

Childcare and Early Years Survey 2007

Parents' Use, Views and Experiences

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Eleanor Ireland and Eva Lloyd

National Centre for Social Research



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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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SUMMARY

Introduction

Comprehensive data on parents' take-up, views and experiences of childcare has been collected in England since the late 1990s to monitor the effectiveness of the 1998 National Childcare Strategy and to inform policy developments in this area. The 2007 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents is the most recent wave in the series which has produced these data, and provides up-to-date information to assess some important policy initiatives introduced since the last survey was carried out in 2004.

The Ten Year Childcare Strategy, published in 2004, placed a greater emphasis on increasing take-up of childcare among low income families, as supporting these parents into work is seen as key to reducing child poverty. The greater focus on the link between take-up of childcare and parental work has also meant a renewed emphasis not simply on increasing childcare, but ensuring that this is sufficiently flexible to meet working parents' needs. The move to increase the availability and flexibility of childcare has been paralleled by a drive towards better integration of a range of services for families. Children's Centres and the Extended Schools programme have been introduced to ensure that families, and particularly those from disadvantaged groups, have access to integrated childcare and early years education, and other family support services in one place.

Alongside the drive to improve economic outcomes for children and their families, the need to improve educational and developmental outcomes has also remained a high priority, to be achieved mainly through the provision of universal free early years education for 3 and 4 year olds. The effects of this policy were mainly picked up by previous surveys in the series, which showed a substantial increase in take-up of early years education among 3 and 4 year olds. The main development since the last survey was carried out in 2004 has been the extension of the free entitlement from 28 to 33 weeks. While other initiatives have been announced recently, including increasing the free entitlement to 15 hours a week to be delivered flexibly and extending the free entitlement to 2 year olds in disadvantaged areas, these have not yet been fully implemented.

Methodology

Data for the 2007 survey was collected from just under 7,200 parents in England who were interviewed between January 2007 and early April 2007. They were randomly selected from Child Benefit records. All the parents selected had children aged 14 and under, to be comparable with the previous survey in the series, and to focus on the age group most often included within government policy on childcare.

Following the model of the previous surveys in the series, the study used a very inclusive definition of 'childcare and early years provision', which included any time a child was not with the resident parents (or their current partner) or at school. Hence this covered informal care, such as grandparents, as well as formal care; it also covered times when parents were working, as well as times when they were not, and were therefore using childcare for other reasons.

Use of childcare and early years provision in the last year

The survey obtained a broad picture of take-up of childcare and early years provision in the last year for all children in the family. More detailed questions about the nature of childcare used, views on providers and unmet demand focused on a randomly selected child (in families where there was more than one child) and the care they received in the last week. In this section we present the results on use of childcare and early years provision in the last year, while the rest of the summary focuses mainly on the more detailed information collected on childcare and early years provision in the last week.

84% of families had used some form of childcare or early years provision - be it regular or ad hoc - in the last year. Over that period, a greater proportion of families had used informal care (65%) than formal provision (54%). There has been a slight drop in the use of formal childcare in the last year, in 2004 this was reported by 57% of parents.

Grossing up to national estimates, these figures represent 4.32 million families who had used childcare in 2007, 2.80 million families had used formal childcare or early years provision, and 3.34 million families had used informal care.

It is worth noting that the three most commonly used childcare providers in the last year were all informal. Just under half of families (47%) had used grandparents, around a fifth of families had used other relatives (19%) and friends or neighbours (19%).

Among the formal providers used in the last year, families were most likely to report using a breakfast or after school club (17%). Despite the roll out of the Extended Schools programme, which has increased the availability of out-of-school provision, the level of use of breakfast or after school clubs has not changed since 2004.

Use of childcare and early years provision in the last week

63% of families had used childcare or early years provision in the last week, a very similar proportion to 2004. 40% of parents had used formal provision, a very similar figure to that found in 2004, while use of informal care dropped slightly, this was reported by 39% in 2007, compared with 42% in 2004.

Grossing up to national estimates, the above figures represent 3.25 million families who had used childcare in the last week, 2.07 million families had used early years provision or other formal childcare, and 2.00 million families had used informal care.

As with use over the last year, out of all providers, families were most likely to have relied on a grandparent for childcare in the past week (25%). Used by 12% of families, out-of-school clubs were the most commonly used formal setting in the last week.

Looking at take-up of formal childcare and early years education among children in different age groups, the results show that:

- This was highest among 3 and 4 year olds, with 85% having received formal childcare or early years provision in the last week;
- Children under 3 were the next group most likely to have received formal childcare or early years education (38%); and

- Among school aged children, primary school children were considerably more likely to have attended a formal setting (34% of 5-7 year olds and 22% of 8-11 year olds) than secondary school children (7% of 12-14 year olds).

Childcare use also varied by ethnicity, particularly the use of informal care. White families had the highest use of informal care (39%), while Bangladeshi families showed low use of informal providers, at just 8%.

Overall couples and lone parents were equally likely to have used childcare, but differences emerge once the type of care is taken into account:

- Couples were more likely than lone parents to have used formal care (43% and 34% respectively).
- Lone parents were more likely than couples to have used informal care (45% and 37% respectively).

Differences between couples and lone parents remain, even when focusing on working households only, with working lone parents showing higher use of informal care and lower use of formal care than dual-earner families.

When looking at working hours, we found that:

- Among dual-earning families where one parent was working full-time, the more hours the other parent worked, the more likely they were to use informal care.
- Lone parents working 16 or more hours a week were the most likely to use formal care, two-fifths of these lone parents had used formal childcare, compared with one-fifth of lone parents working fewer than 16 hours.
- Atypical working hours¹ were associated with higher than average use of informal care. For example, 40% of couples where at least one parent worked at the weekend had used informal care, compared with 32% of couples where parents did not work at the weekend. Similarly, 67% of lone parents who worked at the weekend had used informal care, compared with 50% of lone parents who did not work at the weekend.

The higher the household income, the higher was the take-up of both formal and informal care; around half of families (52%) with an annual income of £45,000 or more had used formal childcare, compared with 33% of families with a yearly income below £10,000.

Why do parents use childcare and early years provision?

The survey explored take-up of childcare for economic reasons (i.e. so that parents could work, look for a job or study) and for reasons related to children's educational development:

¹ Atypical working hours were defined as either working during a week day before 8am, past 6pm or any time at the weekend.

- A higher proportion of families had used some form of childcare for economic reasons (36%) than had done so for reasons connected with their child's educational development (25%). The proportion using childcare for economic reasons has not changed since 2004. However, the proportion using childcare for educational reasons has declined slightly from 27% in 2004 to 25% in 2007.
- A higher proportion of parents reported using informal provision for economic reasons (23%) than reported using formal provision for these reasons (20%). Grandparents were the provider most likely to be used for economic reasons.

The proportion of families using childcare who reported doing so for economic reasons varied according to family characteristics:

- Among working families, lone parents were the most likely to have used childcare for economic reasons; 85% reported this, compared with 75% of dual-earning couples.
- Use of childcare for economic reasons was also associated with higher income parents and families living in less deprived areas. These patterns are consistent with the fact that these groups are more likely to be in work.

The proportion of families using childcare, and more specifically formal settings, for educational reasons also varied by family characteristics:

- Children aged 3 or 4 were the most likely to have used childcare for educational reasons (78%), which is unsurprising given the availability of the free entitlement and the targeting of early years education at this age group.
- Low income families were more likely to give educational reasons for using childcare than higher income families (47% and 40% respectively).

Patterns of use of childcare and early years provision

The survey explored patterns of use of childcare and early years provision, in terms of the number of providers used, as well as the number of days and the timing of sessions, and the use of providers for transporting children from one setting to another. The patterns emerging in 2007 were very similar to those found in 2004.

Use of multiple carers was common, with 42% of children being looked after by more than one provider in the last week. However, when splitting providers into 'early years education', 'other formal provision' and 'informal provision', it was unusual for children to have been looked after by more than one of each type, suggesting that different providers are used to fulfil different roles.

When looking at the number of days a week children received childcare or early years provision, we found that in the last week:

- 28% of children had received childcare on 5 days of the week, 17% on 2 days and 17% on one day only.
- Early years services were more likely to be used on 5 days of the week; 17% of children had received early years provision on 5 days of the week, compared with 6% for other formal providers.

- Informal care was most likely to be used on just one day of the week, reflecting its more ad-hoc nature; 19% of children had received care from an informal provider on just one day, compared with 3% for early years provision, and 9% for other formal care.

We have split the weekday into five time periods, and separated out use of childcare at the weekend. The results show that²:

- Weekday daytime (9am to 3.29pm) and weekday late afternoon (3.30pm to 5.59pm) were the most common times for the use of childcare, with just under two-thirds of children who had used childcare in the last week having used it during those periods.
- Similar levels of use were reported for weekday evening (6pm to 9.59pm) (33%), weekday early morning (6am to 8.59am) (32%) and at the weekend (29%).
- Predictably, the least likely time to be using childcare was at night (10pm to 5.59am) (12%).

The timing of sessions does of course vary hugely by provider type. Reflecting the greater flexibility of informal care, children were considerably more likely to have received informal care than formal provision at the weekend and from late afternoon onwards during the week.

One in three children (31%) who had received childcare in the last week had been taken or collected by one of their childcare providers, this figure varied considerably by family characteristics, even when controlling for the number of providers used:

- Among children who had been cared for by 2 providers, we found that 8-11 year olds were the group most likely to have been taken or collected by one of their childcare providers (54%), while 0-2 year olds were the least likely (26%).
- Lone parents were more likely than couple families to have used a provider for transporting children between different carers, with the respective figures among those using 2 providers being 55% and 38%.
- As would be expected, working was also associated with high use of a provider to transport children between different carers, this was reported by 41% of dual-income families and 59% of working lone parents who had used 2 providers.

The cost of childcare and early years provision

Just over half of families (55%) who had used childcare in the last week had made a payment to at least one of their providers, a similar proportion to 2004 (53%).

Looking at how much parents paid for childcare (inclusive of subsidies, such as money paid by an employer or the local authority):

- The median weekly spend on childcare by families was £27, whilst the median hourly cost was £1.71 and the mean was £2.42³.

² These are not exclusive categories, and a single extended period of childcare might cover several of them.

- Costs varied considerably by provider types, parents paid the highest hourly rate to nannies (a median of £4.68 and a mean of £5.33), day nurseries (median £3.75, mean £4.22) and childminders (median £3.40, mean £4.03).
- Costs also varied by region, with the highest hourly cost found in London (£3.50) and the South East (£3.03).

Higher hourly costs were associated with a number of family characteristics, partly reflecting the use of different types of providers. Among parents who had paid for childcare:

- Working parents paid more for childcare than non-working parents. For example, the hourly cost was £2.77 for dual-working households, compared with £1.50 where neither parents worked, working lone parents paid £2.39 an hour, compared with £2.06 for non-working lone parents.
- Families in the top income band spent £3.23 an hour on childcare, compared with £1.90 reported by parents in the bottom income group, however, low income families reported greater difficulties in paying for childcare.

When looking at financial help to pay for childcare, we found that:

- Take-up of the childcare element among those receiving the Working Tax Credit (WTC) was low, as in 2004, this was claimed by only 1 in 10 families receiving WTC.
- 18% of families who had paid for childcare had received other types of financial help, this represents a slight increase since 2004, when this was reported by 15% of families.
- The most common source of financial help was the Local Education Authority, reported by 61% of parents who had received financial help.
- 19% of parents received help from their employer, this represents a substantial increase since 2004, when the equivalent figure was 7%. This is likely to reflect the effect of the 2005 reforms of the tax and National Insurance exemptions for employer supported childcare, which have made it more attractive for employers to offer financial help with childcare costs.

There is room for improvement in terms of increasing parents' awareness of the financial help available, especially amongst non-working families. Knowledge of the types of childcare that are in general eligible for the childcare element of the WTC was low. Around a third of families not currently receiving the childcare element were not aware that it was available, the same proportion as in 2004. There also remains considerable confusion among parents about which providers are covered by the childcare element. On the other hand, awareness of actual costs of childcare seemed relatively good, based on parents' estimates of the cost of day nurseries and childminders.

³ The median cost is less influenced by extreme outlying values than the mean, however mean figures are necessary to allow for any differences between sub-groups to be tested for statistical significance. Unless otherwise stated the figures given in this section are the mean costs.

The barriers to using childcare and early years provision

The survey has explored parents' views on the affordability, availability and quality of childcare in their area, and to what extent cost and the lack of places might constitute barriers to the use of childcare and to work.

The results of parents' perceptions of local childcare services show that:

- Views on the affordability and availability of local childcare have improved slightly between 2004 and 2007. However, a substantial minority of parents still thought that affordability was fairly or very poor (36%) and that there were not enough childcare places in their local area (37%).
- Views on the quality of childcare were more positive, with 63% of parents rating the quality of local childcare services as very or fairly good.

When looking at how childcare costs influence parents' decisions, we found that:

- For a significant minority a lack of affordable childcare was cited as a reason for not using it (13% of those not using childcare said this was a reason) and for not working (17% said they could not find childcare that would make working worthwhile).
- Cost also affected the decisions of parents with young children regarding take-up of early years provision. For example, 24% of those not using early years education said they did not do so due to high costs, and 27% of those who did not use it every day said this was due to cost factors.

In terms of the extent to which lack of provision was a barrier to parents using childcare or early years provision or to working, the evidence is mixed. It was not often cited unprompted as a reason for not using childcare or not working (although those who did were more likely to come from lower income and lone parent families). However, when asked whether they would work if they could arrange 'good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable', 51% of non-working parents said that they would.

In addition to affordability and general availability of childcare places, availability of provision at specific times could influence take-up of childcare and parents' ability to work. There appeared to be significant levels of unmet demand for formal childcare services during less traditional times, such as school holidays, weekends and evenings. For example:

- 42% of parents whose main provider did not open in the school holidays said they would like it to. There has been no statistically significant change since 2004.
- A substantial minority of parents who worked atypical hours reported problems with their childcare arrangements at these times and lone parents were particularly likely to report difficulties. For example, arranging childcare to cover early morning work (6am to 8.59am) was reported as a problem by 34% of lone parents and 23% of couples working at that time.

A lack of information - or knowledge about where to seek it - may be a barrier to parents' use of childcare and early years provision. When asked directly, 35% of parents felt that they would like more information about childcare services in their local area. Specific areas about which parents asked for more information included school holiday provision, early years provision, the cost and quality of childcare. What is particularly interesting is the reliance on 'word of mouth' for obtaining information about all kinds of childcare and early years provision (36% cited this source), coupled with low use of two of the key government-led information sources, namely Children's Information Services and ChildcareLink (only 7% and 2% respectively had used these sources in the previous year).

Parents of pre-school children's views on their childcare and early years providers

When parents are choosing childcare and early years provision, they are looking for the provider to fulfil a variety of roles. Their opinion of how well their provider meets these needs can vary depending on the provider they are using and on their pre-existing expectations. When looking at these issues, given the often different needs of pre-school and school aged children and their families, we have reported separately on these two age groups. We look firstly at pre-school children, focusing on formal childcare providers.

