popular choice was out-of-school clubs, with parents choosing this option for three times as many children as childminders or babysitters (30%, compared with 11% and 9% respectively). Interestingly, for 20% of children, parents said that they would not choose any type of formal childcare, reinforcing the message that ideal childcare provision would be informal (and, as we have seen, preferably carried out by a family member). Figure I-4 shows the choices of formal provider in full.

Figure I-4: First choice of formal childcare provider
Base: All children whose ideal provider was informal



When asked for the reasons behind their choice of *absolute* ideal provider, parents' comments had focused mainly on family-related reasons, including the following:

- the feeling that parents should look after their own child/ren
- parents' preference for someone from their immediate family to look after their child/ren
- a preference for childcare to take place within the family home.

Child-related reasons were also important in parents' choice of ideal childcare provider, and included:

- the opportunity for the child/ren to socialise with others
- happiness of the child/ren when receiving childcare.

The main reasons for choices based on individual providers were the quality of childcare provided and the fact that parents knew their child/ren would be well looked after.

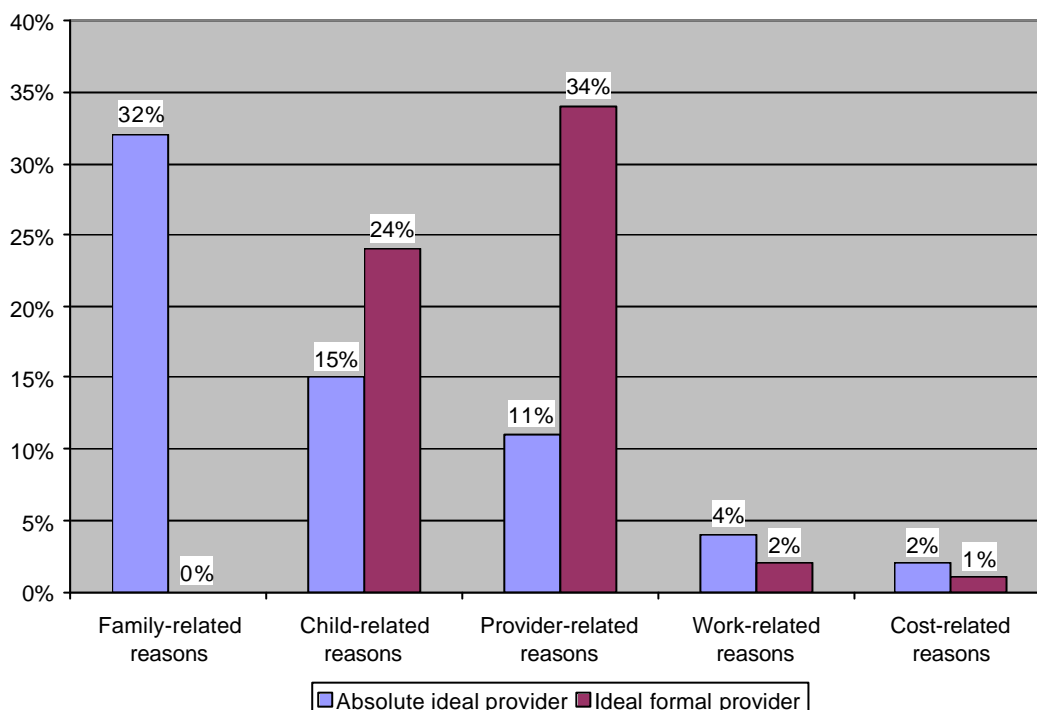
Work-related reasons for choice of ideal provider were:

- the choice of childcare provider allowed the parent to go out to work
- childcare fitted in with working hours and/or school hours.

However, when those parents whose ideal provider would be informal were asked to choose from a list of formal providers, the reasons for their choices were slightly different. Clearly, as their ideal preference was for informal childcare, there were no family-related reasons associated with choosing a formal provider. Reasons related to formal providers themselves (such as quality standards and qualifications) were unsurprisingly high, and child-related reasons (such as the opportunity to mix with others and happiness of the child) were higher than they were for informal providers.

Figure I-5 compares the net percentages for each of the main reasons given for choosing absolute ideal providers and ideal formal providers.

Figure I-5: First choice absolute ideal and ideal formal childcare provider
Base 1: All children; Base 2: All children whose ideal provider was informal



Parents whose ideal formal provider for their children (if no informal childcare was available) would be a childminder, child carer or nanny were asked whether they would prefer the provider to be registered or unregistered. The majority of parents preferred a registered provider (89%) and this compares with those who *first* ideal choice was a childminder, child carer or nanny (86%). Only 2% of parents would prefer an unregistered provider (the same percentage as those who first choice was a childminder, child carer or nanny), and one in 10 said it would depend on the individual provider (as was the case for those whose first choice was this type of provider).

Whether children currently have their ideal childcare provision

Having established ideal types of childcare provision, parents were asked whether each of their children were *currently* receiving their ideal childcare arrangements. A majority of parents' children (83%) currently had their ideal childcare arrangements and there was no notable difference by age of child.

Children in two-parent families were more likely than those of lone parents to have their ideal childcare arrangements (86% compared with 72%), which is likely to be due to greater

choice afforded to two-parent households through factors such as higher gross household income. Table I-6 shows these comparisons.

Table I-6: Whether children were receiving their parents' ideal childcare provision by household structure and employment

Base: All children

	2 parents	1 parent
	%	%
Yes	86	72
No	13	28
Don't know /not stated	1	0
Unweighted base	1,273	336
Weighted base	1,265	334

For those children whose parents said they were not currently using their ideal childcare arrangements, the main reasons were cost (28%), lack of ideal provision in the local area (15%) and childcare not being available for the right hours or for long enough (12%).

In the depth interviews, a common theme amongst single parents, parents living in deprived areas, and parents living on low incomes, was that their ideal circumstances were constricted by cost. Some parents were keen to work part-time or even full-time and have formal childcare arrangements but could simply not afford to pay for the childcare. However, other parents within these groups indicated that they would prefer to look after their children full-time, regardless of whether they were currently in employment or not. The issue of cost having an influence on ideal and realistic childcare arrangements is discussed fully in Chapter H.

Key findings:

The key factors driving the type and volume of childcare that parents wish for their children include the preferred attributes of childcare provision (trust in the provider, quality of care etc), the availability of childcare and parents' employment status.

Parents first decide on the amount of time they wish their children to spend with adults. After the target child to adult time matrix has been decided, key decisions are for parents to provide childcare themselves, followed in preference by using informal or formal care.

Parents generally prefer to use informal childcare ahead of formal provision, thus the potential demand for formal childcare is the residual, providing for those parents who must work and do not have easy access to informal childcare. However, parents may also actively **choose** formal provision for the educational and developmental opportunities it brings.

Childcare is only used if it meets parents' minimum standards of safety and trust, quality of care, cost and convenience. If a provider cannot be found to meet these minimum thresholds, parents may then reassess their lifestyles and working patterns.

Formal childcare is a small part of the whole childcare market and government incentives to encourage participation in formal care will only work if the care satisfies parents' minimum thresholds. Any policy to increase the volume and quality of formal childcare should be formulated within the context of the large usage of informal provision.

In an ideal situation, parents would prefer to look after their own children, organising their work to allow for this. Where this is not possible, then grandparents, followed by other close family members, are seen as the ideal providers of childcare.

Of the small percentage of parents choosing formal childcare as the ideal, OSC was the most popular choice for older children (8%), while private crèches or nurseries were the preferred choice for pre-school children (4%).

While childcare for 22% of children would **ideally** be provided by respondents' spouses or partners, **realistically** this was only possible for less than half that proportion (10%). The reality is that many parents work for financial reasons and use other types of childcare outside their household. Issues such as income, cost of housing and desired lifestyles mean that it is unrealistic for one parent to work while the other stays at home to rear children, and this undermines the policy of providing childcare to help parents go out to work.

The majority of parents (83%) said that they currently already have their ideal childcare arrangements, which reflects the fact that choice of childcare provider is a complex and carefully thought-out decision.

J. Parental priorities: childcare, culture and the labour market

Key questions:

What are parents' attitudes towards employment and childcare?

Have parents' views towards childcare changed since they personally became a parent?

How are the roles of 'mother' and 'father' defined in a childcare context?

What do parents think about employer arrangements for childcare provision?

What would the ideal childcare arrangements be for working parents? And for non-working parents?

What are the key attributes of childcare that make parents choose one type of provider over another?

How do parents prioritise and evaluate their choice of childcare?