Parents' decisions about which providers to use are often influenced by several competing factors. When asked why they chose their main formal provider, overall, parents were more likely to mention 'pull' than 'push' factors, more often reporting reasons why they were attracted to the provider than reasons around a lack of choice. As found in 2004, the majority of parents felt that they had a real choice of providers, citing reasons such as trust in the carer and preferences to see their child educated as well as cared for.

Parents' reasons for choosing their formal childcare providers differed according to the age of their (pre-school) children. Trust was key for parents of very young children (28%), with concerns about educational development increasing as the children reached 4 and 5 years old (17%).

Awareness of Ofsted inspections was high, 70% of parents using a group provider and 80% of those using a childminder were aware of these. Among parents who had seen the inspection report, just over half said this had influenced their choice of provider (54% of those using a group setting and 56% of those using a childminder).

Parents were asked their views about improvements to different aspects of their formal provider, from buildings and premises to staff qualifications. The findings showed that:

- 60% of parents using a group setting and 89% using a childminder stated that no improvements were needed at their provider; and
- The most frequently cited aspects that needed improving were buildings and premises and outdoor play and activities.

Parents were also asked about the opportunities for skills development at their formal provider. The results showed that the majority of settings were encouraging the development of a range of skills identified in the Foundation Stage curriculum:

- 93% of group settings and 80% of childminders were reported to be encouraging children to recognise letters, words, numbers or shapes;

- 95% of group providers and 80% of childminders were trying to get children interested in books; and
- 87% of group settings and 78% of childminders were encouraging children to find out about animals and plants.

Parents were also generally satisfied with the level of feedback they received about their children's progress at their providers, as was the case in 2004, 68% of parents were very satisfied with the feedback they got.

Given the government's drive to integrate family services at single sites through initiatives such as Children's Centres and Extended Schools, since 2004 the survey has explored the availability of additional family services at childcare settings. In 2007 we found that:

- 62% of parents said there were no additional services (e.g. health services, parenting classes) available at their group provider, the figure is almost identical to that reported in 2004.
- Where services were available take-up was highest for parents and toddler sessions (14%), advice and support for parents (13%) and health services (10%).
- When these services were not available at the setting a substantial number of parents said they would like to see them available, with health services being most likely to be mentioned (25%), followed by advice and support for parents, and courses or training (each mentioned by 16%).

Parents of school children's views on their childcare and early years providers

Moving on to parents' influences on their choice of formal provider for their school children, we found that these varied by type of setting:

- Trust was a key issue for choosing childminders (50% of these parents cited this reason).
- Reputation and educational reasons were most often reported by parents using reception classes, cited in each case by a quarter of parents (26% and 25% respectively).
- For users of out-of-school clubs issues around how the care fitted in with their working hours and the choice of the children themselves were more likely to be mentioned (9% and 8% respectively).

Awareness of Ofsted inspections was relatively high for all provider types. Among parents who had seen the inspection results, those using a childminder were considerably less likely to say the inspection results influenced their choice of provider; 22% mentioned this, compared with 38% of parents using a reception class and 34% using an out-of-school club.

As was found in 2004, most parents were largely content with their settings; 86% of parents using childminders, 59% using reception classes, and 72% using out-of-school clubs could suggest no improvements.

The findings on additional family services available at group settings used by parents of school children show that:

- These services were considerably less likely to be available at out-of-school clubs; 77% of parents using out-of-school clubs said these services were not available, the equivalent figure for parents using a reception class was 47%.
- When services were available take-up for most services was higher among parents using reception classes (e.g. 14% had done courses or training, 11% had used health services) than those using out-of-school clubs (4% had done courses or training, 3% had used health services).
- Among parents who did not have access to these services the proportion of parents who wanted them was similar regardless of the type of setting used.

Conclusions

A key message from this report is that the rise in the use of formal care identified in the 2004 survey has not continued, in 2007 the same proportion of families had used formal care in the last week.

A continuing concern is the concentration of 'non-users' of childcare in the lowest income groups, given that a key focus of the Ten Year Childcare Strategy is increasing the use of formal care amongst disadvantaged families, with the ultimate aim of facilitating parents' move into work and hence alleviating poverty.

Although the relationship between the use of formal childcare and income is maintained even once working status is taken into account, families in the lowest income groups will nevertheless largely consist of non-working households, for which the current childcare options and existing work incentives do not seem sufficient for them to move into work. These families are more likely to cite affordability as a barrier, and awareness is also an issue, as their lower use of sources of information like ChildcareLink and Children's Information Services indicate.

When looking at 3 and 4 year olds and take-up of the free entitlement to early years education, we found that this was high (86% of eligible 3 and 4 year olds), but it was lower than average among the children most likely to benefit from this, including those from low income families and Asian children.

The use of out-of-school clubs (whether on or off the school site) has not changed since 2004. This is despite the roll out of the Extended Schools programme, and an increase in primary schools in particular providing childcare before and after school.

Despite a small improvement in parents' views on the affordability of childcare, cost remains an important barrier to the use of childcare for some parents, especially large families and those with younger children. The affordability of childcare continues to be a barrier to work among a substantial minority of non-working parents. These findings might partly reflect parents' lack of awareness of childcare subsidies. For example, awareness and take-up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit remains very low. As well as low awareness, another factor likely to have affected take-up may be the problems identified with the administration of tax credits.

The proportion of families receiving financial help has increased and this is largely due to the increase in financial help from employers. This reflects the improvements from 2005 in the tax and National Insurance advantages for employers offering support with childcare, and the subsequent increase in employers offering support. However, the higher income groups are the ones benefiting most here, as higher rate tax payers are more likely to receive employer supported childcare.

The availability of childcare as a barrier to its use is a recurrent theme, despite a small increase in the proportion of parents who think the number of places available in their local area is about right. Although the number of childcare places and vacancies has been increasing in recent years, a substantial minority of parents think there are not enough places in their area. This may be because the cost of the places available as well as their accessibility has an impact on parents' views of availability, and parents are identifying gaps in provision in terms of suitable and affordable care.

A particular area for concern remains the availability of provision during holidays and atypical hours. Despite the growth of Extended Schools there was no change in the proportion of parents who reported that their main provider was open during school holidays and demand for holiday opening remains high. In addition many parents, particularly lone parents, working atypical hours continue to report difficulties in arranging childcare at these times.

Finally, it is worth highlighting again the important role that informal care has, particularly the continued reliance on grandparents for (largely unpaid) childcare.

The evidence suggests overall that the Ten Year Childcare Strategy has not had as much impact as intended, particularly in relation to the most disadvantaged children. Nevertheless, policy plans such as the extension of the free entitlement and the roll out of the Extended Schools programme might contribute to a higher take-up of childcare by families. This report only provides an initial update on parents' views and experiences of childcare and early years provision, the 2008 wave of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents will provide further evidence.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the study

This report provides the main findings of the 2007 wave of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and carried out by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The study had two key objectives. The first was to provide salient, up-to-date information on parents' use, views and experiences of childcare and early years provision. The second was to continue the time series data on issues covered by previous surveys in the series. Overarching both these aims was a need for data to aid the evaluation of recent policy interventions in these areas.

1.2 Policy background

The publication in 2004 of the Ten Year Childcare Strategy⁴, not only followed the Government's Child Poverty Review⁵, but also marked a crucial point in the development of the National Childcare Strategy, which was first introduced in 1998.

The need for more effective support for poor parents was one of eight persistent childcare challenges identified in the Ten Year Childcare Strategy, reflecting an assessment of the National Childcare Strategy's impact by the National Audit Office⁶. With the Treasury taking over from the DCSF (then Department for Education and Skills - DfES) in formulating the next steps to achieve the strategy's objectives of choice and flexibility, availability, quality and affordability, a more explicit convergence with the Government's child poverty strategy became apparent:

'This strategy will not have succeeded if, along with its other achievements, it has not helped more of this generation and the next out of poverty and worklessness⁷.'

The principle of progressive universality, that is a focus on those most in need with some universal support, continued to govern childcare and other early years initiatives and funding streams. Among the Ten Year Childcare Strategy's targets was a 50% increase in the take-up of formal childcare by lower income working families as well as an increase of 10% in the stock of Ofsted registered childcare.

The drive to improve developmental, educational and economic outcomes for all children and narrow the gap between the poor and the better off had already been heralded in the programme outlined in the 2003 Green Paper *Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme*⁸, which was given legal force in the Children Act 2004. This reform agenda for the delivery of children's services entails both the improvement and integration of universal services, such as in early years settings and schools, and the reconfiguration of services around children and families in one place and delivered by multi-disciplinary teams, such as in Children's Centres and in Extended Schools.

⁴ HM Treasury (2004a).

⁵ HM Treasury (2004b).

⁶ National Audit office (2004).

⁷ HM Treasury (2004a: 4).

⁸ DfES (2003).

Subsequently, a programme was initiated to transform Sure Start Local Programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries, maintained nursery schools and some private and voluntary early years settings into Children's Centres for young children and their families, with the aim of meeting the 2010 target of a Children's Centre for every community in England. Of the total 3,500 planned Centres, over a third (1,400) were fully operational by September 2007, reaching well over a million children, predominantly in disadvantaged areas. The Centres' core services include early education and childcare, as well as family health care, advice and support for parents, and links to training and employment services.

The roll-out of the Children's Centres initiative is complemented by the national Extended Schools programme. By 2010 this is expected to offer a range of integrated services, including study and parenting support and after-school and holiday childcare, to children, young people and their families in every primary and secondary school. The programme's targets for primary schools include the provision of 8am to 6pm wraparound childcare and holiday provision. By October 2007, over 8,000 primary and secondary schools (one in three schools in England) were already offering the core offer of extended services. As far as the consolidation of non-school based out-of-school and holiday provision is concerned however, providers in this sector have had to contend with the ending of their New Opportunities Fund support.

Several recent reports and evaluations have documented the challenges these integrated programmes face in going full scale over the next few years⁹. Since 2005 national evaluations of the Sure Start Local Programmes (NESS) and of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative¹⁰ and other DCSF research have served to inform these developments. Areas identified as in need of improvement include the take-up of provision by ethnic minority families¹¹ and by children with special educational needs and disabilities¹².

Both private for-profit and the private not-for-profit early years service providers, also referred to as the PVI (private, voluntary and independent) sector, are expected to contribute to the delivery of integrated early education and childcare services in Children's Centres and Extended Schools. Indeed, the 2006 Childcare Act introduced a requirement on Local Authorities to secure sufficient childcare locally for employed parents. At the same time, section 8(3) allows local authorities to act only as 'provider of last resort', and restricts their ability to establish new childcare services or expand their own provision in competition with existing good PVI provision. Across the UK childcare for under 3s is predominantly being delivered in PVI settings, most of it in the private for-profit sector, by now dominated by corporate providers¹³. According to recent statistics¹⁴ well over half of 3 year olds and a quarter of 4 year olds also accessed their free entitlement in PVI settings.

Since April 2006, all 3 and 4 year olds can receive their free entitlement to early years education for 38 rather than 33 weeks of the year¹⁵, while by 2010 all 3 and 4 year olds will be entitled to 15 hours, rather than the current 12.5 hours free per week, for 38 weeks of the year, also delivered more flexibly. In anticipation of this national development 20 Pathfinder Local Authorities have been phasing in this extension of the free entitlement since April 2007, in order to explore how it can be made to work optimally for parents and children.

⁹ Cummings et al (2006); NAO (2006); Ofsted (2006a).

¹⁰ Smith et al (2007); Sylva et al (2004).

¹¹ Kazimirski et al (2006a); Graig et al (2007).

¹² Dickens, Taylor and La Valle (2005).

¹³ Laing & Buisson (2007).

¹⁴ DfES (2007).

¹⁵ DfES (2006).

The Childcare Act 2006 provided the legal underpinning for the Ten Year Childcare Strategy's proposals. It also introduced a change to the Foundation Stage Curriculum, which providers in England must be qualified to deliver in order to receive the supply-side subsidy governing the free entitlement. From 2008 the Early Years Foundation Stage for 0 to 5 year olds is a new curriculum framework, integrating the Foundation Stage curriculum with the National Standards for Daycare and Childminding and the Birth to Three Matters Guidance for providers working with children under 3.

Ofsted has been monitoring the quality of childcare and education since the introduction of the minimum standards¹⁶ and their latest report confirms that over half of all settings were rated good or outstanding. From September 2008, the Early Years Register for 0 to 5 year olds and the Ofsted Childcare Register for 6 and 7 year olds will be integrated into a single regulatory system in the interest of efficiency.

Progress towards improving the quality of childcare and early years provision was also made through the introduction in early 2006 of the Early Years Professional Status, equivalent to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The new validation pathways towards this status, subsidised through the Transformation Fund¹⁷, aim to ensure that a graduate childcare professional takes a lead role in every Children's Centre by 2010 and in every full day care setting by 2015.

The Childcare Element within the Working Tax Credit has remained the main form of parental demand-side subsidy for childcare since data were collected for the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents in 2004. Its take-up has however been affected by administrative problems, urgently being addressed by HMRC and documented in a series of reports from the Public Accounts Committee, which concluded that as yet this tax credit is not working well¹⁸.

Overall, the last three years have been characterised by concerted efforts by central and local Government, reflected in a raft of new policies and legislation, to consolidate the provision of early education and childcare, to improve delivery methods and increase its take-up, particularly by poor parents.

1.3 Time series of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents

Since childcare policy and the childcare market have undergone and are still undergoing substantial changes, it is vital for policy makers to have access to up-to-date, robust and comprehensive information on parents' use of, need for and attitudes towards childcare and early years provision.

The current study is the second in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series, which began in 2004, thereby allowing valuable time series analysis. At least two further waves are planned for 2008 and 2009.

The time series however actually stretches back further than 2004, since the current series comprises a combination of two series that preceded it: the Parents' Demand for Childcare series (from here referred to as the Childcare series) and the Survey of Parents of Three and Four Year Old Children and their use of Early Years Services series (from here referred to as the Early Years series). These two survey series, both conducted by NatGen, have played a key role in helping to monitor, evaluate and further develop childcare policies. The Childcare series included two studies conducted in 1999 and 2001. Focusing on families with children aged 14 and under, it collected information on

¹⁶ Ofsted (2006b); Ofsted (2007).

¹⁷ The Transformation Fund will change to the Graduate Leader Fund in April 2008

¹⁸ House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2007: 6).

their use of childcare and early years provision over the past year and, in more detail, over the last week. With an interest in childcare used for economic and other reasons, it collected information about services used at any time during the day or week. The six surveys in the Early Years series were conducted between 1997 and 2002 and focused on families with children aged 3 and 4. With more of an interest in early years provision, the series focused on services used Monday to Friday, 8am until 6pm. Before combining the two earlier survey series NatCen conducted a feasibility study¹⁹, which contains more information about how losses to each of the survey series were minimised, how it was possible to facilitate a combined design, and about the need for alterations to the questionnaire and survey design to address the changes that had occurred in policy over time.

1.4 Overview of the study design

1.4.1 The interviews

Just under 7,200 parents in England were included in the study, conducted between January 2007 and early April 2007. They were randomly selected from Child Benefit records. Given the almost universal take-up of Child Benefit, the records provide a comprehensive sampling frame for families with dependent children. Excluding parents who opted out of the study, ineligible cases or those with untraceable addresses, 71% of selected parents were interviewed. This represents a good response rate and their socio-demographic profile very closely matches that of the Child Benefit record population.

All the parents selected had children aged 14 and under, to be comparable with the previous surveys in the Childcare series and to focus on the age group most often included within government policy on childcare. In order to have sufficient numbers of children attending early years provision, a boost of around 900 parents with 2, 3 or 4 year olds were included amongst the 7,200 parents surveyed. Combining these with the parents of 2, 3 and 4 year olds in the main sample enables the continuation of the Early Years series and allows more detailed analysis of this group which is important given the recent policy focus.

Interviews were conducted in people's homes and lasted for an average of three-quarters of an hour. The main respondent to the survey was always a parent or guardian with main or shared responsibility for childcare decisions and tended to be the mother of the children (see Appendix A for the - weighted - gender breakdown of respondents). In addition, any partners at home during the interview were asked personally about their socio-demographics. Where this was not possible the main respondent was asked to provide proxy information about their partner. The interview focused on the families' use of both childcare and early years provision. However, because of time constraints, detailed information on the use and needs of all children in the family could not be collected. Rather, we obtained a broad picture about all the children and then in families where there were 2 or more children, detailed questions were asked about one randomly selected child. Similarly, if the selected child had used more than one childcare or early years provider, we collected some information about all providers, but concentrated on their main provider, which was always a formal childcare provider, providing that they used some type of formal childcare. The same decision was made regarding information about use in the last year and in the last week. We collected brief details about use over the last year, but concentrated on the childcare and early years provision used in the last term time week²⁰. It was agreed that use in the last week would be more reflective of

¹⁹ Finch et al (2003).

²⁰ For most parents this meant that they were asked about childcare used in the last week. However, if the last week had been a school/nursery holiday, they were asked about the most *recent* term time week.

regular arrangements and data on more recent use of childcare was less likely to be affected by recall issues.

The interview broadly covered:

For all children in the family

- Use of childcare and early years provision in the last year (in summary)
- Use of childcare and early years provision in the last week
- Costs of paying for childcare and early years provision (for providers used in the last week)
- Sources of information and attitudes towards childcare and early years provision in the local area

For one randomly selected child

- Detailed record of attendance in the last week
- Reasons for using and views of the main formal provider
- Reasons for using more than one provider

As background

- Family structure
- Socio-demographics
- Parents' work details

Full details of the study design and implementation can be found in Appendix B.

1.4.2 Defining childcare

Following the model of previous surveys in the series, the study used a very inclusive definition of 'childcare and early years provision'. Parents were asked to include any time that their child was not with resident parents, or their current partner, or at school²¹. Thus, the definition is much wider than other studies that focus on childcare use when parents are working or studying or on early years education. In order to remind parents to include all possible people or organisations that may have looked after their child, parents were shown the following list:

Formal providers

- Nursery school
- Nursery class
- Reception class
- Special day school or nursery or unit
- Day nursery
- Playgroup or pre-school
- Childminder
- Nanny or au pair
- Babysitter who came to our home
- Breakfast / After School Club, on school site
- Breakfast / After School Club, not on school site
- Holiday club/scheme

²¹ Although a slight ambiguity is introduced, as parents are asked to think about 'childcare' that they use, before being given the broad definition.

Informal providers

- My ex-husband / wife / partner / the child's other parent (who does not live in this family)
- The child's grandparent(s)
- The child's older brother / sister
- Another relative
- A friend or neighbour

Other

- Other nursery education provider
- Other childcare provider

It is worth noting that we have classified providers according to the service for which they were being used, e.g. day care, early years education. Thus, we have continued to use - and classify according to - terminology such as 'nursery schools' and 'day nurseries', rather than include forms of integrated provision such as Children's Centres. In relation to reception classes, this type of provider was only included as *childcare* if it was not compulsory schooling, that is if the child had *not* turned 5 in the previous school term. Further details of the definitions of the above categories of providers are provided in Appendix B.

This inclusive definition of childcare and early years provision means that parents will have included time when their child was visiting friends or family, at a sport or leisure activity, and so on. The term *early years provision* also covers both 'care' for young children and 'early years education'. In order to be able to look separately at childcare and early years provision used for economic reasons and for the education of the child, parents were asked the reasons for using each provider, although it is possible for parents to use 'early years education' for economic reasons. Thus, we are able to re-define childcare and early years provision in different ways.

In addition, in Chapter 4 of the report *early years provision*, defined as 'Nursery school, Nursery class, Reception class, Special day school/nursery, Day Nursery, Playgroup/pre-school, Other nursery education provider', is distinguished from *other formal care*, defined as 'Childminder, Nanny or au pair, Babysitter, Breakfast/after school club, Holiday club'.

Deciding on the correct classification of the 'type' of provider can be complicated for parents, especially given the changing childcare and early years market. We have therefore checked the classifications given by parents with the providers themselves and/or with administrative data sources. See Appendix B for more details about the provider checks.

1.5 The report

The data from this study contain a level of detailed information that is not possible to cover in this initial 'broad sweep' report. Here, the aim is to provide an overview of the findings. We report on all the major elements included in the interview with parents and look across different types of families, children and childcare providers.

Even restricting analysis to a 'broad sweep' of the findings does not sufficiently curtail the length of this report. Therefore where the tables that are referenced are very long or very detailed they have been included in Appendix C.

There are a number of methodological issues to consider in interpreting the analysis in the report. These are discussed in turn in the rest of the section.

1.5.1 Interpreting results in the report

During the report we use data about:

- The family
- The selected child
- The main (formal) provider (for the selected child)

1.5.2 Weights

A 'family level' weight is applied to the family analysis. This weight ensures that the research findings are representative of the population of families in England in receipt of Child Benefit and re-balances the relative proportions of the main and boost samples. A 'child level' weight is applied to the selected child and main provider analysis. This weight combines the family level weight with an adjustment for the probability of the child being selected for more detailed information. Full details of the weighting are provided in Appendix B.

1.5.3 Time series analysis

Throughout the report we compare the findings from 2007 with the findings in 2004. However, one methodological caveat should be borne in mind when interpreting our reported changes. Whilst in 2004 the interviews were conducted during the Autumn term, this was not possible in 2007 and therefore the interviews were conducted in the Spring term (January to early April). Since childcare use can vary across terms, some changes between the two years may be attributable in part to the change in the fieldwork period.

1.5.4 Bases

The tables in this report contain the total number of cases in the whole sample or in the particular sub-group being analysed and the base for different columns (e.g. different types of families, income groups). The total base figure includes all the eligible cases (i.e. all respondents or all respondents who were asked a particular question) minus any coded as 'don't know' or 'not answered'. Thus, whilst the base description may be the same across several tables (e.g. all families using childcare in the last week), the base sizes may differ slightly due to the exclusion of those coded 'don't know' or 'not answered'²². In some tables, the column bases do not add up to the total base and this is mainly because some categories might not be included in the table, either because they are too small or are not useful for the purpose of the analysis.

1.5.5 Percentages

Due to rounding percentage figures may not add up to exactly 100%. Furthermore, where the information in tables is based on multi-coded questions, the percentages in the table could add up to more than 100%. Column percentages are presented in tables, unless specified otherwise.

²² Occasionally the proportion of people saying 'don't know' was sufficiently high to warrant showing them within the table (and therefore they are included in the base). This is particularly the case for awareness questions.

1.5.6 Sub groups

Measures of local deprivation²³ have been matched to the survey data and are used for sub-group analysis throughout the report. Families have been split into quintiles according to their local area score on the index of multiple deprivation (IMD). Sub-group analysis by income is also used, reflecting the income groups used in previous surveys in the series as closely as possible²⁴.

The age of children in the household is one of the many factors that can have a strong influence on parents' experiences and use of childcare. This has been taken into account in much of the report through looking separately at families with a pre-school child and those with a school age child. However, in addition, since the age of the selected child²⁵ is indicative of the age profile of children in the family, this has also been used in some sections of the report to explore the nature of the relationship between childcare issues and children's age.

1.5.7 Significance testing

The large sample size used for this survey means that the differences between percentages for most sub-groups are statistically significant. However, bases for some estimates are still relatively small. It is therefore important to note the unweighted bases at the foot of the tables when drawing comparisons. Throughout the report, whenever the text comments on differences between sub-groups of the sample, these differences have been tested for significance using the survey commands in STATA/SE 9.2, and found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval or above. Similarly, standard deviations have been calculated when reporting on statistically significant differences in mean scores.

1.5.8 Symbols in tables

The symbols below have been used in the tables and they denote the following:

- n/a to indicate that this category does not apply (given the base of the table)
- [] to indicate a percentage based on fewer than 50 respondents
- +
- 0 to indicate a percentage value of less than 0.5
- 0 to indicate a percentage value of zero

²³ As calculated by the Social Disadvantage Research Centre at Oxford University for the Department for Communities and Local Government.

²⁴ Income groups are based on this survey except for the income quintile levels used in relation to the PSA target in Chapter 2, which are based on the Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey (FRS).

²⁵ As previously mentioned, because of time constraints, detailed information on the use and needs of all children in the family could not be collected and instead we randomly selected one child for this purpose.

2 THE USE OF CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS PROVISION

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we provide an overview of families' use of childcare and early years provision. We first take a brief look at their use over the last year. We then concentrate on families' use of childcare over the last week, looking at the use of different provider types by different types of families and children. Finally, formal care use *within children's age groups* is examined across different family and area characteristics.

In order to be comparable with our previous studies this chapter focuses on the use of childcare and early years provision using our very broad definition (see Chapter 1 for details).

2.2 Use of childcare and early years provision in the last year

84% of families had used childcare in the last year; around half (54%) had used formal care, and two-thirds (65%) informal care (Table 2.1). This amounts to a slight drop in the use of formal care, from 57% in 2004 (the decrease in informal care use is not statistically significant).

As in 2004, grandparents were the most common provider of childcare, used by 47% of families. Use of friends and neighbours or other relatives was also again quite common (used by around a fifth of families in each case), although the use of friends and neighbours has dropped slightly, by 4 percentage points (23% in 2004 down to 19% in 2007).

The most common *formal* provider type was a breakfast or after-school club, with 17% of families having used this type of provision in the last year (either on or off a school site). Whilst an increase in use might have been expected, as a result of the increase in extended school provision²⁶, use has remained stable since 2004 (when the figure was 18%). The 2008 wave of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents will focus on the use of extended schools, which might help to understand this lack of increase, so far.

²⁶ Gilby et al (2006).

Table 2.1 Use of providers in the last year*Base: All families*

	2004	2007
	%	%
Any childcare	86	84
Early years provision and formal childcare	57	54
Nursery school	6	5
Nursery class attached to primary or infants school	7	7
Reception class attached to primary or infants school ²⁷	13	10
Special day school or unit for children with SEN	1	1
Day nursery	10	10
Playgroup or pre-school	11	11
Other nursery education provider	1	+
Childminder	7	8
Nanny or au pair	2	2
Baby-sitter who came to our home	9	8
Breakfast club or after school club, on school site	13	13
Breakfast club or after school club, off school site	6	5
Holiday club / scheme	9	7
Informal childcare	67	65
Ex-partner / wife / husband	9	9
The child's grandparents	49	47
The child's older brother / sister	10	11
Another relative	19	19
A friend or neighbour	23	19
Other		
Leisure / sport activity	5	5
Other childcare provider	3	4
No childcare used	14	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7784</i>	<i>7129</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7774</i>	<i>7123</i>

Grossing up to national estimates²⁸, the above figures represent 4.32 million families having used childcare in the last year - 2.80 million having used formal childcare or early years provision, and 3.34 million having used informal childcare. The estimates for key formal providers used in 2007 are given in Table 2.2.

²⁷ The data on use of reception classes should be treated with caution, as for some four year olds, respondents stated they were attending school (hence likely to be in reception) but did not identify reception class as a provider.

²⁸ National estimates are based on the number of families with children aged 0-14 receiving Child Benefit as at November 2006 (5,135,805), DWP Information and Analysis Directorate, Information Centre.

Table 2.2 National estimates of use of key formal providers in the last year

	Number of families
Early years provision and formal childcare	2.80 million
Nursery school	0.26 million
Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school	0.37 million
Reception class attached to primary or infants school	0.50 million
Day nursery	0.53 million
Playgroup or pre-school	0.54 million
Childminder	0.39 million
Breakfast club or after school club on school site	0.68 million
Breakfast club or after school club, off school site	0.28 million

As the focus of the survey interview is on a term-time week, the use of holiday clubs is collected at the yearly level only - therefore before moving on to weekly use of childcare, Tables 2.3 and 2.4 provide an overview of the use of holiday clubs by family and area characteristics.

Use of holiday clubs did not vary by family type, but was positively associated with parental work, among both couple families and lone parents (Table 2.3). Families with higher incomes were also more likely to have used a holiday club in the last year. Using the age of the selected child as a proxy for the age of the children in the household²⁹, it seems families with primary school children were more likely to use holiday clubs than those with secondary school children.

²⁹ The data on which children had used a holiday club was not collected, hence holiday club use can only be analysed at the family level.

Table 2.3 Use of holiday clubs in the last year, by family characteristics*Base: All families*

	%	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Family type			
Couple	7	5169	5343
Lone parent	6	1960	1789
Family working status			
Couple - both working	9	3274	3097
Couple - one working	5	1564	1821
Couple - neither working	2	332	416
Lone parent – working	10	961	768
Lone parent - not working	3	1000	1021
Family yearly income			
Under £10,000	3	1132	1036
£10,000-£19,999	5	1770	1859
£20,000-£29,999	8	1323	1372
£30,000-£44,999	9	1159	1118
£45,000+	12	1221	1211
Age of child			
0-2	2	1449	1406
3-4	4	997	1434
5-7	11	1125	1186
8-11	12	1722	1666
12-14	6	1836	1431

Note: Row percentages.

The use of holiday clubs varied widely by region (Table 2.4); families in the South East showed the highest use of holiday clubs (12%) and in the North East region the lowest (3%). Reflecting the pattern of use by income, 13% of families in the least deprived areas had used a holiday club, while use was low in the most deprived areas (4%).

Table 2.4 Use of holiday clubs in the last year, by region and index of multiple deprivation

Base: All families

	%	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Government Office Region			
North West	6	989	982
North East	3	361	404
Yorkshire & the Humber	4	717	745
East Midlands	7	605	648
West Midlands	6	768	729
East	8	778	787
London	5	1070	933
South East	12	1130	1169
South West	9	665	695
Index of multiple deprivation			
1st quintile - least deprived	13	1361	1394
2nd quintile	9	1247	1271
3 rd quintile	6	1334	1299
4th quintile	5	1469	1423
5th quintile - most deprived	4	1670	1705

Note: Row percentages.

2.3 Levels of use and providers used in the last week

Two-thirds (63%) of families had used childcare in the last week³⁰, a very similar proportion to 2004 (Table 2.5). Use of formal care was very similar at 40%, and informal care use dropped slightly from 42% to 39%. Childcare use therefore seems to have stabilised after large jumps between 2001 and 2004 in both formal and informal care use in the last week³¹.

We should, however, bear in mind the slight differences in the way that the questions on childcare were asked in 2004 and 2007 compared with the previous surveys. Greater focus was placed on ensuring that respondents included all times when the child was not with them or their partner. A proportion of the increase in informal care, in particular, between 2001 and 2004 may be related to these methodological issues.