This chapter explores parents' attitudes towards childcare in the context of the labour market and the current culture. The views of working and non-working parents towards their ideal childcare arrangements are explored, as well as the views of those who were studying or training. In the first section, there is a discussion of the extent to which parents agree or disagree with a number of statements about childcare places, childcare arrangements and employment. Respondents were also asked whether their views towards bringing up children and participating in the labour market had changed since becoming a parent.

The second section of the chapter looks at the decisions parents make about working, training, studying or staying at home to care for their child/ren, and what factors underlie these decisions. Are parents able to make real choices based on what they personally think is best for their child/ren or do cost and availability issues constrict that choice? Do parents – particularly mothers – feel that they *should* be going out to work or staying at home in the current cultural climate? Overall, are parents happy with the decisions they have made?

In order to understand how parents balance their different needs and priorities in deciding on the most suitable types of childcare given their socio-economic circumstances, a priority

evaluator model was used. Parents were presented with a board outlining a range of options related to quantity, quality and convenience of childcare and were asked to indicate their ideally balanced preferences. The choices were constrained financially, thus forcing parents to prioritise those aspects of childcare that they felt were most important to them. The last section of the chapter describes in detail the findings of the priority evaluator model.

Attitudes towards childcare and the labour market

Parents were presented with a series of statements about childcare and employment and were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each. The overall results for each are shown in Table J-1.

Table J-1 Extent of agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statements
Bases: 1, 2 = All respondents; 3, 4, 5, = All working parents; 6 = All non-working parents

	Agree	Disagree	Weighted base
	%	%	
1 There should be more nursery education places available for pre-school children	62	14	1,003
2 There should be more supervised places for school-age children to go outside of school hours	79	6	1,003
3 If I could afford to give up work full-time, I would prefer to stay at home and look after my children	56	31	641
4 If I could afford it, I would work fewer hours so I could spend more time looking after my children	64	23	641
5 If I could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable, I would work more hours	19	73	641
6 <i>If I could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable, I would prefer to go out and work or do an education training course</i>	57	28	341

Below, each of the statements are analysed in turn.

1. 'There should be more nursery education places available for pre-school children'

Six in ten parents overall agreed with this statement (62%), with almost half of these saying they strongly agreed (30% overall). Overall agreement was more likely from parents of pre-school age children than those with older children, as would be expected, because these parents would be using this service and therefore would have a vested interest. Two thirds

of parents of children aged 0-2 agreed with the statement compared with just over half of those with children aged 12-14 (67% compared with 56%), as Table J-2 illustrates.

Table J-2: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 1 by age of child
Base: All respondents

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	67	60	62	57	56
Neither agree nor disagree	15	15	16	18	14
Disagree	12	20	17	16	17
Don't know	6	5	5	9	13
Unweighted base	292	234	365	460	233
Weighted base	304	241	365	438	237

2. 'There should be more supervised places for school-age children to go outside of school hours'

The majority of parents overall agreed with the above statement (79%), with only 6% disagreeing. Above average agreement was slightly more likely to come from parents of children aged 8-11 (81%) and 12-14 (82%), as these would be the groups most likely to be affected by such a change. Table J-3 illustrates the findings by age of child.

Table J-3: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 2 by age of child
Base: All respondents

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	75	72	78	81	82
Neither agree nor disagree	9	10	10	8	8
Disagree	5	6	8	6	6
Don't know	11	11	4	6	4
Unweighted base	292	234	365	460	233
Weighted base	304	241	365	438	237

3. 'If I could afford to give up work full-time, I would prefer to stay at home and look after my children'

Of those parents who were working, over half (56%) agreed with the above statement, and strong agreement came from half of these (28% overall). Just under third of parents overall (31%) disagreed that they would prefer to stay at home if finances permitted. Working parents with very young children (aged 0-2) were slightly more likely than average to agree with the statement (58%), as Table J-4 illustrates.

Table J-4: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 3 by age of child
Base: All respondents who work

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	58	48	53	54	53
Neither agree nor disagree	9	11	10	9	9
Disagree	29	36	30	32	33
Don't know	5	5	6	6	5
Unweighted base	139	118	223	308	173
Weighted base	149	123	221	297	173

There were no significant differences by household income groups. While 58% of parents with a gross household income up to £10,399 agreed that they would give up work full-time to look after their child/ren at home, this was also the case for 54% of parents in households with a gross income of £31,200 or more. This suggests that absolute income is not a major influence over whether parents work or stay at home; there are more important issues to consider, such as parents' ideals over the best way to bring up their child/ren and trust in childcare providers, as has been discussed in previous chapters.

4. 'If I could afford it, I would work fewer hours so I could spend more time looking after my children'

Two thirds of working parents agreed that they would work fewer hours to spend more time with their children if they could afford it, while just under a quarter disagreed (64% compared with 23%). Once again, there were no significant differences across different

income groups, showing that other factors drive parents' demand for childcare and their decision over whether or not to work.

However, working fewer hours to look after their children was a salient issue among working parents with younger children. Nearly seven in 10 (68%) of those with children aged 0-2 years agreed with the statement, compared with six in 10 (60%) of parents of 12-14 year olds. Table J-5 illustrates this point.

Table J-5: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 4 by age of child
Base: All respondents who work

	Age of child				
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	68	55	62	63	60
Neither agree nor disagree	7	14	11	11	11
Disagree	24	29	25	25	26
Don't know	1	2	3	2	3
Unweighted base	139	118	223	308	173
Weighted base	149	123	221	297	173

5. 'If I could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable, I would work more hours'

Overall agreement with the above statement was very low, at only 19%, compared with three quarters (73%) of working parents who disagreed. However, lone parents were far more likely than those in two-parent households to say that they would work more hours if they could arrange convenient, reliable and affordable childcare (25% compared with 17%).

This suggests that for some lone parents, the benefits of working more hours (or working at all) are currently outweighed by the disadvantages of too large a proportion of their wages being taken up by childcare costs while they are at work.

As many lone parents fell into the lower income brackets, it was unsurprising to note differences of opinion by gross household income. While a third (32%) of working parents with a household income of up to £10,399 agreed that they would work more hours if they could arrange convenient, reliable and affordable childcare, this was the case for only 14%

of working parents with household incomes of between £20,800 and £31,199. Table J-6 gives a breakdown of working parents' opinions by gross household income.

Table J-6: Agreement/disagreement with childcare and employment statement 5 by gross household income

Base: All respondents who work

	<i>Gross household income</i>			
	Up to £10,399	£10,400 to £20,799	£20,800 to £31,199	£31,200 or more
	%	%	%	%
Agree	32	13	14	16
Neither agree nor disagree	7	4	8	5
Disagree	57	78	76	78
Don't know	3	5	2	1
Unweighted base	106	112	77	237
Weighted base	98	127	86	231

6. 'If I could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable, I would prefer to go out and work or do an education training course'

Over half (57%) of those parents who were not working agreed that they would prefer to work, study or train if they could arrange convenient, reliable and affordable good quality childcare. Only 28% disagreed with this statement.

Agreement with the above statement was higher than average from parents in the lowest income households (70%, compared with 56% of households with an income of £31,200 or more) and among parents with children aged 0-2 years (64%, compared with 49% of parents of 12-14 year olds).

When asked whether they would prefer to work, study or train full-time or part-time, the majority stated a preference for part-time work, study or training (66%, compared with 25% who said they would prefer to work, study or train full-time). A further 7% of parents said that either option would be acceptable

The reasons given for preferring to work, study or train full-time included financial reasons (16%) and respondents not wishing to work part-time (2%).

Reasons given for preferring to work, study or train part-time included:

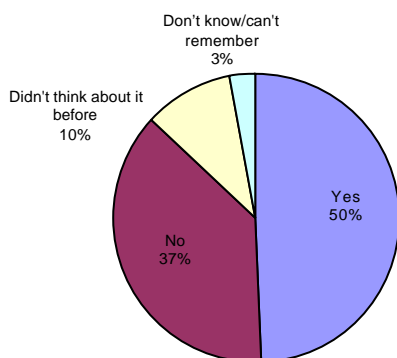
- Giving the parent something different to do or relieve boredom (11%)
- Enabling the parent to fit work around the family and have flexibility (8%)
- Allowing for flexible working during school hours so that parents could see their children after school (5%)
- Giving a better lifestyle or the “best of both worlds” (4%)
- The feeling that younger children need a parent to be at home some of the time (3%)
- Spending more time with children and family (2%).