Compared with childcare use in the last year, when we look at the amount and types of childcare and early years provision used over the last week, we are less likely to pick up ad hoc (usually informal) arrangements. However, we are almost equally likely to pick up people's regular (formal or informal) arrangements, particularly those used during term-time. Hence focusing on a particular week is likely to closely reflect use over the year in relation to formal care, whilst we are likely to see a drop in use of informal care. The proportions of families using *formal* providers in the last week were therefore only slightly

³⁰ As discussed in Chapter 1, this was the last term-time week, which was the previous week in the majority of cases. If the last week had been a school/nursery holiday (half-term), parents were asked about the most recent term-time week.

³¹ Bryson et al (2006).

lower than for the last year. In contrast, use of particular *informal* providers in the last week was much lower than use over the last year. For each informal provider, half or fewer than half the number of families had used them for childcare in the last week, compared with the last year. Thus, whilst over the last year more families had used informal arrangements than formal (65% compared with 54%), the proportions using formal and informal care over the last week were virtually identical (40% and 39%).

As seen for use over the last year, grandparents remain the most common form of childcare provider when focusing on the last week (used by 25% of families). One in ten of families (12%) had used out-of-school clubs (whether on or off school sites), which makes this provider type the most common formal provision.

Table 2.5 Use of providers in the last week

Base: All families

	2004	2007
	%	%
Any childcare	64	63
Early years provision and formal childcare	41	40
Nursery school	3	3
Nursery class attached to primary or infants school	5	5
Reception class attached to primary or infants school ³²	8	7
Special day school or unit for children with SEN	1	1
Day nursery	8	8
Playgroup or pre-school	7	7
Other nursery education provider	+	+
Childminder	4	5
Nanny or au pair	1	1
Baby-sitter who came to our home	2	2
Breakfast club or after school club, on school site	9	9
Breakfast club or after school club, off school site	4	3
Holiday club / scheme	+	+
Informal childcare	42	39
Ex-partner / wife / husband	6	5
The child's grandparents	26	25
The child's older brother / sister	5	5
Another relative	6	6
A friend or neighbour	10	8
Other		
Leisure / sport activity	5	4
Other childcare provider	2	3
No childcare used	36	37
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7802</i>	<i>7136</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7802</i>	<i>7136</i>

³² The data on use of reception classes should be treated with caution, as for some four year olds, respondents stated they were attending school (hence likely to be in reception) but did not identify reception class as a provider.

Looking at the combined use of formal and informal care, 18% had used both in the last week, one-fifth had used only formal providers (23%), and one-fifth had used only informal providers (21%).

Grossing up to national estimates³³, the above figures represent 3.25 million families having used childcare in the last week - 2.07 million having used formal childcare or early years provision, and 2.00 million having used informal childcare. The estimates for key formal providers are given in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 National estimates of use of key formal providers in the last week

	Number of families
Early years provision and formal childcare	2.07 million
Nursery school	0.14 million
Nursery class attached to primary or infants' school	0.27 million
Reception class attached to primary or infants school	0.36 million
Day nursery	0.42 million
Playgroup or pre-school	0.36 million
Childminder	0.24 million
Breakfast club or after school club, on school / nursery site	0.46 million
Breakfast club or after school club, off school / nursery site	0.17 million

2.4 Use of childcare in the last week by child characteristics

As would be expected, use of childcare varied considerably by the age of the child, particularly in the case of formal care (Table 2.7 provides data on the use of childcare in the last week at the child level). Reflecting the greater need for childcare for pre-school children combined with the use of early years education, 3 and 4 year olds were the key age group for use of formal care, with 85% having received formal care or early years provision in the last week. The oldest age group (12 to 14 year olds) were associated with the lowest use of formal care, as well as informal care³⁴.

³³ National estimates are based on the number of families with children aged 0-14 receiving Child Benefit as at November 2006 (5,135,805), DWP Information and Analysis Directorate, Information Centre.

³⁴ Use of childcare by age was very close to 2004, with the only statistically significant difference being an increase in the use of formal care for 5 to 7 year olds, from 27% to 34%. This reflects one of the few differences over time in use of provider types by age group, as 12% of 5 to 7 year olds had attended reception class in 2007 compared with 5% in 2004. Conversely, 18% of 3 to 4 year olds attended reception class in 2007, compared with 28% in 2004. This change is likely to reflect a change in the field-work period (Autumn term in 2004, and Spring term in 2007) as 4 year olds tend to start reception at the start of the school year, but then turn 5 before the Spring term (hence the higher figure for 3-4 year olds in the 2004 Autumn term and the increase among 5-7 year olds in the 2007 Spring term).

Table 2.7 Use of childcare in the last week, by age of child*Base: All children*

	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Any childcare	60	88	59	50	35
Formal childcare	38	85	34	22	7
Informal childcare	37	37	39	38	31
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1227</i>	<i>939</i>	<i>1406</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1566</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1415</i>	<i>1435</i>	<i>1186</i>	<i>1669</i>	<i>1431</i>

Table 2.8 shows that the greater use of formal care for 3 to 4 year olds is based on greater use of early years education rather than other formal childcare, such as childminders. 5 to 11 year olds, on the other hand, showed the highest use of out-of-school clubs. The lower use of informal care seen above for 12 to 14 year olds is based on lower use of grandparents than younger age groups.

Table 2.8 Use of provider types in the last week, by age of child*Base: All children*

	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Early years provision and formal childcare					
Nursery school	2	10	0	0	0
Nursery class	1	25	+	0	0
Reception class	+	18	12	0	0
Day nursery	19	15	+	0	0
Playgroup or pre-school	10	20	0	0	0
Childminder	5	6	4	4	1
Nanny or au pair	1	2	1	1	1
Baby-sitter who came to home	2	2	2	2	+
Out-of-school club on site	+	2	14	13	3
Out-of-school club off site	0	1	5	5	2
Informal childcare					
Ex-partner / wife / husband	2	4	5	5	6
The child's grandparents	28	26	21	20	13
The child's older brother / sister	1	1	2	4	7
Another relative	6	4	5	4	3
A friend or neighbour	3	5	8	8	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1227</i>	<i>939</i>	<i>1406</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1566</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1415</i>	<i>1435</i>	<i>1186</i>	<i>1669</i>	<i>1431</i>

Childcare use also varied by the ethnicity of the child, particularly the use of informal care (Table 2.9). White families showed the highest use of informal care, while Bangladeshi families showed low use of informal providers (as in 2004), at just 8%. Previous research suggests this lower use of informal care by Bangladeshi families holds even once other socio-demographic factors (family type, working status, etc.) are taken into account. Having fewer family members near by may be a reason for lower use, or there may be an issue around a lower proportion of Bangladeshi families conceptualising care by close family members as ‘informal care’, despite the explanation used in the survey interview³⁵.

Both Pakistani and Bangladeshi families stand out as the lowest users of formal care and this finding holds even once differences in working status and income are taken into account, as will be discussed in Section 2.8.

Table 2.9 Use of childcare in the last week, by ethnicity of child (main ethnic groups)

Base: All children

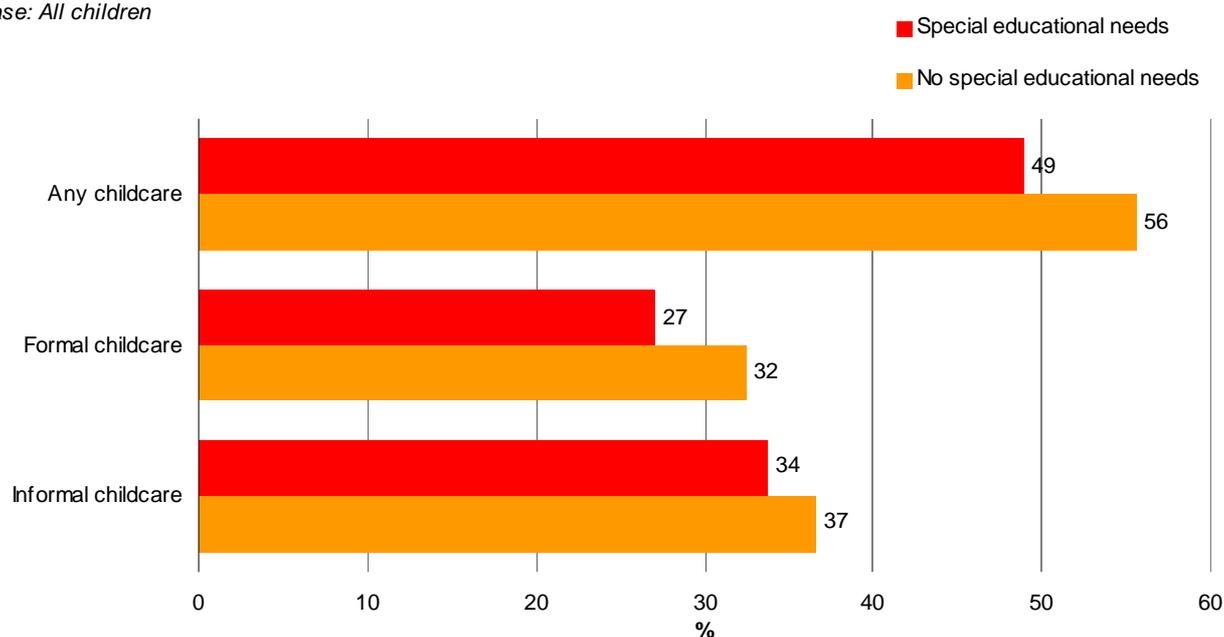
	White %	Black - Caribbean %	Black - African %	Indian %	Pakistani %	Bangladeshi %	Mixed race %
Any childcare	58	42	45	43	34	21	57
Formal childcare	33	24	33	25	18	17	36
Informal childcare	39	24	20	28	20	8	32
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>5879</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>309</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>5919</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>299</i>

Children with special educational needs were slightly less likely to have received formal childcare in the last week; 27% compared with 32% of other children (Figure 2.1 - the difference in use of informal care is not statistically significant). This is likely to reflect somewhat the older age profile of children with special educational needs, as statements of need are rarely given to pre-school children. Focusing only on children with special educational needs, formal care use by age was found to reflect the same pattern identified above for all children.

³⁵ Kazimirski et al (2006a).

Figure 2.1 Use of childcare in the last week, by child's special educational needs

Base: All children



2.5 Use of childcare in the last week by family characteristics

Turning now to the use of childcare in the last week by family characteristics, we look at family type and working status, working hours, family income and size.

2.5.1 Family type and working status

As in 2004, couples and lone parents were equally likely to have used childcare, but differences emerge once work status or the type of care is taken into account (Table 2.10).

Couples were more likely to have used formal care (43% compared with 34% of lone parents), whilst lone parents were more likely to have used informal care (45% compared with 37% of couples). As in 2004, the greater use of ex-partners by lone parents accounts for the difference in informal care use, whilst the difference in formal care is not as clearly associated with one particular provider (see Table C.2.1 in Appendix C).

These differences between couples and lone parents remain even when focusing on working households only, with working lone parents showing higher use of informal care and lower use of formal care than dual-earner households and slightly higher use of childcare overall.

As in 2004, parental work was generally associated with greater use of childcare regardless of the type of care or family type, except for lone parents' use of formal care where the gap between working and non-working lone parents was small (and not statistically significant). The association between work and use of childcare was particularly strong for informal care. For example, 43% of dual-earner couple families had used informal care in the last week, compared with 20% of non-working couples, whilst 58% of working lone parents had used informal care, compared with 31% of non-working lone parents.

The smaller gap in use of formal care between working and non-working families is explained by non-working families' greater use of nursery and reception classes somewhat balancing out greater use of day nurseries, childminders, and out-of-school clubs among working families (Table C.2.1).

Table 2.10 Use of childcare in the last week, by family type and working status

Base: All families

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both working	One working	Neither working	All couple families	Working	Not working	All lone parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Any childcare	68	58	48	63	74	52	63
Formal childcare	44	40	34	43	36	33	34
Informal childcare	43	28	20	37	58	31	45
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>3274</i>	<i>1567</i>	<i>332</i>	<i>5173</i>	<i>963</i>	<i>1000</i>	<i>1963</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3098</i>	<i>1828</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>5343</i>	<i>770</i>	<i>1023</i>	<i>1793</i>

2.5.2 Working hours

Focusing on dual-earner couples first (Table 2.11), the use of informal childcare varied according to how many hours both parents were working. Where one parent was working full-time, the more hours the other parent worked, the more likely they were to use informal care. This pattern is a recent development, in 2004 use of informal care was broadly the same across these groups. The small differences in use of formal care by dual-earner working hours are not statistically significant. This lack of difference in formal care use is likely to be explained by the use of nursery and reception classes for educational rather than economic reasons (see Chapter 3).

Among sole-earner families, as in 2004, part-time working (as opposed to full-time) was associated with lower use of formal care; 33% of families where the working parent was working part-time, compared with 42% of families where the working parent was working full-time. This may be due to the cost of formal care, with a full-time salary making use of childcare more affordable. Informal instead of formal care may also be a more viable option where the parent works part-time, assuming this means the care is needed for shorter periods.

Table 2.11 Use of childcare in the last week, by couple families' working hours*Base: All couple families*

	Both full-time	One full-time and one part-time (16-29 hrs)	One full-time and one part-time (1-15 hrs)	Both part-time (1-29 hrs)	One full-time and one not working	One part-time (1-29 hrs) and one not working	Neither working
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Any childcare	71	67	63	53	59	53	48
Formal childcare	43	46	44	38	42	33	34
Informal childcare	45	43	39	23	28	27	20
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1241</i>	<i>1439</i>	<i>512</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>1357</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>332</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1021</i>	<i>1435</i>	<i>565</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>1593</i>	<i>235</i>	<i>417</i>

Moving on to lone parents (Table 2.12), the use of formal care was most marked where the number of hours worked increased to 16 or more. Two-fifths of lone parents working 16 hours or more had used formal childcare compared with one-fifth of lone parents working less than 16 hours. The differences in informal care use are not statistically significant.

Table 2.12 Use of childcare in the last week, by lone parents' working hours*Base: All lone parents*

	Full-time	Part-time (16-29 hrs)	Part-time (1-15 hrs)	Not working
	%	%	%	%
Any childcare	78	73	55	52
Formal childcare	37	38	18	33
Informal childcare	61	57	46	31
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>429</i>	<i>458</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>1000</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>312</i>	<i>385</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>1023</i>

2.5.3 Working atypical hours

Whether parents were working atypical hours³⁶ (defined as either working during a week day before 8am, past 6pm, or any time at the weekend) had an impact on the use of childcare, particularly in relation to the use of informal care. This reflects the fact that formal care is not usually available at these hours.

³⁶ This applied to the majority of working parents, as seen in Appendix A (Table A.8).

Focusing on couple families first, couples where at least one parent was working at atypical hours were more likely to use informal care than couples where at least one parent was working, but neither parent was working atypical hours (Table 2.13). For example, 40% of couples where at least one parent worked at the weekend had used informal care, compared with 32% of couples where at least one parent worked but not at the weekend.

Couples where at least one parent worked at the weekend were actually *less* likely to use formal care. This may be because some parents in this situation set up an informal arrangement to cover their weekend work, which might have extended into the usual working week and therefore reduced their need for formal care, or they might be less likely to work at 'typical' times and hence formal care does not cover their needs.