Whether there have been shifts in attitudes towards employment and childcare since becoming a parent

Respondents were asked whether or not their views towards working or studying while having young children had changed since becoming a parent. Half of all parents said that their views *had* changed, while over a third (37%) said that their views had not changed. Thirteen per cent either said that they hadn't thought about the issue before becoming a parent, or that they did not know.

Figure J-1: Whether or not attitudes towards employment and childcare have changed since becoming a parent

Base: All respondents



Those parents who said that their attitudes towards working or studying while having young children had changed since becoming a parent were asked *how* their views had changed. Responses were centred on a number of key issues: work, the time available to them, financial considerations, childcare arrangements and issues to do with having children. Table J-7 shows the full range of responses. Figures in bold type represent the net percentages of the key issues outlined above.

Table J-7: Ways in which respondents' views towards working and studying have changed since becoming a parent

Base: All parents who say that their views have changed

	%
All work-related factors (net percentage)	36
More difficult than expected to raise children when working	19
Career used to come first	5
I no longer want to return to work full-time	4
Work is not always flexible	3
I thought I would want to stay at home but now think I would prefer to return to work	2
I can/could combine both work and having children	2
More help is provided for working mothers than I expected	1
Mothers shouldn't have to work	1
All time-related factors (net percentage)	13
I need my own time/space/stimulation	2
You have to be more flexible as a parent	*
All cost-related factors (net percentage)	7
Finances/expenses dictate that I have to return to work	6
I didn't realise the financial implications of having children	1
All childcare provider-related factors (net percentage)	51
It is difficult finding good childcare (i.e. reliable, trustworthy etc)	6
Childcare is more expensive than I realised	5
I didn't know much about childcare before	1
I don't think it is right for strangers to look after your child/ren	1
It is hard to fit childcare around my job	*
All child-related factors (net percentage)	24
I would now prefer to stay at home and look after my children	14

The child/ren come first	8
I worry about my child/ren	2
Unweighted base	487
Weighted base	496

Ideal labour market/childcare balance for working parents

Parents in paid employment responding to the Part 2 survey were asked to consider their current labour market position and then respond to a series of statements about how they would wish to balance working and childcare in an ideal world. Respondents from both lone parent and two-parent families were included. Table J-8 shows the overall findings.

Table J-8: Ideal labour market/childcare balance for working parents

Base: All working parents

	Would like	Would not like	Does not apply/ already have this	Base
	%	%	%	
In an ideal world, I would like....				
...my spouse/partner to work less so s/he could spend more time with the children	57	24	19	254
...to work when my partner/spouse is not working so s/he can look after the child/ren	29	36	35	254
...to change my and my partner/spouse's working hours so the whole family could spend more time together	55	18	27	254
...not to have to work during school holidays	64	14	23	333
...my partner/spouse not to have to work during school holidays	49	27	24	254
...'emergency' childcare for when my child/ren is/are sick	50	21	29	333
...to have paid time off when my child/ren is/are sick	68	5	27	333
...my partner/spouse to have paid time off when our child/ren is/are sick	66	11	23	254
...to work from home some of the time	29	39	33	333
...my partner/spouse to work from home some of the time	24	46	30	254
...to work from home most/all of the time	12	60	28	333

...my partner/spouse to work from home most/all of the time	9	65	26	254
...to work flexi-time	41	24	35	333
...my partner/spouse to work flexi-time	39	29	31	254
...to work nearer home	22	19	59	333
...my partner/spouse to work nearer home	28	18	54	254

N.B. The percentages may not always add up to 100% in the table because a small proportion of parents stated 'Don't know'.

The above data are analysed in more detail below.

Working fewer or different hours

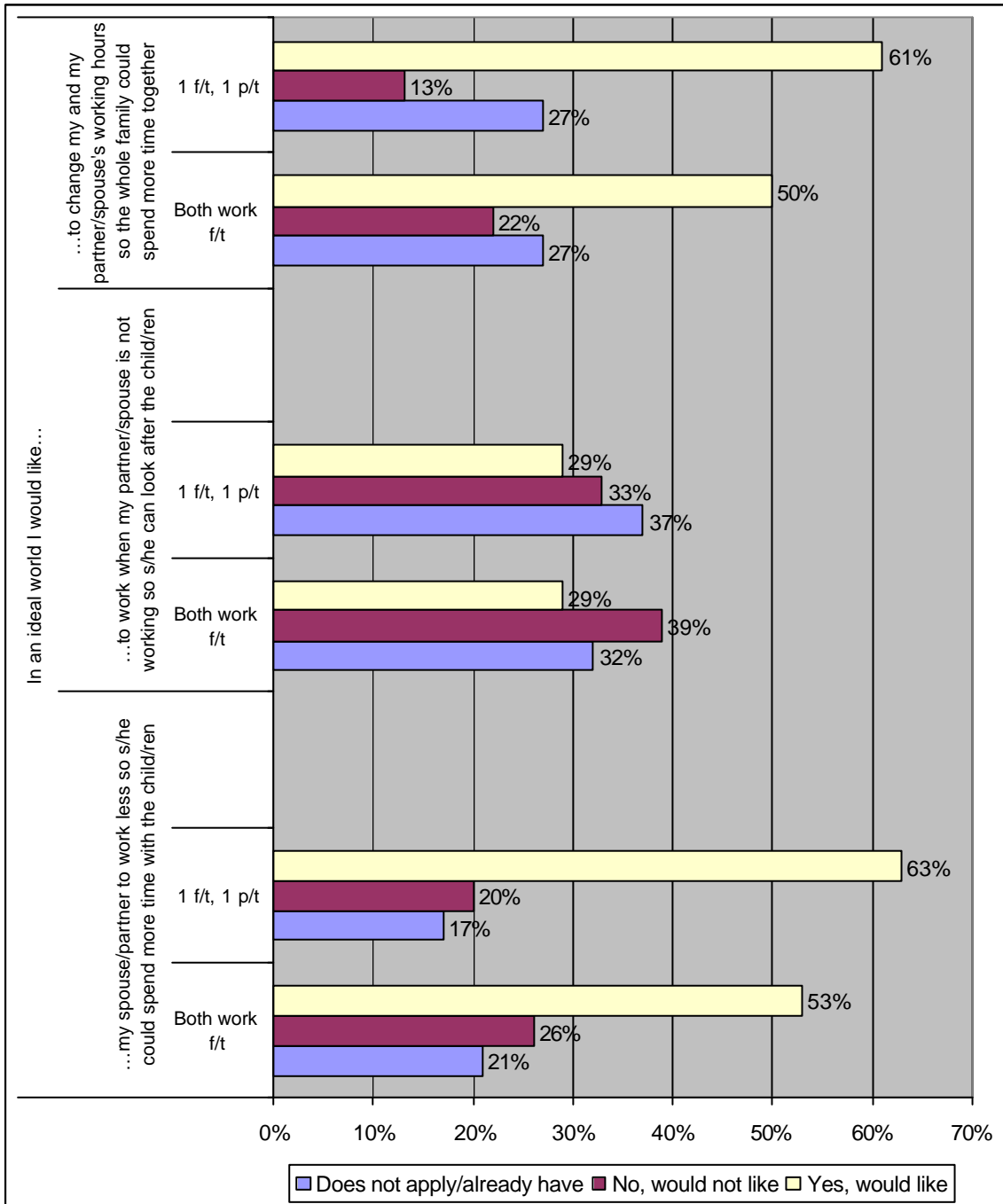
Respondents from two-parent families were asked about the ideal working and childcare arrangements for themselves and their partner or spouse. Over half (55%) said that they would like to change their and their partner or spouse's working hours so that the whole family could spend time more together. In families where both parents worked full-time, this was more likely to be the case than in families where at least one parent worked part-time (61% compared with 50% said that they 'would like' to change their and their partner's working hours so the family could spend more time together).

Over half of parents (57%) overall said that they would like their spouse or partner to work less so that s/he could spend more time with the children. Analysis by working status reveals that this was more likely to be the case for respondents from families in which both parents work full-time (63% said that they would like their spouse or partner to work fewer hours, compared with 53% in families where at least one parent worked part-time).

However, less than three in 10 parents (29%) overall said that they would like to work when their partner or spouse was not working so that s/he could look after the child/ren, and there were no significant differences by working status. This supports the finding that parents would like to spend more time together as a family.

Table J-2 shows the findings for the three scenarios described above.

Figure J-2: Ideal working hours to fit in with childcare for two-parent families
Base: All working parents in two-parent families



Not working during school holidays

Two thirds (64%) of working parents overall said that they would like to not have to work during school holidays, but there were no significant differences between parents' working status or the age of their child/ren.