Table 2.13 Use of childcare in the last week, by couple families' atypical hours

Base: All working families

	Used formal care %	Used informal care %	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Couple - work before 8am	43	39	3193	3208
Couple - no work before 8am	44	35	1648	1718
Couple - work after 6pm	44	39	3715	3770
Couple - no work after 6pm	41	35	1126	1156
Couple - weekend work	42	40	3605	3649
Couple - no weekend work	46	32	1236	1277

Note: Row percentages.

Lone parents working atypical hours also showed higher use of informal care, although the impact of working before 8am and the differences relating to the use of formal care are not statistically significant (Table 2.14).

Table 2.14 Use of childcare in the last week, by lone parents' atypical hours

Base: All working families

	Used formal care %	Used informal care %	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Lone parent - work before 8am	30	64	218	167
Lone parent - no work before 8am	38	56	745	603
Lone parent - work after 6pm	38	69	399	310
Lone parent - no work after 6pm	35	51	564	460
Lone parent - weekend work	38	67	462	361
Lone parent - no weekend work	34	50	501	409

Note: Row percentages.

2.5.4 Family income

The higher the household income, the more likely the family was to use both formal care and informal care (Table 2.15). Reflecting the pattern identified in 2004, around half of families (52%) with a yearly income of £45,000 or more had used formal childcare in the last week, compared with a third of families (33%) with a yearly income below £10,000. As will be discussed in Section 2.8, this pattern of use by income does not simply reflect the parents working patterns. The gap in the take-up of childcare between the highest and lowest income groups does not appear to be closing, despite the policy emphasis on increasing use of childcare by the lowest income groups.

As in 2004, the differences in use of formal care were based on higher use of individual formal providers among wealthier families, such as childminders, nannies, au pairs and babysitters, as well as day nurseries, rather than the more traditional forms of early years provision (nursery schools, classes, and playgroups) (Table C.2.2). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, these individual formal providers are the more expensive types of providers.

There was also a smaller gap in levels of use of informal care, with a 10 percentage point difference between the lowest and highest income brackets (31% compared with 41%). As other research has shown, this might be because many parents need or wish to combine formal and informal arrangements to cover their childcare needs³⁷.

Table 2.15 Use of childcare in the last week, by family yearly income

Base: All families

	Under £10,000	£10,000- £19,999	£20,000- £29,999	£30,000- £44,999	£45,000+
	%	%	%	%	%
Any childcare	52	60	66	69	74
Formal childcare	33	34	43	44	52
Informal childcare	31	38	43	45	41
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1134</i>	<i>1772</i>	<i>1323</i>	<i>1159</i>	<i>1221</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1038</i>	<i>1863</i>	<i>1374</i>	<i>1118</i>	<i>1211</i>

2.5.5 Family size

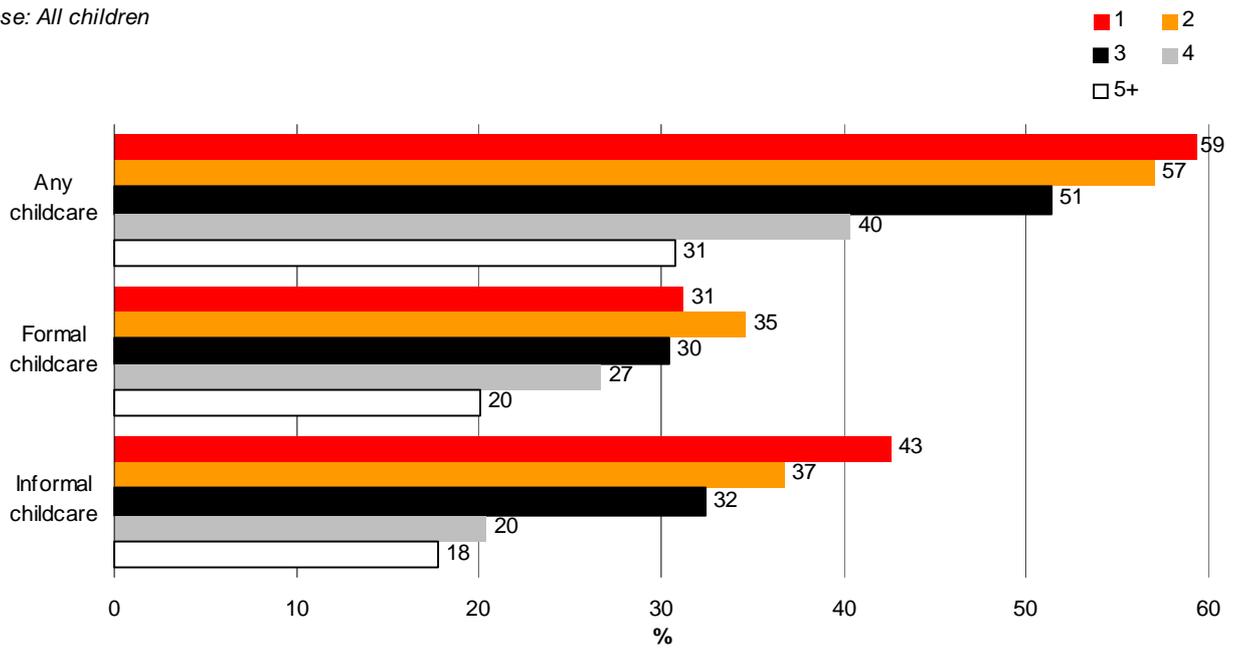
Figure 2.2 shows the use of childcare in the last week for the selected child (hence at the child level)³⁸, by the number of children aged 0 to 14 in the family. Use of both formal care and informal care was clearly related to family size, with the larger families (which tend to be associated with lower maternal employment) being less likely to use either form of care.

³⁷ Butt et al (2007).

³⁸ This is to control for the fact that families with greater numbers of children in principle have more opportunities to use childcare.

Figure 2.2 Use of childcare in the last week, by number of children aged 0-14

Base: All children



2.6 Use of childcare in the last week by region and deprivation

We now turn to the use of childcare and early years provision according to two dimensions of where people live: their region and the level of deprivation of their local area.

2.6.1 Region

As in 2004, London stands out against the other regions, with the lowest use of informal care (Table 2.16). This may reflect the fact that parents in London were more likely to have moved away from their families.

The North East region also stands out, as families in this region show particularly low use of formal care and particularly high use of informal care.

Table 2.16 Use of childcare in the last week, by government office region*Base: All families*

	Any childcare %	Formal childcare %	Informal childcare %	Weighted base	Unweighted base
North East	63	32	49	361	404
North West	60	36	38	989	983
Yorkshire & the Humber	62	42	40	717	745
East Midlands	62	35	41	605	649
West Midlands	65	44	41	773	737
East	69	41	44	778	787
London	57	41	26	1071	935
South East	68	45	41	1130	1170
South West	65	42	40	665	695

Note: Row percentages.

2.6.2 Area deprivation

Many recent childcare policy initiatives have focussed on the most deprived areas of England. Nevertheless, as in 2004, Table 2.17 shows that use of childcare (whether formal or informal) is still below average in these areas. Families in the least deprived areas had the highest use of formal childcare (47%) and families in the most deprived areas the lowest (36%). As in 2004, the pattern of formal care use by area deprivation is accounted for by the differences in household income and parental work (see Section 2.8).

Table 2.17 Use of childcare in the last week, by index of multiple deprivation*Base: All families*

	1st quintile – least deprived %	2nd quintile %	3rd quintile %	4th quintile %	5th quintile – most deprived %
Any childcare	70	65	66	61	56
Formal childcare	47	43	42	37	36
Informal childcare	43	41	39	40	33
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1361</i>	<i>1248</i>	<i>1335</i>	<i>1472</i>	<i>1673</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1394</i>	<i>1273</i>	<i>1300</i>	<i>1428</i>	<i>1710</i>

2.7 Use of formal care in the last week within age groups

As use of formal care varies so much by the age of the child, it is useful to look at whether the sub-group trends identified above hold true within age groups.

Focusing on family type first, we saw earlier that couples were more likely to use formal care. Once the age of the child is taken into account however, this relationship applied only to the youngest age group of 0 to 2 year olds, where 41% of couples had used formal care, compared with 27% of lone parents (Table 2.18). The use of formal care for

older age groups did not vary by family type (the small differences are not statistically significant).

Work, on the other hand, was consistently associated with higher use of formal care across all age groups and both family types, except for 12 to 14 year olds in couple families, where the small differences are not statistically significant. We earlier identified working lone parents as using less formal care than dual-earner households, however this does not apply to the 5 to 7 year old age group, where 50% of working lone parents had used formal care compared with 37% of dual-earner households.

Table 2.18 Different age groups' use of formal care in the last week, by family type and working status

Base: All children

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both working %	One working %	Neither working %	All couple families %	Working %	Not working %	All lone parents %
0-2	59	25	23	41	50	20	27
3-4	94	79	71	86	89	77	81
5-7	37	30	16	33	50	24	35
8-11	27	16	14	23	25	15	20
12-14	7	6	4	7	10	4	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>365-932</i>	<i>265-432</i>	<i>58-109</i>	<i>713-1437</i>	<i>60-286</i>	<i>144-276</i>	<i>226-562</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>507-789</i>	<i>245-503</i>	<i>70-95</i>	<i>883-1209</i>	<i>72-234</i>	<i>170-226</i>	<i>296-460</i>

Note: the figures in the same column are based on different bases including a combination of child's age and working status, this is why ranges are presented for the bases.

Moving on to the association between the use of formal care with family income, Table 2.19 shows that the use of formal care varies by income regardless of the age of the child (although the differences for 12-14 year olds are not statistically significant). The starkest differences were for the youngest age group, with 63% of 0 to 2 year olds in the highest income groups having received formal care, while 25% in the lowest income group had done so.

Table 2.19 Different age groups' use of formal care in the last week, by family yearly income

Base: All children

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000- £19,999 %	£20,000- £29,999 %	£30,000- £44,999 %	£45,000+ %
0-2	25	25	38	52	63
3-4	80	79	88	92	92
5-7	23	29	35	35	50
8-11	12	16	22	24	38
12-14	4	6	8	7	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>155-256</i>	<i>235-556</i>	<i>179-392</i>	<i>144-300</i>	<i>152-353</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>162-250</i>	<i>301-460</i>	<i>215-329</i>	<i>192-255</i>	<i>213-297</i>

Note: the figures in the same column are based on different bases including a combination of child's age and income, this is why ranges are presented for the bases.

Table 2.20 shows that use of formal care varied by region for all age groups, however, the differences are only statistically significant for 3 and 4 year olds, with the highest use of formal care in the South East (92%) and the lowest in London (76%).

Table 2.20 Different age groups' use of formal care in the last week, by government office region

Base: All children

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
North East	35	85	34	15	4	<i>45-97</i>	<i>65-93</i>
North West	33	85	32	19	3	<i>128-282</i>	<i>155-234</i>
Yorkshire & the Humber	39	83	34	24	5	<i>96-211</i>	<i>120-184</i>
East Midlands	35	85	31	19	5	<i>65-163</i>	<i>106-153</i>
West Midlands	38	82	32	24	10	<i>114-202</i>	<i>135-169</i>
East	36	87	38	25	7	<i>98-216</i>	<i>130-180</i>
London	40	76	31	24	11	<i>157-280</i>	<i>169-201</i>
South East	42	92	37	23	9	<i>148-334</i>	<i>192-284</i>
South West	46	90	33	19	7	<i>87-204</i>	<i>99-145</i>

Note: the figures in the same row are based on different bases including a combination of child's age and region, this is why ranges are presented for the bases.

Finally, turning to area deprivation, Table 2.21 shows that deprivation was associated with lower use of formal care across almost all age groups (the differences for 12 to 14 year olds are not statistically significant). The difference was particularly stark for the younger age groups, with 50% of 0 to 2 year olds and 93% of 3 to 4 year olds in the least deprived areas receiving formal care, compared with 26% and three-quarters (76%) respectively of their counterparts in the most deprived areas.

Table 2.21 Different age groups' use of formal care in the last week, by index of multiple deprivation

Base: All children

	1st quintile - least deprived	2nd quintile	3rd quintile	4th quintile	5th quintile - most deprived
	%	%	%	%	%
0-2	50	46	46	32	26
3-4	93	92	88	79	76
5-7	44	34	34	30	28
8-11	30	22	22	19	17
12-14	10	8	6	5	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>174-383</i>	<i>167-370</i>	<i>176-378</i>	<i>182-406</i>	<i>238-453</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>220-327</i>	<i>214-315</i>	<i>209-316</i>	<i>239-335</i>	<i>297-369</i>

Note: the figures in the same column are based on different bases including a combination of child's age and area deprivation, this is why ranges are presented for the bases.

2.8 Key characteristics associated with the use of formal childcare

The use of formal childcare is likely to be influenced by a number of overlapping factors. The differences presented above may be the result, for example, of differences in income, differences in working status, or differences in the age of the child.

Multivariate analysis (binomial logistic regression) was used to explore the independent association between the use of *formal* childcare in the last week and a child's socio-demographic profile. The analysis was carried out at the child level, rather than the family level, in order to take into account important child characteristics including age, ethnicity and special educational needs. Other variables included in the analysis were: household income, working status and hours, area deprivation and family size (see Table D.2.1 in Appendix D)³⁹.

After controlling for other relevant factors, we found that 3 to 4 year olds, higher income families, and full-time working lone parents and dual-earning couples where both parents were working full-time were all significantly associated with the use of formal care. Pakistani and Bangladeshi children, children with special educational needs, couple families where at least one parent was working at the weekend and families with 3 or more children were, on the other hand, associated with not having used formal care.

³⁹ Working status and number of hours worked have been combined into one variable; couple families where both parents were working full-time have been combined with lone parents working full-time, dual-earner households where at least one parent was working part-time have been combined with lone parents working part-time, and sole-earner and non-working couple households have been combined with non-working lone parents. This effectively provides a proxy for maternal work status, as in the majority of couple families where at least one parent is working, the parent working part-time (dual-earner households) or not working (sole-earner household) will be the mother and the majority of lone parents are mothers.

Hence differences in levels of use by income are not simply based on working status, as even among couple families where both parents work, or among lone working parents, higher income families were more likely to use formal care. This suggests cost may have a large role in decisions around childcare.

After controlling for other factors, there were no significant differences in the use of formal care by family type, atypical working hours (other than weekend work), the index of multiple deprivation for the area, or the region the family lived in.

2.9 Public Service Agreement Target - use of formal childcare by children in low income working families

The Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for DCSF include increasing the take-up of formal childcare by children in lower income working families. The target is to increase this number (grossed up from the 2004 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents estimate) from the baseline of 615,000 children by 120,000 children, by 2008.

Lower income families are defined as families (in England) with at least one child aged 14 or younger, and with a gross annual income in the bottom two income bands. The income bands, for the purpose of the PSA target, are based on *all* families in the Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey (FRS)⁴⁰.

Table 2.22 provides the figures used to calculate the proportion and grossed up national estimate for the number of children receiving formal childcare in lower income families⁴¹.

The proportion of children in lower income working families receiving formal childcare in the last week increased slightly, from 26% in 2004 to 27% in 2007, although this difference is not statistically significant. As the proportion of children in lower income families has gone down (from 36% to 29%) and the total number of children in receipt of Child Benefit has also decreased, the national estimate for the *number* of children in lower income working families using formal childcare has actually decreased, from 615,000 to 544,000.

⁴⁰ FRS income quintiles were used to define the income bands. The FRS collects income more accurately than the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, as the latter collects income data in broad bands.

⁴¹ DWP figures for child benefit receipt used for grossing up (November 2006, DWP Information and Analysis Directorate, Information Centre): Number of children 0-14 years old = 8,598,000 (Note the reduction in comparison to the 2004 figure of 8,774,000); (Number of recipient families = 5,136,000)
Additional Childcare 2007 data used for calculation of figures above: Proportion of children in working families = 80.1%; Grossed up number of children = 6,891,000.

Table 2.22 Children in working families receiving childcare in last week by FRS household income bands⁴²

Base: All children in working families

	Lowest band (£0-£14,999)	Second band (£15,000-£19,999)	Third band (£20,000-£24,999)	Fourth band (£25,000-£39,999)	Highest band (£40,000+)	Total
% of children in band	16%	13%	12%	25%	25%	
No of children	1,080,000	920,000	842,000	1,748,000	1,755,000	6,890,000
% of children receiving formal care	27%	28%	30%	36%	44%	
No of children receiving formal care	288,000	256,000	255,000	626,000	765,000	2,349,000
% of children in lowest 2 bands	29%					
No of children in lowest 2 bands	2,000,000					
% of children receiving formal care	27%					
No of children receiving formal care	544,000					

2.10 Summing up

The use of childcare has overall remained similar to 2004; the same proportion (two-thirds) of families had used childcare in the last week, 40% had used formal care and 39% had used informal care. Grandparents remain the most common form of childcare (used by a quarter of families), while the most common type of formal services are out-of-school clubs (used by 11% of families in the last week).

Childcare use, particularly formal care, naturally depends largely on the age of the children. 85% of 3 and 4 year olds had received formal care or early years provision in the last week, while 12 to 14 year olds were associated with the lowest use of both formal and informal care.

Income and working status were also key family characteristics driving the use of formal care. Reflecting the pattern identified in 2004, around half of families (52%) with a yearly income of £45,000 or more had used formal childcare in the last week, compared with a third of families (33%) with a yearly income below £10,000. This raises concerns over the effectiveness of the policy drive in recent years to increase the accessibility of childcare for low income families - the cost of childcare is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. The plan to extend the free early years education entitlement from 3 and 4 year olds to disadvantaged 2 year olds, currently being piloted, could help to close this continuing gap between income groups, as one of the aims of this extension to the free entitlement is to increase take-up of early years education among disadvantaged (and hence likely to be low income) groups.

⁴² All figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

3 WHY DO PARENTS USE CHILDCARE?

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 has provided an overview of the use of childcare across different types of providers and by different families. This chapter addresses the question of *why* parents were using childcare. The main focus is on the use of childcare for economic reasons (parental work, job search or study) or for reasons connected with the child's educational development.

The chapter looks at the proportion of families using childcare for economic and educational reasons and the types of provision used for these different purposes. In addition to looking at the overall proportion of families using childcare for economic and educational reasons, we also specifically focus on families using childcare and their reasons for doing so. Comparisons are made across different families to see whether, after taking into account the greater likelihood of some groups to use childcare at all, different families choose to use childcare for different reasons.

3.2 Defining economic and educational reasons

For each childcare provider used in the last week, parents were asked to give their reasons for doing so. They were asked to choose from a list of options and could pick more than one reason. For the purposes of analysis any answers relating to work or study have been grouped together as 'economic' reasons. Answers relating to the child's educational development have been grouped together as 'educational' reasons. All other reasons were classified as 'other'⁴³.

Economic reasons

- 'So that I could work'
- 'So that my husband / wife / partner could work'
- 'So that I could look for work'
- 'So that my husband / wife / partner could look for work'
- 'So that I could study'
- 'So that my husband / wife / partner could study'
- *'Because I am soon going to be working'*
- *'Because I am soon going to be studying'*

Educational reasons

- 'For my child's educational development'

Other reasons

- 'So that I could look after the home / other children'
- 'So that I could go shopping / attend an appointment / socialise'
- 'Because my child likes spending time with/at the provider'
- 'So that my child could take part in a leisure activity'
- 'Other reason'

⁴³ Options mentioning a partner were shown only to parents in couple families. Reasons in italics were not shown as options during the interview but coded on the basis of the reasons given by those saying "Other".

- *'So that I could care for a relative/friend/neighbour'*
- *'Because I was/am ill'*
- *'So that my child and a relative could spend time together'*
- *'For my child's social development'*
- *'To keep the childcare place'*
- *'So that I/we could have a break'*

It needs to be borne in mind that it is not really possible to distinguish between providers offering childcare for economic reasons and those offering early years educational provision. In practice the provision of childcare and early years education tends to be integrated across provider types. In particular, parents may rely on early years providers offering the Foundation Stage Curriculum for economic as well as educational reasons. Furthermore, it is possible that parents using early years providers primarily for economic reasons may not identify the additional educational role played by these providers.

3.3 Use of childcare for economic or educational reasons in the last week

The proportions of parents using various childcare providers in the last week for economic and educational reasons are shown in Table 3.1, which shows that 36% of families had used childcare for economic reasons and 25% for reasons connected with the child's educational development. Overall, a similar proportion of parents had used formal and informal providers. However, a higher proportion of parents reported using informal provision for economic reasons (23%) than reported using formal provision (20%) for these reasons. Grandparents were the informal provider most likely to be used for economic reasons.

Unsurprisingly, the use of childcare for educational reasons came about almost exclusively through the use of formal providers. 23% of families made use of formal providers for educational reasons compared with only 1% who made use of informal providers for these reasons. Most formal providers were used for a mixture of educational and economic reasons reflecting the integration of childcare and early years provision in England. However, some formal providers were more commonly used for educational reasons than others. Playgroups and reception classes were the settings most likely to be used for educational reasons and these providers were more likely to be used for educational reasons than for economic reasons. In contrast, day nurseries and childminders were more likely to be used for economic reasons than educational reasons.

The proportion of families using childcare for economic reasons has not changed since 2004. However, the proportion of families using childcare for educational reasons appears to have fallen slightly, from 27% in 2004 to 25% in 2007. This is perhaps surprising given the policy focus on early years education in recent years.

Table 3.1 Use of providers in the last week, by reasons for use*Base: All families*

	Economic reasons	Educational reasons
	%	%
Any childcare	36	25
Early years provision and formal childcare	20	23
Nursery school	1	2
Nursery class	2	4
Reception class	2	6
Special day school or unit for children with SEN	+	+
Day nursery	7	3
Playgroup or pre-school	2	6
Other nursery education provider	+	+
Childminder	5	+
Nanny or au pair	1	+
Baby-sitter who came to our home	+	+
Breakfast club or after school club on school site	4	2
Breakfast club or after school club off school site	1	1
Holiday club / scheme	+	+
Informal childcare	23	1
Ex-partner / wife / husband	2	+
The child's grandparents	16	+
The child's older brother / sister	2	+
Another relative	3	+
A friend or neighbour	4	+
Other		
Leisure / sport activity	+	2
Other childcare provider	1	2
No childcare used	37	37
<i>Weighted base</i>	7136	7136
<i>Unweighted base</i>	7136	7136

The previous table showed the proportion of all families using childcare for different reasons. Table 3.2 focuses just on those families who used childcare in the previous week and whether they did so for economic reasons, educational reasons, or both.

Table 3.2 Reasons for using childcare, 2004-2007*Base: All families who used childcare in the last week*

	Any childcare		Formal childcare		Informal childcare	
	2004	2007	2004	2007	2004	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Economic reasons only	36	39	26	31	56	58
Educational reasons only	23	21	39	36	1	1
Economic and educational reasons	19	19	21	20	1	1
Neither economic nor educational reasons	22	21	13	13	43	40
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>5004</i>	<i>4511</i>	<i>3169</i>	<i>2878</i>	<i>3255</i>	<i>2774</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>5348</i>	<i>4836</i>	<i>3813</i>	<i>3521</i>	<i>3236</i>	<i>2737</i>

Among parents who had used any childcare in the last week 39% had done so for economic reasons only, whilst 21% had done so for educational reasons only⁴⁴. A further fifth of parents using childcare (19%) had done so for a mixture of economic and educational reasons whilst a similar proportion (21%) had used childcare only for reasons unconnected with economic or educational needs. The majority of families using informal childcare said they had chosen to do so for economic reasons only. In contrast, the reasons for using formal childcare were more evenly spread between economic reasons, educational reasons, or a combination of the two.

Among parents using formal provision, the proportion using childcare for economic reasons only has risen since 2004, from 26% to 31%. Conversely, the proportion using formal childcare for educational reasons only has fallen slightly from 39% in 2004 to 36% in 2007.

3.4 Reasons for using childcare and family characteristics

Having built up an overall picture of the proportion of families using childcare for different reasons, the remainder of this chapter compares the reasons given for using childcare by different families. In each case, we focus just on those families using childcare and compare the proportions using childcare for economic reasons, educational reasons or a combination of the two. This allows us to see whether, after taking into account the greater likelihood of some families to use childcare, different families choose to use childcare for different reasons⁴⁵. The tables in the main chapter present the reasons given by families using any childcare whilst supplementary tables in Appendix C present the reasons given by those using formal and those using informal childcare separately.

3.4.1 Family type and work status

Parents' reasons for using childcare varied depending on the family's work status (Table 3.3 and Table 3.4). Unsurprisingly, non-working households using childcare were the least likely to say that they had done so for economic reasons, whether combined with educational reasons or not. This was the case for both lone parents and couple families.

⁴⁴ This chapter focuses on the distinction between childcare used for economic reasons and childcare used for educational reasons. Those counted as using childcare for economic reasons only did not use it for educational reasons, although they may also have used childcare for 'other' reasons listed in Section 3.2. Similarly, those counted as using childcare for educational reasons only, did not use childcare for economic reasons but may have used it for 'other' reasons.

⁴⁵ Figures for the overall proportion of parents in different sub-groups using childcare for economic or educational reasons can be found in Table C.3.1

Overall, working lone parents using childcare were more likely than dual-earning couples using childcare to have chosen to do so for economic reasons only or in combination with educational reasons (85% and 75% respectively). The greater reliance on childcare for economic reasons among working lone parents is likely to reflect the fact that lone parents are less likely to be able to rely on shift parenting, that is when parents' in couple families arrange to work different hours from one another in order to minimise or even eliminate the need for non-parental care. Working lone parents were particularly likely, compared with dual-earning couple families, to have used childcare for economic reasons only, that is not in combination with educational reasons. This may reflect the fact that lone parents are less likely to have pre-school age children, the prime users of early years education, compared with couple families (Table C.3.2).

Families where at least one parent did not work were the most likely to report using childcare for educational reasons only (i.e. not in combination with economic reasons). Even if we include the use of childcare for both educational and economic reasons, dual-earning couple families were less likely to give their child's educational development as a reason for using childcare, compared with other couple families. The same was found for working lone parents compared with non-working lone parents. The higher use of childcare for educational reasons among non-working households may reflect the greater incidence of pre-school age children in these households (Table C.3.2).

Non-working lone parents were the group most likely to say they had used childcare for neither economic nor educational reasons (44%). Other reasons for choosing to use childcare were mainly connected with wanting to attend a social engagement or other appointment or because the child enjoyed spending time with the provider.

Table 3.3 Lone parents' reasons for using childcare, by work status

Base: All lone parents who had used childcare in last week

	Working lone parents	Not working lone parents	All lone parents
	%	%	%
Economic reasons only	64	10	41
Educational reasons only	4	37	18
Economic and educational reasons	21	9	16
Neither economic nor educational reasons	11	44	25
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>712</i>	<i>518</i>	<i>1230</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>596</i>	<i>597</i>	<i>1193</i>

Table 3.4 Couple families' reasons for using childcare, by work status*Base: All couple families who had used childcare in last week*

	Both working %	One working %	Neither working %	All couple families %
Economic reasons only	51	10	7	38
Educational reasons only	11	45	49	23
Economic and educational reasons	24	11	8	20
Neither economic nor educational reasons	13	34	37	20
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2212</i>	<i>910</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>3281</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2236</i>	<i>1181</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>3643</i>

The different reasons given by working and non-working families for choosing to use formal childcare (Table C.3.3) followed a similar pattern to that described above. As previously discussed (Table 3.2) informal childcare was rarely used for educational reasons by any family. However, the proportion of families saying they had used informal childcare for economic reasons varied by work status and family type (Table C.3.4). Working lone parents were the most likely group to say they had used informal care for economic reasons (79%).

3.4.2 Family income

Compared with low income families, higher income families using childcare were more likely to give economic reasons for doing so, either in isolation or in combination with educational reasons (Table 3.5). This finding is likely to reflect the fact that higher income tends to be associated with working households. The association between higher income and using childcare for economic reasons holds both for the use of formal childcare and the use of informal childcare (Table C.3.3 and Table C.3.4).

Overall, lower income families using childcare were more likely to cite educational reasons for doing so, compared with higher income families using childcare (Table 3.5). This was because low income families were more likely than higher income families to say that they had used childcare for educational reasons only i.e. not in addition to economic reasons. Given that it is predominantly formal childcare which is used for educational reasons, this reflects differences in the reasons given for using formal childcare by low and high income families (Table C.3.3). The high proportion of low income families reporting use of formal childcare for educational reasons probably reflects the success of the free entitlement in encouraging the use of formal childcare among families who would not otherwise have done so.

Nevertheless, despite the high proportions of low income families who used childcare giving education as a reason for doing so, it remains the case that overall a lower proportion of low income families made use of childcare for educational reasons compared with high income families (Table C.3.1). This reflects the fact that low income families continue to lag behind higher income families in their take-up of formal childcare (Chapter 2).

Table 3.5 Reasons for using formal childcare, by family yearly income*Base: All families who used childcare in the last week*

	Under £10,000	£10,000- £19,999	£20,000- £29,999	£30,000- £44,999	£45,000+
	%	%	%	%	%
Economic reasons only	18	37	44	46	43
Educational reasons only	34	23	18	15	19
Economic and educational reasons	13	16	21	21	21
Neither economic nor educational reasons	35	24	17	18	17
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>582</i>	<i>1061</i>	<i>879</i>	<i>798</i>	<i>899</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>1182</i>	<i>963</i>	<i>827</i>	<i>937</i>

3.5 Reasons for using childcare and child's age

This section compares take-up of childcare for economic and educational reasons among children of different ages. In contrast to the other analysis (which has been conducted at the family level) the analysis in this section is at the level of the selected child.

Table 3.6 shows that the reasons why children received childcare varied according to their age. The need for parents to work or study was most commonly given as a reason for the youngest children using childcare, with 62% of 0-2 year olds receiving childcare for economic reasons only or in combination with educational reasons. The oldest age group was the least likely to have received childcare for economic reasons, although it was still the case that nearly half (48%) of 12-14 year olds receiving childcare had done so for economic reasons.

Differences in the proportion of children of different ages receiving childcare for economic reasons were the result of differences in the proportion of children receiving *formal* care for economic reasons (Table C.3.3). Among children receiving informal care there was no difference by age group in the proportion receiving care for economic reasons (Table C.3.4). A majority of children in all age groups who were receiving informal care had done so for economic reasons.