Half (49%) of those in two-parent families said that they would like it if their partner or spouse did not have to work during school holidays. In households where both parents worked full-time, this view was given by 59% of parents, compared with only 44% of parents in households where at least one parent worked part-time. Over a quarter (27%) of parents in the latter type of household said that they already had a situation whereby their partner or spouse did not work during the school holidays, compared with a fifth (19%) of households where both parents worked full-time.

Childcare and time off when children are sick

Half of parents overall said that they would like 'emergency' childcare for when their child/ren is/are sick and a further 29% said that they already had this facility.

Nearly seven in 10 parents overall (68%) would like to have paid time off when their child/ren is/are sick, but over a quarter (27%) currently have this benefit. In two-parent households, two thirds of respondents said that they would like their partner or spouse to be able to take paid time off when their child/ren is/are sick, and just under a quarter (23%) were already able to do this.

There were no significant differences between household working status or age of respondents' youngest child.

Working from home

Only a minority of parents overall (12%) said that they would like to work from home most or all of the time, and just 9% said that they would like their partner or spouse to work from home most or all of the time. However, three in 10 said that this was either not applicable to them or that they already worked from home most or all of the time.

There was more demand for working from home some of the time, with 29% of parents overall saying that they would like this, and 24% saying that they would like their partner or spouse to be able to do this.

There was no significant difference between the views of two-parent and lone parent families, or between household working status. However, when analysing by *mother's* working status, 32% of those in full-time employment said that they would like to work from home some of the time, compared with 24% of those who worked part-time. It would presumably not be worth the while in some part-time jobs to be able to work from home, because the total number of hours being worked is lower.

Working flexi-time

Over four in 10 (41%) of parents overall said that they would like to work flexi-time, with a further third (35%) saying that they already had this arrangement in place, or that the question did not apply.

For respondents in two-parent households, 39% said that they would like their partner to be able to work flexi-time, with a further 31% saying that this arrangement was already available or not applicable.

There were no significant differences across household or mother's working status, or across two-parent and lone parent households.

Working nearer home

While 22% of parents overall said that they would like to work nearer home, 59% said that this scenario did not apply to them or that they already had an ideal location. In two-parent families, 28% and 54% gave these views respectively. There were no significant differences between two-parent and lone parent families, household or mother's working status.

The findings from Chapter F revealed that the majority of working parents lived within a 20 minute journey to their workplace, although in two-parent families where both parents were working, it was more likely that one parent (typically the father) worked further away.

What working parents would like to change most about their working arrangements

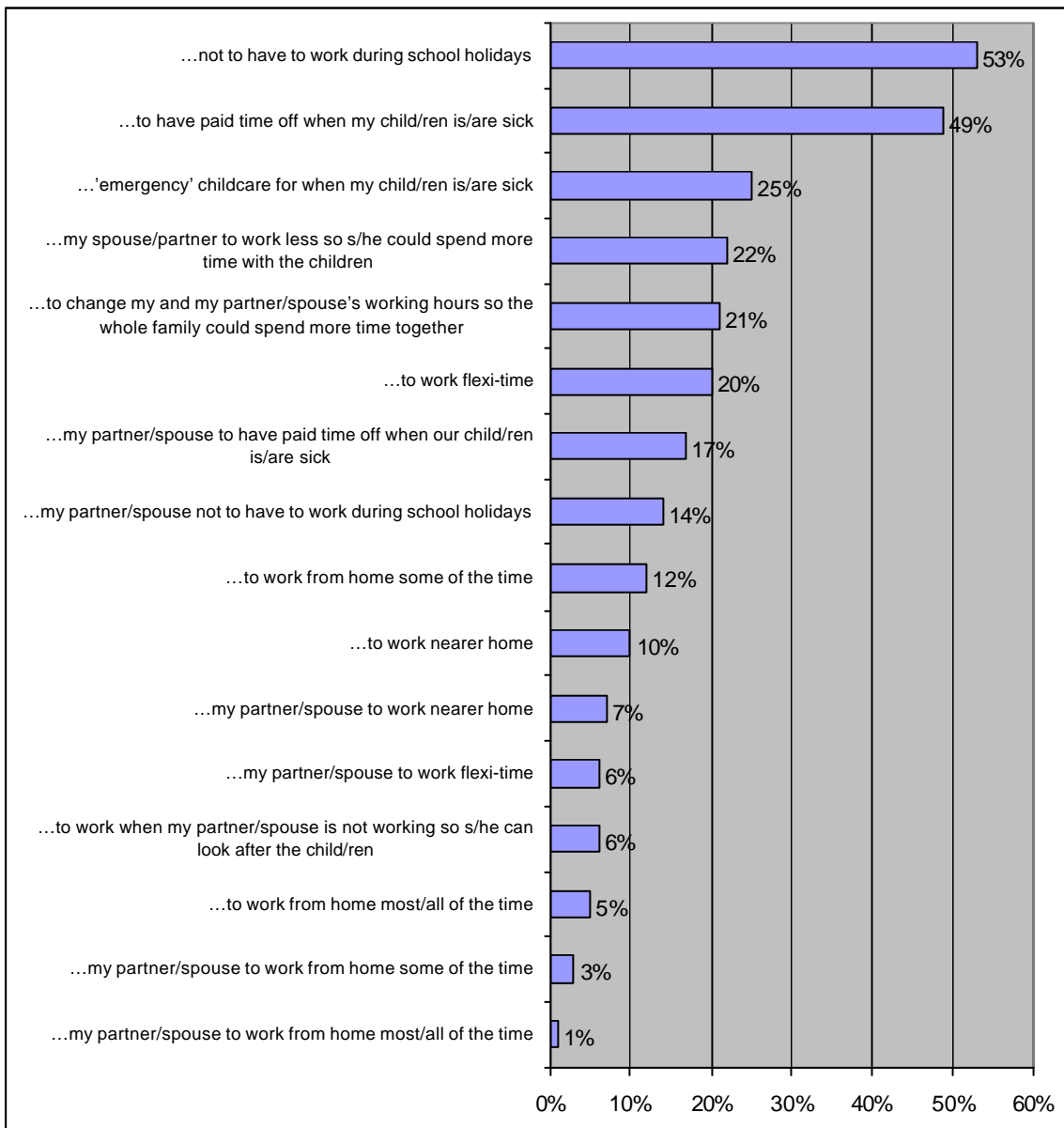
When asked which three of the above ideals parents would most like, over half said that they would like it if they did not have to work during the school holidays. As seen in Chapter C, patterns of childcare provision often differ between term-time and the school holidays, with formal providers often being used during term-time and a heavier reliance on relatives and friends in the holidays. If parents did not have to work during school holidays, this would make for easier arrangements and would allow parents to spend more time with their own children.

Almost half of parents (49%) said that they would like paid time off work when their child/ren is/are sick, which again supports the indications that parents feel they are the most appropriate care giver for their own child/ren and would rather to be with them when they are unwell than leave them with a childcare provider. A quarter of parents also said that they would like 'emergency' childcare for when their child/ren is/are sick.

Also of importance to working parents was changing theirs and/or their partner or spouse's working hours (whether this is reducing the number of hours they work or working flexi-time) so that they can spend more time together as a family.

Figure J-3: Ideal working hours to fit in with childcare
Base: All working parents (333)

In an ideal world I would like...



Incentives for non-working parents to participate in the labour market

The previous section focused on the views of working parents from both two-parent and lone parent families. The following section focuses on parents who are not currently in paid employment. Non-working parents were given a list of hypothetical circumstances which might help them go out to work, and were asked if any of those circumstances *would* help them to go (back) to work.

Table J-9 shows the overall findings.

Table J-9: What would help parents go back to work?
Base: All non-working parents (146)

	Would help	Would not help	Does not apply
	%	%	%
It would help me to go to work if...			
...I/my family did not lose benefits	37	10	53
...I could earn enough to make it worthwhile to work	70	8	22
...I could find a job near home	69	10	21
...I could find a full-time job (30 or more hours a week)	25	48	27
...I could find a part-time job (less than 30 hours a week)	57	21	23
...I could work from home some of the time	58	17	25
...I could work from home all/most of the time	51	23	26
...I could work flexi-time	68	14	18
...I didn't have to work during school holidays	70	12	18
...I did not have to work at unsocial hours/weekends	55	17	28
...the hours of work fitted in with the childcare I have now	34	16	49
...I knew my child/ren was/were safe and well looked after while I was at work	76	7	17
...my partner/spouse was able to help (more) with childcare	44	16	40
...relatives were able to help (more) with childcare	45	21	35
...the employer provided/paid for childcare	69	12	18
...my child/ren was/were at school	59	10	32
...my child/ren was/were old enough to look after themselves	66	11	23

N.B. The percentages may not always add up to 100% in the table because a small proportion of parents stated 'Don't know'.

What would most help non-working parents to go to work?

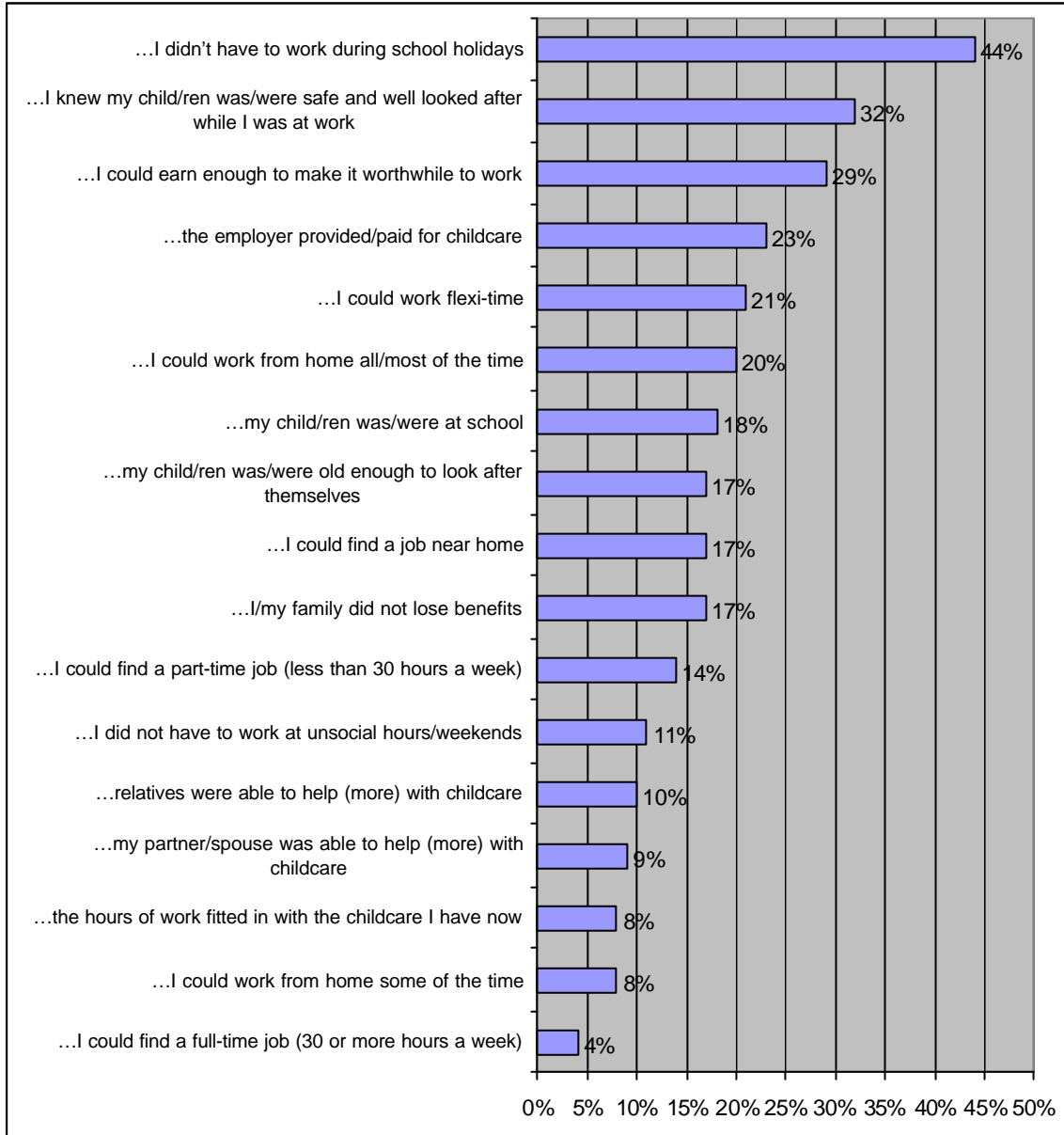
When asked to state the three most important factors in helping them to go to work, not having to work during the school holidays emerged as the most popular response, cited by 44% of parents. This was also the most popular response when working parents were asked what would make it easier for them to work.

The issue of trust in childcare providers arose once again, with 32% of non-working parents saying that an incentive to get them to go to work would be the knowledge that their child/ren was/were safe and well looked after.

Financial issues were a concern for three in 10 non-working parents (29%) who would be encouraged to go to work if the amount they earned made it worthwhile. It was the case for some parents, particularly lone parents, that the cost of childcare while the parent/s was/were at work outweighed the benefit of working at all, and parents in this situation would rather stay at home and care for their child/ren themselves.

Figure J-4: Three things that would most help parents go back to work
Base: All non-working parents (133)

It would help me to go to work if...



Traditionalism

All parents were responding to the Part 2 survey were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about 'traditionalism'; that is, the perceived roles of mothers and fathers in child-rearing and their places in the labour market. The overall levels of agreement and disagreement appear in Table J-10.

Table J-10: Extent of agreement/disagreement with 'traditionalism' statements**Base: All parents (502)**

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
	%	%	%
Employers should make special arrangements to help mothers with young children	91	3	5
Employers should make special arrangements to help fathers with young children	81	8	11
The government should provide more money for childcare so parents of young children can work if they want to	87	6	7
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if both his/her parents go out to work	40	46	13
A primary school child is likely to suffer if both his/her parents go out to work	22	60	17
Bringing up children is as fulfilling as having a paid job	79	9	11
Fathers cannot look after their children as well as mothers do	21	70	9
Mothers with young children should stay at home and look after their children	29	45	25
<i>Fathers should take more responsibility for looking after their children</i>	72	8	19

N.B. The percentages may not add up to 100% in the table because a small proportion of parents stated 'Don't know'.

Overall, there was an extremely high level of support for employers making special arrangements to help mothers and fathers with young children (91% and 81% agreement respectively). Additionally, 87% of parents agreed that the government should provide more money for childcare so parents of young children can work if they want to.

These results are unsurprising given that parents responding to the Part 1 survey placed great emphasis on the importance of being able to work flexible hours and/or work from home some of the time. Additionally, parental concerns about taking time off when their children are sick and concerns over the quality of childcare would be addressed if employers were to help working parents with childcare arrangements.

There were mixed opinions over the statements concerning working parents. Parents were less inclined to agree that a child of primary school-age would suffer if his or her parents went out to work, than a child of pre-school age (22%, compared with 40%). While 46% of

parents disagreed that it would be detrimental for a school age child if his/her parents both worked, this rose to 60% when parents were asked about pre-school children.

This supports the earlier findings that many parents would rather care for younger children themselves than use childcare, and where this is not an option, they would use close family members instead. It is clear that parents believe it important to spend time caring for their own child/ren, particularly when they are young. The fact that 79% of parents agreed that bringing up children is as fulfilling as having a paid job further strengthens this argument.

While only 21% of parents agreed that fathers cannot look after their children as well as mothers, 72% agreed that fathers should take more responsibility for looking after their children. This suggests that while the quality of care given by fathers is seen as being of equal value to that given by a mother, the quantity of care given is lacking. However, the fact that the majority of the respondents were female and many had partners who were working full-time may partly explain these views. Earlier in this chapter, it was seen that the majority of fathers work full-time, while mothers are more likely to be able to work part-time (or full-time but with more flexible hours) or to stay at home full-time.

Assessing parental preferences – the Priority Evaluator Model

In order to assess the preferences of different groups of parents, the 2000 study utilised a priority evaluator model to assess what parents think of their current childcare provision and if, in an ideal world, it could be improved upon. In 2004, an amended priority evaluator model was utilised to reassess parents' priorities⁹. This model can therefore highlight what is important for parents, but does not allow us to assess the volume of demand for formal childcare.

Methodology

A full explanation of the methodology and structure of the model, with the questions posed to respondents is detailed in Appendix I. This section will provide a short explanation of the model and how it can be interpreted, followed by a presentation of the key results.

The priority evaluator model has been used to understand how parents balance different needs and priorities in deciding what type of childcare is most suitable for their children. This model is based on the economic concept of marginal utility and enables respondents

to indicate their ideally balanced preferences for childcare provision through the allocation of points for different factors.