The proportion of children receiving childcare for educational reasons varied by age (Table 3.6). Children in the 3 to 4 year old age bracket were the least likely to have received childcare for economic reasons only (15%) and the most likely to have received childcare for educational reasons, either in isolation (43%) or in combination with economic reasons (35%). This is as we would expect, given the availability of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds and the fact that early years education is specifically targeted at this age group. The fact that childcare among this age group is predominantly seen as serving an educational purpose may help to explain the relatively low proportion of 3 and 4 year olds who used childcare for economic reasons (52%), compared with other pre-school age children (62%). Parents may not think of themselves as using childcare for economic reasons, even if leaving their child with an early years education provider does allow them to work or study.

Overall, parents of school age children receiving childcare were less likely to give educational reasons for using childcare compared with economic reasons. However, among the relatively small proportion of school age children receiving formal childcare, the reasons for doing so were more evenly divided between economic reasons and educational reasons (Table C.3.3). For example, of those 12-14 year olds receiving formal childcare, 30% had done so for economic reasons and 36% had done so for educational reasons (with a further 4% having done so for both educational and economic reasons). This probably reflects the dual role played by out-of-school clubs for older children.

Overall, among children receiving some childcare, older children were more likely than younger children to have done so for other reasons apart from economic and educational reasons (Table 3.6). Other reasons given for older children using childcare include taking part in a leisure activity and being able to spend time with a relative.

Table 3.6 Reasons for receiving childcare, by age of child

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
Economic reasons only	46	17	46	51	43
Educational reasons only	13	43	19	12	10
Economic and educational reasons	16	35	9	4	5
Neither economic nor educational reasons	25	5	26	32	41
<i>Weighted base</i>	739	825	829	990	550
<i>Unweighted base</i>	866	1259	704	828	501

3.6 Reasons for using childcare, by area deprivation

The reasons families gave for using childcare varied depending on the level of deprivation in the area in which they lived (Table 3.7). Overall, a lower proportion of families living in the most deprived areas and using childcare had done so for economic reasons, either in isolation or combined with educational reasons, compared with those living in less deprived areas and using childcare. This result reflects differences in employment rates across areas. The association between area deprivation and lower use of childcare for economic reasons holds for both users of formal childcare and users of informal childcare (Table C.3.3. and Table C.3.4).

Overall, similar proportions of families using childcare said they had done so for educational reasons regardless of the level of area deprivation (Table 3.7). However, those in less deprived areas were more likely to say they had used childcare for a combination of educational and economic reasons, whilst families in more deprived areas were more likely to say they had done so for educational reasons only. Given that it is predominantly formal childcare which is used for educational reasons, this reflects differences in the reasons given for using formal childcare by families living in deprived and less deprived areas (Table C.3.3). The high proportion of families in deprived areas giving educational reasons only for using formal childcare probably reflects the success of the free entitlement, and programmes such as Children's Centres and the Neighbourhood Nurseries initiative, in widening access to early years education and encouraging take-up of formal childcare in areas where it would not otherwise be used⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ See Butt et al (2007).

Nevertheless, it remains the case that, overall a lower proportion of families in the most deprived areas made use of childcare for educational reasons compared with families in less deprived areas (Table C.3.1). This reflects the fact that deprived areas continue to lag behind less deprived areas in terms of take-up of formal childcare (Chapter 2).

Table 3.7 Reasons for using childcare, by index of multiple deprivation

Base: All families who used childcare in the last week

	1 st quintile - Least deprived %	2 nd quintile %	3 rd quintile %	4 th quintile %	5 th quintile - Most deprived %
Economic reasons only	40	39	37	42	35
Educational reasons only	20	22	21	19	25
Economic and educational reasons	21	22	20	17	14
Neither economic nor educational reasons	19	17	22	22	26
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>812</i>	<i>880</i>	<i>897</i>	<i>941</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1032</i>	<i>892</i>	<i>912</i>	<i>933</i>	<i>1047</i>

3.7 Summing up

A higher proportion of families had used some form of childcare for economic reasons (36%) than had done so for reasons connected with their child's educational development (25%). Both formal and informal providers were used for economic reasons, with a higher proportion of families using informal provision for this reason. Unsurprisingly, the use of childcare for educational reasons came about almost exclusively through the use of formal providers, reflecting the fact that informal provision is less likely to include an educational component. The overall proportion of families using childcare for economic reasons has not changed since 2004, while the proportion using childcare for educational reasons has declined slightly.

Working families were more likely to have used childcare for economic reasons compared with non-working families. Using childcare (both formal and informal) for economic reasons was also associated with higher income groups and families living in more affluent areas. These patterns are consistent with the fact that these groups are more likely to be in work.

Children aged 3 or 4 were the most likely to have used childcare for educational reasons, which is unsurprising given the availability of the free entitlement and the targeting of early years education at this age group. Among those families who used formal childcare, there was no difference by level of area deprivation in the proportion of families who did so for educational reasons, whilst low income families were more likely to give educational reasons for using childcare than higher income families. Although it still remains the case that the overall take-up of childcare for educational reasons remains lower among low income families and those living in deprived areas, these patterns suggest that policies, such as the free entitlement and Extended Schools, designed to encourage take-up among families not previously using formal childcare have had some success.

4 PATTERNS OF USE OF CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS PROVISION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we turn to the pattern of use of childcare and early years provision, in terms of the number of providers used, as well as the number of days and the timing of sessions, with a particular focus on differences in the use of formal childcare by family and child characteristics.

This chapter focuses on the selected child only, as the information used is based on an attendance diary for the last week, which was asked only about the selected child. Detailed information was collected day by day, and session by session, about all childcare and early provision used in the last week.

4.2 Number of providers

As in 2004, 58% of children who had received childcare had done so from just 1 provider in the last week. 29% had used 2 providers, 10% 3 providers, and 4% 4 providers.

Using more than one provider was associated with use for different reasons, as few children had received childcare from more than one provider for the same type of reason (Table 4.1). Just 8% of children who had received care had done so from 2 providers for economic reasons only, and no children had received care from more than one provider for educational reasons only.

29% of children who had received childcare had done so from just one provider for economic reasons only, 12% had received childcare from just one provider for educational reasons only, and 8% had received childcare from just one provider for both economic and educational reasons. This is a very similar pattern to 2004.

Table 4.1 Number of providers used for different reasons in the last week

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	Economic reasons only	Educational reasons only	Economic and educational reasons	Neither economic nor educational reasons
	%	%	%	%
0	62	87	91	58
1	29	12	8	31
2	8	+	1	7
3+	1	+	+	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>3949</i>	<i>3949</i>	<i>3949</i>	<i>3949</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>4173</i>	<i>4173</i>	<i>4173</i>	<i>4173</i>

Looking at the number of early years and other formal providers used by different age groups we find that, predictably, 3 and 4 year olds were more likely to have used more than one early years provider; 6% of 3 and 4 years olds compared with almost no children among the other age groups (Table 4.2). For other formal providers, 8 to 11 year olds

showed the highest use of multiple providers, although this was still low at only 5% of this age group.

Table 4.2 Number of formal providers used in the last week, by age of child

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
Number of early years providers					
0	46	5	79	99	98
1	52	89	21	1	2
2	1	6	0	0	0
Number of other formal providers					
0	86	87	61	56	81
1	13	12	36	39	17
2	1	1	3	5	2
3	0	+	+	+	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	739	825	829	991	550
<i>Unweighted base</i>	867	1259	704	829	501

Turning to the use of early years provision and other formal providers by family income (Table 4.3), although we can see, as discussed in Chapter 2, that lower income groups were more likely to use early years provision, the use of *more than one* early years provider did not vary by family income.

As well as being more likely to receive other formal provision (the more expensive types of childcare), children in the highest income group were more likely to use more than one type of other formal provision, although at 6% the use of more than one provider was still low for this group of children.

Table 4.3 Number of formal providers used in the last week, by family yearly income

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000- £19,999 %	£20,000- £29,999 %	£30,000- £44,999 %	£45,000+ %
Number of early years providers					
0	56	67	67	67	66
1	43	32	31	32	32
2	1	1	2	1	2
Number of other formal providers					
0	83	80	74	73	58
1	16	18	25	25	36
2	1	2	1	2	6
3	0	+	+	+	+
<i>Weighted base</i>	463	921	795	696	818
<i>Unweighted base</i>	506	979	839	730	845

4.3 Days when childcare is used

As in 2004, 28% of children had received childcare on 5 days of the week (Table 4.4), reflecting the traditional pattern of their parents' working life, 17% of children had received childcare on one day only, and 17% on 2 days. Use of childcare on every day of the week (including weekends) was rare, reported for only 3% of children.

Reflecting the way early years services offer care, the type of childcare provided on 5 days of the week was more likely to be early years provision; 17% of children had received such care on 5 days of the week, compared with 6% for other formal provision. Informal care was most likely to be used on just one day of the week, reflecting its more ad-hoc nature, as discussed in Chapter 2. 19% of children had received care from an informal provider on just one day, compared with 9% for other formal provision, and 3% for early years provision.

Table 4.4 Number of days childcare used in the last week

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	Early years providers %	Other formal providers %	Informal providers %	All providers %
0	65	73	41	N/A
1	3	9	19	17
2	5	6	16	17
3	6	4	9	16
4	4	3	6	14
5	17	6	7	28
6	+	+	2	5
7	+	+	1	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>3945</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>4169</i>	<i>4169</i>	<i>4169</i>	<i>4169</i>

Looking at provider types in more detail, we can see that among the early years services reception classes and nursery classes were more likely to be used on 5 days (87% and 73% respectively) than nursery schools (40%), day nurseries (23%) or playgroups (15% - Table 4.5). The use of individual rather than group care was also more likely on fewer days than reception or nursery classes; a third of children had received care for 5 days in each case from a childminder (30%), or from a nanny or au pair (29%). Out-of-school clubs and babysitters, on the other hand, were more likely to have been used on just one day.

Table 4.5 Number of days childcare used in the last week, by (formal) provider type

Base: All children who had received care from this provider in the last week

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Reception class	Day nursery	Playgroup / pre-school	Child-minder	Nanny / au pair	Baby-sitter	On-site out of school club	Off-site out of school club
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1	7	2	2	14	23	16	15	77	38	45
2	16	5	1	24	26	18	15	11	23	24
3	23	10	3	24	21	21	19	7	12	12
4	14	9	6	14	15	15	21	2	8	7
5	40	73	87	23	15	30	29	2	19	11
6	1	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	1
7	0	+	0	1	0	+	2	0	+	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>253</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>261</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>514</i>	<i>204</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>174</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>402</i>	<i>487</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>271</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>449</i>	<i>174</i>

Care from a friend or neighbour or from a relative, other than a grandparent, sibling, or non-resident parent, tended to have been used for just one day in the week (Table 4.6), although 7% to 9% of children had received care from each of these providers on 5 days of the week. In the case of grandparents, the pattern of use was particularly varied, with two-thirds of children who had received care from a grandparent having done so on 1 or 2 days of the week, whilst one-fifth had done so for 4 or 5 days of the week.

Table 4.6 Number of days childcare used in the last week, by (informal) provider type

Base: All children who had received care from this provider in the last week

	Ex-partner	Grandparents	Sibling	Another relative	Friend/ neighbour
	%	%	%	%	%
1	25	38	43	47	55
2	32	28	28	24	25
3	25	14	9	10	8
4	9	8	8	7	4
5	4	10	11	9	7
6	3	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	+	1	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>1491</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>429</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>313</i>	<i>1556</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>410</i>

Information was collected about what the parents were doing during each session of childcare. As maternal work status tends to be a key factor in childcare decisions, especially for lone parents, the focus here is on the mother's activities⁴⁷. Table 4.7 shows the number of days on which childcare was used whilst the mother was engaged in economic activities (working, looking for work or studying), versus the number of days where the mother was not doing any economic activity for any of the sessions of childcare used.

As in 2004, for half of the children (47%) who had received childcare in the last week none of their childcare was linked to maternal work or study. Conversely, for over a third of the children (38%) all their childcare sessions were related to their mother's working or studying. The proportion of children receiving childcare on 5 days of the week related to maternal economic activities was slightly higher than the proportion who had received childcare on 5 days related to *non-economic* maternal activities.

⁴⁷ This includes a very small number of female carers who were not the mother of the children (e.g. grandmothers).

Table 4.7 Number of days of economic activity and non-economic activities (mother's activities)

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	Economic activity only %	Non-economic activity only %
0	47	38
1	10	19
2	10	14
3	10	9
4	8	6
5	14	11
6	1	2
7	+	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	3945	3945
<i>Unweighted base</i>	4169	4169

Figure 4.1 shows use of childcare on 5 days of the week related to maternal economic activities versus non-economic activities, by the age of the child. 28% of 3 and 4 year olds had received childcare on 5 days of the week for non-economic reasons only, compared with 13% of 5 to 7 year olds and smaller proportions of the other age groups. The proportions receiving childcare on 5 days of the week for economic reasons only were not so disparate, with 16% of 3 and 4 year olds in this situation and 11% of 12 to 14 year olds (full data on use of childcare by maternal activities and child's age for 0 to 7 days of the week is provided in Table C.4.1 in Appendix C).

Figure 4.1 Childcare related to economic activity and non-economic activities (mother's activities) on five days of the week, by age of child

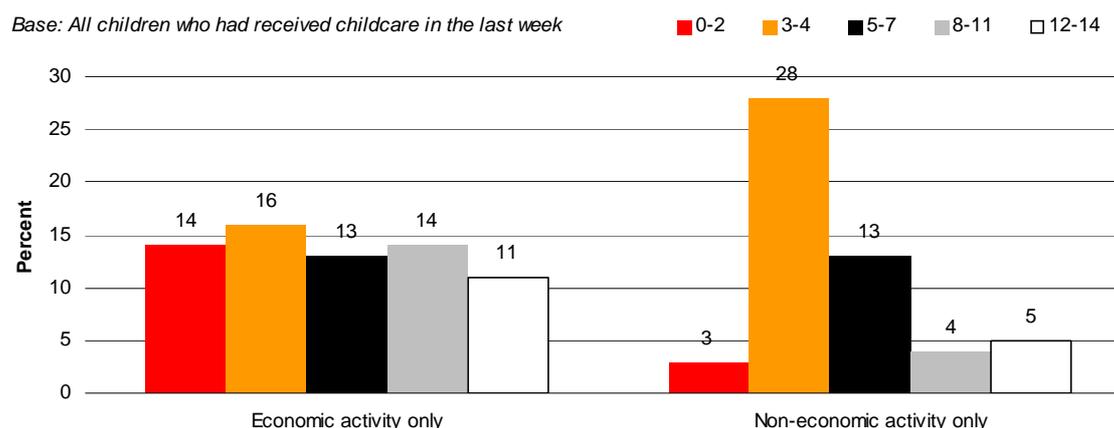


Table 4.8 provides the number of days of early years provision used by children aged 7 and under. Children aged 2 years or younger were much more likely than older children to have received early years provision for just 1 or 2 days a week (12% and 17% respectively, compared with 3% and 6% of 3 and 4 year olds). The latter were associated with a high use of early years provision on 5 days of the week, reflecting

the usual pattern of take-up of the free entitlement to early years education for 3 and 4 year olds.