It is assumed that children of different age groups have different needs from childcare, so parents were asked to assess their childcare needs against different factors, depending on the age of their children. The factors chosen for each age group are given in Table J-11. Factors assessed include quantity of childcare, how conveniently located the facility is, opportunities for child development, child learning opportunities, staff to child ratios, staff experience, and educational support.

Table J-11: Summary of options for children in different age groups

Age group	A	B	C	D	E
Pre-school 0-4*	Number of hours of childcare a week	Access/transport to and from main provider	Child development issues	Staff's experience and training	Children/ staff ratio
4-7*	Number of hours of childcare a week	Access/transport to and from main provider	Child development issues	Staff's experience and training	Children/ staff ratio
8-11	Number of hours of childcare a week	Access/transport to and from main provider	Child development issues	Education support	Children/ staff ratio
12-14	Number of hours of childcare a week	Access/transport to and from main provider	Child development issues	Education support	Staff's experience and training

*The pre-school age group included 4 year olds who had not started school yet, while the 4-7 age group included 4 year olds at school.

When asked about their childcare for each child, parents are presented with a choice for each category on which to rate their current provision. Each choice has pre-defined points that it is converted into, allowing the weighting of the importance of different categories to parents. Category A's points range from 3 to 12 points, whilst all other categories points range from 1 to 4.

⁹ As the options in the model were changed between 2000 and 2004, direct comparisons between the two models cannot be made.

Parents are then asked the questions again, this time asking how they would rate the childcare provision if the provider possessed all the characteristics that the parents would ideally prefer they have. To reflect the fact that in reality parents will have to make trade offs between different options, they are restricted to allocating 18 points to their ideal choices.

Average scores are calculated for different categories of parent and provision type and are presented in Appendix I. Converting the average score into a percentage of the maximum score that is available will allow comparison of the importance of the different categories for specific groups of parents, i.e. the higher the percentage of the maximum score the more important the parents see an individual category. The results section that follows presents these percentages, along with the number of respondents in each category.

For most groups of parents, the ratings may not change all that much between the current provision and ideal provision, because they have already gone through the decision-making process (as described in the first part of this chapter). These parents may have already decided upon the childcare provision that meets all their needs.

Preschool Children

Table J-12: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for preschool children (as a % max score available for each category)

	Quantity	Convenience	Child Development	Staff Training	Carer / Child Ratio	Cases
Users of formal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	63.1%	53.1%	68.5%	83.2%	73.0%	65
Ideal arrangements	58.5%	48.5%	68.5%	75.4%	66.8%	66
Users of informal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	62.3%	54.1%	51.0%	43.1%	83.5%	73
Ideal arrangements	56.2%	50.6%	57.2%	55.9%	79.3%	77

Experienced staff are important in formal childcare

When placing pre-school children with formal providers having experienced (trained) staff is the most important attribute that parents rate their provider on. When assessing their ideal preferences, this remains the most important attribute.

Users of formal providers are less constrained by budgets

The lower scores for ideal preferences suggests that parents using formal provision for caring for infants are prepared to pay more for these services than other parents. With the average total score at 18.4, this suggests that these parents have less budget constraints than other parents. It is only when these parents are asked to allocate only 18 points that parents are restricted. In these circumstances, these parents will accept less hours of childcare, a less convenient location, more children to adults and less experienced staff, but they will want the level of child development maintained. Although they would accept less experienced staff, it would still remain the most important quality measure for these parents.

One to one caring is important for users of informal childcare

Users of informal provision rate their current arrangements poorly in terms of staff training and child development, but highly in terms of child to adult ratios and the quantity available. Low child to adult ratios is the most important factor in both current and ideal arrangements.

Given the budget constraint of 18 points, parents currently using informal care would prefer their child to have more development opportunities and be looked after by better trained staff. To facilitate this they would accept fewer hours of childcare than they receive at the moment have a provider that is less conveniently situated. Although they accept an increased child to carer ratio, this remains the most important quality measure for parents of pre-school children currently using informal care. Informal provision is characterised by more one to one caring, so this ideal preference is reflecting the actual choice that parents using informal childcare have already made.

4 – 7 year olds

Table J-13: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for 4-7 year old children (as a % max score available for each category)

	Quantity	Convenience	Child Development	Staff Training	Carer / Child Ratio	Cases
Users of formal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	57.9%	59.2%	59.2%	77.6%	60.5%	19
Ideal arrangements	45.2%	54.8%	71.4%	79.8%	66.7%	21
Users of informal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	47.3%	55.8%	49.1%	38.4%	93.5%	56
Ideal arrangements	43.6%	60.8%	61.0%	58.9%	89.3%	59

Users of formal childcare

For parents using formal care, staff training is the most important quality measure in the current childcare provision for this age group, followed by the carer to child ratio. When parents are asked to make constrained choices, they would prefer their childcare provider to have slightly better qualified staff and more staff (per child) and, more importantly, more child development opportunities. As a trade-off, they would accept fewer hours of childcare and accept a less conveniently situated provider.

Users of informal childcare

Parents using informal care rate their current provider best on the carer to child ratio, but least on child development and staff training. This would be expected as friends and relatives are less likely to be formally trained in looking after children. The current provision is of less hours and of less convenience than that experienced by parents using formal provision for their 4 to 7 year olds. Those currently using informal provision would prefer more convenient childcare provision, more qualified staff and more child development opportunities, with fewer hours. While increases in quality are desired, these parents would only accept a slightly lower ratio of carers to children. A low carer to child ratio remains, by far, their most important concern.

Attention is important for younger children

For both pre-school children and those aged 4 – 7, the carer is very important to parents. Although formal providers cannot provide one to one attention, parents see the quality of the attention the child receives as important – in both age groups, users of formal provision rate staff experience as the most important factor in both their current and ideal choice of provider. Users of informal care rate the carer child ratio as the most important factor in their current provision and when forced to choose between attributes, would not wish this ratio to change to any large extent.

8 – 11 year olds

Table J-14: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for 8 – 11 year old children (as a % max score available for each category)

	Quantity	Convenience	Child Development	Educational Support	Carer / Child Ratio	Cases
Users of formal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	55.4%	52.2%	57.6%	45.2%	82.5%	23
Ideal arrangements	47.8%	60.9%	59.8%	55.7%	78.4%	23
Users of informal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	55.4%	57.1%	44.9%	44.5%	92.3%	70
Ideal arrangements	49.0%	58.1%	54.2%	55.8%	87.1%	74

Choices differ for parents of 8 – 11 year olds. They were asked to rate the educational support instead of the staff qualifications or experience.

Carer/Child ratios are important

The carer/child ratio receives the highest score out of all the attributes of current chosen providers. The rating is higher than that given by parents of pre-school children. Parents of 8 – 11 year olds ideal preferences would not differ all that much, they would only accept a small reduction in the carer / child ratios compared to what their current provider has at present.

Monitoring the child while parents are at work

Educational support by the existing provider appears to be lower than parents would prefer, for both formal and informal provision. Child development opportunities are rated better in formal provision than informal provision, with parents using informal provision ideally preferring more development opportunities than their current provider offers. The low scores in child development and educational support relative to the carer / child ratio suggests that parents realise this age group of children develop educationally at school and the purpose of childcare at this stage is more related to monitoring of the child while parents are at work.

Users of informal childcare rate the convenience of the location of their current provider slightly higher than do users of formal childcare. Both groups would prefer their childcare provider to be more convenient situated. Children in this age group spend similar hours with a childcare provider, irrespective of the provider type (formal or informal). When asked to make a choice on all the measures, parents would accept slightly less childcare provision for their 8 – 11 year olds than they currently receive.

12 – 14 year olds

Table J-15: Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision for 12 – 14 year old children (as a % max score available for each category)

	Quantity	Convenience	Child Development	Educational Support	Staff Qualifications / Experience	Cases
Users of formal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	75.0%	81.3%	50.0%	37.5%	62.5%	4
Ideal arrangements	68.8%	75.0%	43.8%	37.5%	62.5%	4
Users of informal childcare provision						
Current arrangements	61.3%	69.4%	40.6%	46.9%	36.3%	40
Ideal arrangements	55.6%	70.6%	47.2%	59.4%	47.2%	45

There were few responses from parents of children aged 12 – 14 year olds who used formal childcare. A summary of the responses is presented, but should be treated with caution, particularly for formal childcare provision.

Child supervision is important

Parents of 12-14 year olds rate their current providers highly on the quantity and convenience of childcare available, with the quality measures rating relatively less well. Like the preferences of parents of 8 – 11 year olds, parents of 12 – 14 year olds are more interested in their child being monitored while they are busy and having a conveniently situated provider.

Socio-economic characteristics

Parents' choices are also influenced by some key economic factors. In this section, we highlight the differences in choices and preferences of different categories of household structures (lone parent or couples) or household income (low, medium, high). Due to the small numbers of cases in some of the categories, it is not possible to analyse the results for different age groups, so the analysis in this section includes children of all age groups. As the categories measuring the different aspects of the quality of childcare varied by age group, the quality measures have been combined into one "childcare quality" category. Although this combined category provides less detail than the individual quality categories, it does provide a useful indicator of the importance that parents in different socio-economic groups attach to quality.

*Household Structure***Table J-16:** Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision by household structure (as a % max score available for each category)

	Quantity	Convenience	Quality categories	Cases
Users of Formal Provision				
Couples – current arrangements	37.1%	57.0%	73.8%	100
Lone parents – current arrangements	42.0%	52.3%	68.0%	22
Users of informal arrangements				
Couples – ideal arrangements	38.1%	59.5%	77.7%	105
Lone parents – ideal arrangements	48.9%	51.1%	71.0%	23
Users of informal arrangements				
Couples – current arrangements	35.0%	62.9%	55.9%	169
Lone parents – current arrangements	43.2%	57.1%	58.7%	60
Users of informal arrangements				
Couples – ideal arrangements	35.2%	69.2%	67.2%	186
Lone parents – ideal arrangements	44.5%	58.6%	64.3%	64

Quantity is important for lone parents

Lone parents' scores on quantity are higher than those for couples. The quantity scores do not differ between current provision and ideal provision for informal users, but lone parents paying for formal childcare would clearly prefer their child to spend more time in childcare. With no partner to help look after their child, lone parents' options for looking after their child themselves are likely to be fewer. Accessing more childcare will allow lone parents more time for work or other activities.

The lower quantity scores (in both current and ideal arrangements) for couple households (when compared to lone parent households) suggests that couples are less interested in quantity because they can share the task of looking after their children. Quality and convenience of childcare arrangements therefore tends to become more important to them.

*Household Income***Table J-17:** Parents' rating and preferences for childcare provision by household income category (as a % max score available for each category)

	Quantity	Convenience	Quality categories	Cases
Users of Formal Provision				
Low income - current arrangements	35.0%	50.0%	71.8%	35
Medium income - current arrangements	36.1%	61.6%	73.3%	54
High income - current arrangements	48.3%	46.9%	74.0%	16
<hr/>				
Low income - ideal arrangements	41.9%	55.4%	77.9%	37
Medium income - ideal arrangements	38.8%	60.3%	76.4%	56
High income - ideal arrangements	38.2%	54.4%	77.9%	17
<hr/>				
Users of informal arrangements				
Low income - current arrangements	35.2%	58.1%	58.8%	89
Medium income - current arrangements	39.5%	60.5%	56.9%	74
High income current arrangements	32.4%	68.8%	54.5%	28
<hr/>				
Low income - ideal arrangements	40.4%	61.2%	67.1%	96
Medium income - ideal arrangements	37.8%	65.7%	66.2%	84
High income - ideal arrangements	30.0%	79.2%	67.9%	30

Users of formal provision

Although the quality of provision is similar to that provided to other income groups, high income households using formal provision place their child with a provider for more hours than other households. The chosen provider is not as conveniently situated, however.

Measuring the ideal scores indicates that given the trade-offs that people must make, both low and high income households would prefer their provider to be more conveniently located, with high income households prepared to trade off on quantity to ensure this. All income groups using formal provision would prefer their provider to be of slightly higher quality. Lower income households would prefer more hours of childcare.

Users of informal provision

It is unlikely that informal provision by relatives or friends will be paid for, so quality, convenience and quantity is less likely to be affected by how much household income they have.

Low income households would, again, prefer greater quantity of childcare, whereas medium and high income households would prefer their providers to be more conveniently located.

All three income types would prefer greater quality childcare, but, as discussed, this is unlikely with what tend to be unskilled informal providers.

Conclusions – preferences influence on demand

This chapter has outlined the drivers of childcare demand and highlighted parental choices and preferences. There is a preference for parents to either provide childcare themselves or to use family and friends. Formal childcare is a small part of the overall childcare market and tends to be used by those who cannot gain some informal provision and/or who want their child to develop through interaction in the formal childcare setting.

When parents consider using formal childcare, they must ensure that the providers meet minimum requirements on safety, quality, cost and convenience. If these minimum thresholds are met, parents will then choose a provider according to how each provider rates against parental preferences on quantity, cost, convenience, child development, staff experience and staff child ratios.

The priority evaluation model allows an assessment of parental preferences, showing how parents rate their current provider and what they would ideally like from a childcare provider.

The results demonstrate that for parents of pre-school children and 4-7 year olds, those that choose formal childcare arrangements clearly most prefer having properly trained staff to look after their children under current and ideal arrangements. Users of informal childcare, however, most prefer having low child/carer (probably one to one) ratios. Choosing whether your child enters formal or informal childcare would therefore appear to be dependent on whether you believe in having trained or one-to-one supervision of your child(ren).

For 8-11 year olds, who will be at school, it would appear to be the close monitoring of their children at specific times of the day in which parents are most concerned, rather than the quantity or quality of provision. For parents of 12-14 year olds, the convenience of the childcare provider would appear to be the main concern.

The quantity of childcare is clearly an important issue for lone parents and those that use formal childcare would prefer more hours in particular.

As expected, it is high income households that purchase the highest amount of formal childcare, but it is noteworthy that they would be willing to trade off some of this quantity for convenience of provider. Low income households are the ones that appear to need greater additional childcare.

The government can influence the volume and (more importantly) the quality of formal childcare to increase participation rates, but this will only have a minor impact on the market as many parents will continue using informal childcare provision. This is not to say that increasing the volume and quality of formal childcare establishments should not be a policy objective as it appears clear that lone parent households and low income households, in particular have a demand for greater amounts of childcare.

Key questions:

Six to seven in ten parents agree that there should be more nursery education places available for pre-school children and more supervised places for school-age children to go outside of school hours.

Over half of parents agreed that if they could afford to give up work full-time, they would prefer to stay at home and look after their children. Two thirds said that if they could afford it, they would prefer to work fewer hours and spend more time looking after their children themselves.

However, a fifth of parents said that they would work more hours if they knew they could arrange good quality childcare that was convenient, reliable and affordable.

Over half of non-working parents agreed that if they could get childcare that met all of these criteria, they would prefer to go out and work or do an education or training course.

In half of cases, parents' views towards studying or working had changed since becoming a parent. Most commonly, parents said that it had been more difficult than they had expected

to raise children while working, with some saying that it had been difficult or expensive to find good childcare that met all their thresholds.

In an ideal world, over half of parents said that they would like to change their or their partner's working hours (and/or work less hours) so that the whole family could spend more time together.

Two thirds of parents would like not to have to work during school holidays, half would like 'emergency' childcare for when their children are sick, and seven in ten would like paid time off when their children are sick.

Four in ten parents said that they would like to work from home some or all of the time, and the same proportion said that they would like to work flexi-time.

Non-working parents would be encouraged to go to work if they did not have to work during the school holidays (44%), if they knew they could rely on and trust their childcare provider (32%) and if the amount they earned made paying for childcare worthwhile (29%).

There was an extremely high level of support for employers making special arrangements to help mothers and fathers with young children. The majority (87%) of parents also agreed that the government should provide more money for childcare so that parents of young children can work if they want to.

Parents were more inclined to think that a pre-school child would suffer if his or her parents worked than would a school-age child (40% compared with 22%). This supports the finding that parents of younger children would ideally like to care for their children themselves.*

When faced with theoretical constraints on informal childcare, parents would prioritise development opportunities for pre-school children over a convenient location, number of hours of childcare and the provider's experience. For formal provision, the experience of staff is the most important priority.

For 4-7 year olds, a low carer to child ratio is the most important consideration for informal childcare provision, while staff experience remains the priority for formal provision.

Parents of 8-11 year olds prioritise the carer/child ratio above all other attributes. Educational support scores lower than would be expected, although this suggests that parents expect educational development to take place at school for this age group, with childcare fulfilling more of a monitoring role. A similar pattern was observed for 12-14 year olds.

When looking at socio-economic characteristics, the quantity of childcare received ranks higher among lone parents than it does for couples.

Users of formal childcare would prefer their provider to be more conveniently situated, with higher income households prepared to trade off on quantity to ensure this. Lower income households would prefer more hours of childcare.

The government can influence the volume and quality of formal childcare, but this will only have a minor impact on the market overall because many parents will still prefer to use informal childcare. However, lone parents and low-income households have a demand for greater amounts of formal childcare as they are less likely to have informal provision available to them.

K. Implications for childcare policy

Key findings and conclusions:

The main findings from this report are that:

- *there is a clear reliance on some form of childcare in Scotland*
- *informal childcare provision is preferred but the formal/informal distinction is not necessarily made by parents*
- *the relative lack of formal childcare provision may have negative long-term economic consequences*
- *formal childcare provision may be boosted by greater investment to improve quality and affordability and by making parents more aware of their choices and their implications*
- *there is a need for a coherent national childcare strategy that takes account of the needs of parents as well as wider national economic goals.*

This final chapter draws together the study results and conclusions and places them into the context of the current policy agenda, with particular reference to the *Childcare Strategy for Scotland*. Each of the general conclusions outlined above is described and expanded upon below.

'Formal' and 'informal' or 'paid' and 'free' childcare as substitutes

The Childcare Strategy identifies the aim of providing good quality, affordable childcare for children throughout Scotland. However, the main focus is on the formal childcare sector, both commercial and local authority-provided.

The survey, however, shows that parents do not make distinctions based on whether childcare is 'formal' or 'informal', 'paid' or 'free'. Parental choice over the type of childcare used is rather a function of a number of variables. After deciding on the amount of childcare that is needed, parents will choose childcare according to quality, safety considerations and whether they can trust and rely on the provider *before* they look at cost, location and convenience.

There is a preference for informal childcare provision, but this may have an economic cost

The results from this survey support the findings from previous studies in that the bulk of childcare provision in Scotland is informal. The findings also demonstrate that informal childcare is the *preferred* option for most parents (although as stated above, parents do not necessarily think in terms of 'formal' and 'informal' care). The preference though, can be explained by the importance parents place on their provider being safe and reliable; if parents are unable to provide the care themselves, care of their child/ren is usually entrusted to someone who they think can be trusted and will bring up the child/ren in the same way that they would, and that person is usually a close family member.

A further reason behind the preference for informal care is parents' desire for their child/ren to receive individual care and attention. For children aged under 7 years in particular, one-to-one care is believed by parents to be the most important factor in a list of priorities.

However, it could be argued that there are negative externalities (i.e. costs for the wider society and the economy) if there is a relative lack of good quality formal childcare. Children's development can clearly be increased by interaction with other children and receiving specialist support, and parents responding to the survey who used formal care highlight these aspects as priorities.

Interaction with peers and formal educational provision are less likely in an informal, one-to-one, environment. This is particularly an issue when parents rely on informal providers who have a relatively low level of formal education themselves.

The extent to which this represents a long-term cost to the wider society and economy is a matter for debate and a possible source for further research. Where parents *do* choose formal childcare, the perceived need to get their children to mix with other children (and assist their development) is the main reason.

From an economic policy perspective, women returning to work will increase labour force participation rates and economic growth. The greater provision of good quality and affordable formal childcare will enable them to do this. Some of those parents who said that they would like more hours of childcare a week and were willing to pay £3 or a subsidised rate of £1.50 an hour for it said that the additional childcare hours would allow them to work more hours and/or spend (more) time undertaking studying or training. While formal childcare would play a useful role in these cases, it will need to be flexible to fit in with parents' working and lifestyle requirements.

A further group for whom formal childcare is important are lone parents, who are not able to rely on informal care to the same extent as two-parent families. Aside from not having a partner to share their childcare (and half the number of grandparents available as childcare providers for their children), lone parents may be more reluctant to use their friends and neighbours to provide childcare, because of the feeling that they then 'owe' them a favour in return. In these situations, formal childcare may be able to fill the gap, but again, only if it is of high quality, affordable and flexible, and above all, only if parents feel they can trust the provider.

There does not appear to be a high level of unmet need for childcare, but more could be done to help those parents who see the need for a mixture of formal and informal childcare

The evidence suggests that there is *not* a high amount of demand of unmet need for childcare, with nearly 80% of households stating that they had no unmet demand in the previous year. Income does not appear to be a contributor to unmet demand.

We can reasonably conclude from the evidence that childcare provision is relatively price and income inelastic; that is, the quantity demanded is not sensitive to changes in price or income. The issue of the cost of formal childcare does not seem all that important in this context. Relatively few households complained about the excessive cost of formal childcare or that it was impacting on their preferred childcare choices.

However, the lack of affordable formal childcare may be a broader societal issue if it is preventing many children from getting the quality of childcare that they require to grow and develop. The depth interview results demonstrate that the ideal option for many parents was to work part-time and for their child to receive formal childcare part-time. This allowed

parents to spend a lot of time with their child, while also allowing parents and the child the opportunities to interact with others and develop.

This 'ideal state' is simply not possible for most parents and they make alternative arrangements, usually leaving their child with a close relative while the parents work. It must also be borne in mind that parents responding to the survey stated a preference for flexible working hours, the option to work from home some or all of the time and the option of not working during school holidays. If quality and affordable formal childcare were readily available, it could well generate significant levels of demand but only if parents believe that it could benefit them and their children.

It has to be accepted that for another substantial group of parents, informal childcare is the only option due to an inherent distrust of strangers. There is probably little that can be done to encourage those parents to move to formal arrangements.

The survey results also show that nearly 90% of households are satisfied with their main childcare provider, and this is because parents go through a carefully considered and thorough process when choosing a childcare provider. Formal childcare will only be considered as an option if it meets the initial parental priorities of good quality and trustworthiness, and parents have made a conscious decision that they wish their child/ren to mix with others and receive developmental and educational opportunities. Cost and convenience are secondary considerations.

More readily available quality information could broaden parental choice and improve decision-making

The availability of quality information may be crucial to broadening parental choices. With nearly half of all respondents indicating that they did not think that there was enough information on where to look for childcare, the types of childcare available and the cost of childcare, parents' actual choices may be restricted because of a lack of information.

While many parents may want their children to use formal childcare for developmental purposes for at least part of the time, these parents may continue wholly using informal provision because they do not think (or are unaware) that good quality or affordable formal provision is available. For example, the costs of private nursery were considered to be high among parents who had not used this type of childcare, and this is likely to act as a barrier to ever using this type of childcare in the future.

Better information could impact on parents' lifestyle choices: non-working parents or part-time workers (particularly lone parents) who wish to participate more in the labour market may be prohibited from doing so because they believe that local, good quality, childcare provision is not available.

The key time at which to provide parents with information is when they are initially choosing their childcare provision. The vast majority of respondents are satisfied with their current provider, so it may be better to attempt to influence parents' initial decision-making, rather than change choices with which they are satisfied.

There is a need for a coherent national childcare policy

The greater use and preference for informal childcare suggests that at least part of the focus of policy must be on assisting informal provision. This might include provision of more flexible working arrangements to enable families to care for their children and consideration of tax or benefits changes to assist informal providers. Certainly, in England and Wales, there is recognition of the need to review tax credits for parents, thus making staying at home to raise children (or working part-time) a realistic financial option. This is now an area under debate on the political agenda.

The extent to which parents rely on informal care, particularly grandparents, points to a debate around whether informal providers should receive remuneration for providing childcare. Clearly, this would be a difficult area to research and administer, but if parents would be likely to make more use of formal childcare if it were a realistic, trustworthy, good quality and affordable choice, then there may be room for the promotion of formal care as an alternative to, or alongside informal care. This would help parents who felt they were burdening informal providers, particularly grandparents.

There is a need then, for a coherent national policy that takes account of the needs of parents and of the wider society in the split between informal and formal childcare and the provision of quality childcare, particularly to those groups that are least likely to receive quality informal childcare, such as lone parents who work full-time.

Summary and conclusions

Given the above economic arguments based on the report's findings, and the results of the surveys and interviews, there are a number of salient policy implications. It is particularly important for policy makers to decide on the balance between formal and informal childcare provision in Scotland given parental preferences and economic implications.

Incentives could then be put in place to encourage more quality formal and informal childcare provision. Informal providers could be offered some basic childcare training and more flexible employment or benefits packages to try to develop more quality informal childcare. Formal providers could also be offered quality training programmes, subsidies or relocation packages to enable them to improve their service, broaden their market base and reduce the overall cost of childcare. Individual groups could also be targeted, such as working lone parents, who could be given formal childcare vouchers so that their child has better development opportunities.

There are also a number of barriers to childcare provision that could be tackled, including lack of information for parents, inflexible working arrangements, inadequate transport provision to nearest childcare facilities and affordability.

Much more economic analysis could be undertaken on these incentives and barriers to childcare and their likely consequences.