Table 4.8 Number of days received early years provision in the last week, by age of child

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %
0	46	5	79
1	12	3	+
2	17	6	+
3	12	16	1
4	5	15	1
5	7	55	18
6	+	1	+
7	+	+	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>824</i>	<i>836</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>868</i>	<i>1259</i>	<i>710</i>

Moving on to the use of other formal care, the number of days used by children over the age of 4 varied widely. For example, 15% of 8 to 11 year olds received formal care (predominantly out-of-school clubs) on just one day of the week, while 10% had done so on 5 days (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 Number of days received other formal care in the last week, by age of child

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
0	86	87	61	56	81
1	3	4	12	15	7
2	3	2	9	8	3
3	3	3	6	6	2
4	2	1	4	4	2
5	3	3	8	10	4
6	0	+	0	+	0
7	+	0	+	+	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>824</i>	<i>836</i>	<i>994</i>	<i>550</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>868</i>	<i>1259</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>831</i>	<i>501</i>

4.4 Patterns of use across the day

We have split the weekday into five time periods and separated out use of childcare at the weekend to look at the times of day and week when childcare tends to be used more or less often⁴⁸. As would be expected, weekday daytime and weekday later afternoon were the most common times for the use of childcare, reflecting the 2004 findings. In each case, two-thirds of children who had received childcare had done so at these times of day (Table 4.10). Half as many children had received care in the early mornings, weekday evenings, or weekends, a third of children had received care at each of these times.

Table 4.10 Timing of sessions with different provider types

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	Early years	Other formal	Informal	All
	%	%	%	%
Weekday early morning (6am-8.59am)	12	9	14	32
Weekday daytime (9am-3.29pm)	35	14	26	63
Weekday late afternoon (3.30pm-5.59pm)	9	21	39	64
Weekday evening (6pm-9.59pm)	+	5	24	33
Weekday night (10pm-5.59am)	+	1	11	12
Weekend	+	3	23	29
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>3945</i>	<i>3945</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>4169</i>	<i>4169</i>	<i>4169</i>	<i>4169</i>

The timing of sessions varied enormously by provider type, probably reflecting the times different services are available. Early years education was more likely to be used in the daytime than at other times of the day, while other formal care (including out-of-school clubs) was more likely to be used late afternoon. Informal care, on the other hand, was used at all times of the day, at least 1 in 10 children had received informal care at each time of the day. Late afternoon was the most common time for use of this childcare; 39% of children who had used informal care had done so at this time.

4.5 Wraparound care

Wraparound care is defined in this survey as a childcare provider accompanying a child from one provider to another. This is an issue of particular interest in the context of patterns of use of childcare, in terms of the way parents cope with matching their childcare and early education needs and the availability of providers. If one provider is not available for the whole period when the parent needs childcare, or the provider does not offer the desired mix of education and care, then not only is another provider needed, but accompanying the child on the journey from one provider to another also needs to be organised⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ These are not exclusive categories, and a single extended period of childcare might cover several of them, e.g. a period of childcare might have started in the early morning and finished in the daytime.

⁴⁹ As well as childcare needs not matching the availability of childcare providers, there may be other reasons for use of more than one provider in succession, such as not wanting the child to spend more than a certain amount of time with a particular provider.

For every session of childcare recorded in the attendance diary, information was collected on who had taken and who had collected the child. As in 2004, one-third of children (31%) had been taken or collected by one of their childcare providers at least once at some point in the week. The frequency of being taken or collected by a provider inevitably increases with the number of services used; 42% of children using 2 providers had been taken or collected by one of their childcare providers.

In Table 4.11, we can see that wraparound care varied by the age of the child, even once the variety in the number of providers used for different age groups is taken into account (see Table C.4.2). Even where the number of providers was equal, at 2 providers, around half of 5 to 7 year olds (52%) and half of 8 to 11 year olds (54%) had been taken or collected by one of their childcare providers at some point, compared with 40% of 3 to 4 year olds and 26% of 0 to 2 year olds.

The slightly lower use of wraparound care for 3 to 4 year olds than for 5 to 7 year olds is likely to relate to greater use of care for educational rather than economic reasons, where a higher proportion of parents may be able to take or collect the child. The even lower use of wraparound care for the youngest age group is likely to be related to the type of services used for this age group; day nurseries, the main provider for 0 to 2 year olds, cannot generally offer to take or collect children. In the case of the oldest age group, more children are likely to be making the journey to and from childcare providers, which are mainly informal, on their own.

Lone parents were more likely than couple families to have used wraparound care, suggesting that the former were less likely to be able to collect or take the child. As would be expected, working was also associated with high use of wraparound care, particularly for dual-earning couple households and working lone parents.

Table 4.11 Wraparound care, by number of providers used and child and family characteristics

Base: All children who had received care from two providers in the last week & All children who had received childcare in the last week

	Only 2 providers used	Weighted base	Unweighted base	All	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	%			%		
Age of child						
0-2	26	226	265	15	741	869
3-4	40	294	448	25	825	1260
5-7	52	242	209	44	836	710
8-11	54	261	216	41	994	832
12-14	34	117	103	23	550	501
Family type						
Couple	38	826	921	27	2908	3118
Lone parent	55	314	320	41	1039	1054
Family working status						
Couple – both working	41	586	638	33	1939	2008
Couple - one working	28	220	257	17	827	948
Couple - neither working	n/a	n/a	low base	16	142	162
Lone parent - working	59	190	182	47	589	560
Lone parent - not working	48	124	138	33	450	494

4.6 Summing up

The patterns of childcare use explored in this chapter are unchanged since 2004. These patterns confirm the impact of the working week, the working day, and the availability of providers on the use of childcare. It is interesting to note that using more providers is associated with a combination of economic and educational reasons for using childcare and it is rare for just one provider to be used for both types of reasons. This reflects the differences in availability of the types of providers used for educational reasons versus those used for economic reasons (discussed in Chapter 3) and that the times early years provision is available rarely matches the working day. Hence use of a provider type like a playgroup for educational reasons, which is usually only available for short sessions, may be combined with use of a childminder or informal carer for economic reasons.

The use of grandparents, the main form of childcare (as identified in Chapter 2), is particularly variable, with two-thirds of children who had received care from a grandparent having done so on 1 or 2 days of the week, whilst two-fifths had done so for 4 or 5 days of the week.

Use of wraparound care was common across all ages, but particularly for primary school aged children and working families, especially working lone parents. As in 2004, one-third of children had been taken or collected by their childcare provider.

5 THE COST OF CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS PROVISION

5.1 Introduction

The provision of affordable childcare for all is a key aim of the Ten Year Childcare Strategy. A number of policy initiatives, including the Working Tax Credit and free entitlement to early years education for 3 and 4 year olds, have been introduced to ease the financial burden on parents. Nevertheless, previous studies have found that many families continue to have difficulties meeting the cost of childcare and that a lack of affordable childcare remains a barrier to employment for a significant minority of parents⁵⁰. This chapter presents the latest evidence on the cost of childcare to parents.

All families who had used childcare in the previous week were asked a series of detailed questions about any payments made to childcare providers to cover the cost of care used during that week. Respondents were asked to include both payments made directly by the family or by an external source (including the Local Education Authority, an ex-partner, or an employer)⁵¹. They were asked first to give overall details of payments and then asked which children these payments related to.

The chapter looks at whether payment is made for childcare, what this payment covered and how much was paid on an hourly and weekly basis. Comparisons are made across different types of providers and different families. The chapter also looks at any financial help families receive towards the cost of childcare and whether parents find it difficult to meet the costs of childcare.

5.2 Whether payments were made for childcare

Just over half of all families using childcare in the last week had made a payment to at least one of their providers (55%)⁵², this was similar to 2004 (53%). As would be expected, the proportion of families paying for the use of formal childcare was even higher (72%), while only a minority of families using informal childcare had made a payment to an informal provider (9%).

Nearly all families using a day nursery, childminder, or nanny in 2007 had paid that provider (Table 5.1). Among other types of formal provider the proportion of families paying ranged from 55% of those using nursery classes, to 71% of those using on site out-of-school-clubs, and 79% of those using playgroups.

There was little difference between 2004 and 2007 in the proportion of families paying different providers, with the exception of baby-sitters who were less likely to have been paid in 2007 compared with 2004.

⁵⁰ See Bryson et al (2006).

⁵¹ However, in practice, many families receiving the free entitlement (paid for by the LEA) did not report receiving a subsidy.

⁵² These payments could have been made either by the families themselves or via subsidies from other people or organisations.

Table 5.1 Whether payment made for childcare, by provider type*Base: All families who had used provider in last week*

	2004			2007		
	%	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	%	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Any provider	53	5004	5348	55	4511	4834
Early years provision and formal childcare						
Nursery school	73	220	306	76	196	296
Nursery class	51	387	573	55	375	604
Day nursery	95	596	663	93	584	663
Play group or pre-school	76	517	728	79	504	722
Childminder	96	321	358	95	334	342
Nanny or au pair	95	73	91	90	70	88
Baby-sitter	81	137	200	67	112	131
Breakfast club or after school club on school site	69	734	761	71	635	686
Breakfast club or after school club off school site	80	278	288	87	230	254
Informal childcare						
The child's grandparents	7	132	2069	7	1775	1798
The child's older brother / sister	9	375	303	9	340	264
Another relative	8	472	473	9	436	384
A friend or neighbour	12	779	784	10	550	559

As in 2004, couples were more likely to have paid for childcare than lone parents (Table 5.2) and, for both couples and lone parents, working was positively associated with paying for childcare. Those with higher family incomes were also more likely than those with lower incomes to have made a payment. The variation in the proportion of different family types paying for childcare reflects differences in the use of formal childcare, as explored in Chapter 2.

Table 5.2 Whether payment made for childcare, by family characteristics*Base: All families who had used childcare in last week*

	%	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Family type			
Couple	59	3280	3640
Lone parent	44	1232	1194
Family working status			
Couple - both working	63	2211	2236
Couple - one working	53	910	1180
Couple - neither working	41	159	224
Lone parent - working	48	712	596
Lone parent - not working	39	521	598
Family yearly income			
Under £10,000	41	585	602
£10,000-£19,999	46	1060	1180
£20,000-£29,999	59	877	962
£30,000-£44,999	58	798	827
£45,000+	69	901	938

Note: Row percentages

Comparisons on the basis of the number of children in the family were conducted at the child level, with all those children who had used childcare in the last week being considered⁵³. We found no statistically significant association between family size and paying for childcare (Table 5.3). Comparisons by child's age were also conducted at the child level and show an association between the child's age and paying for childcare, with paid childcare more likely to be used for younger children. This reflects the greater use of formal providers by the younger age groups (see Chapter 2).

⁵³ This is to control for the fact that families with greater numbers of children in principle have more opportunities to use childcare.

Table 5.3 Whether payment made for childcare, by number of children 0-14 and child's age

Base: All children who had used childcare in last week

	%	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Number of children 0-14			
1	51	1268	1170
2	53	1814	2000
3	48	675	757
4	47	166	202
5+	42	51	71
Age of child			
0-2	64	748	876
3-4	62	828	1264
5-7	46	834	709
8-11	49	1003	839
12-14	27	562	512

Note: Row percentages

Table 5.4 shows the breakdown of different services paid for by provider type. Overall, the main types of payments made were fees for childcare, fees for education, and payments for refreshments.

Among those using nursery schools a similar proportion of families paid for all 3 of these services. With most other formal providers, especially childminders and day nurseries, families were more likely to be paying childcare fees than for any other service. One exception to this pattern was nursery classes, where payments were most likely to be for refreshments. The proportion of parents paying for childcare and education fees is likely to reflect the ownership of different providers, with fees being more common for providers operating in the private sector, compared with the maintained sector. However, the survey does not allow us to distinguish between providers on this basis.

Payments to nannies tended to cover the widest range of services; whilst the most common type of payment was still for childcare fees, 10% of families using nannies paid towards trips and outings and 13% paid travel costs. The payment of education fees to nannies by 14% of parents may include, for example, foreign language tuition or help with homework. However, the survey did not ask parents to give details. Out-of-school clubs off site were the provider type most likely to receive payments to cover the cost of equipment (18%). This may reflect the use of out-of-school clubs for sports and other leisure activities.

Informal providers who received a payment were most likely to be paid childcare fees.

Table 5.4 Types of services paid for, by provider type

Base: All families who had used provider in last week

	Education fees %	Child-care fees %	Refreshment/ meals %	Use of equipment %	Travel costs %	Trips/ outings %	Other %	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Early years provision and formal childcare									
Nursery school	33	35	34	5	1	4	3	196	296
Nursery class	18	13	29	5	1	3	4	375	604
Day nursery	23	81	26	9	1	2	2	584	663
Play group or pre-school	29	42	29	8	1	1	3	504	722
Childminder	2	92	15	1	4	3	1	334	342
Nanny or au pair	14	73	13	1	13	10	10	70	88
Babysitter	4	57	1	0	3	2	9	112	131
Breakfast club or after school club, on site	17	43	24	7	+	1	2	635	686
Breakfast club or after school club, not on site	29	44	20	18	4	3	7	230	254
Informal childcare									
The child's grandparents	1	3	2	+	1	2	1	1775	1798
The child's older brother / sister	0	4	2	0	2	2	2	340	264
Another relative	1	4	4	0	1	1	1	436	384
A friend or neighbour	+	6	2	+	+	1	1	550	559

Note: Row percentages

5.3 Weekly spending on childcare and early years provision

Families who had made a payment to any childcare provider used in the last week were asked a detailed set of questions about the amounts paid to each provider and which children these payments covered. Respondents were asked to give the amount spent on each provider inclusive of subsidies (subsidies are discussed in more detail in Section 5.5). They were also asked to give details of the amounts received from external sources, making it possible to calculate the total weekly spent exclusive of subsidies by subtracting the amount received from external sources from the total paid. In practice, there was relatively little difference in the average amounts spent whether inclusive or exclusive of subsidies as it is probable that parents underestimate the total value of subsidies received. The majority of this chapter focuses on the amount spent, inclusive of subsidies⁵⁴.

Inclusive of subsidies, the median weekly spent on childcare by families who had paid anything for provision in the last week was £27.00. Exclusive of subsidies, the median amount spent was £23.00⁵⁵.

There was variation in the amount spent depending on the type of provider used (Table 5.5). These variations reflect not only differences in the average number of hours spent with different providers, but also differences in the average hourly cost of different provider types (see Section 5.4 for a discussion of hourly costs). The highest median weekly spend was for nannies and au pairs (£120) followed by day nurseries (£77). Relatively small amounts were spent on play groups, out-of-school clubs and nursery classes.

⁵⁴ Improvements to the questionnaire for the 2008 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents mean that separate information will be collected on: a) payments made by the family b) payments made by external sources. These improvements will allow more accurate estimates of the amount spent by families.

⁵⁵ The median weekly cost in 2004 was £23 including subsidies, and £20 excluding subsidies. However, it is not possible to estimate confidence intervals for median values or to test for significant differences between 2004 and 2007. Therefore Table 5.5 provides mean estimates (and their corresponding standard errors) for 2007. Median figures are quoted in the text because they are less influenced by outlying values than the mean. The total mean weekly cost (£54 inclusive of subsidies) is twice the median, reflecting the large amount spent on childcare by some families at the extreme.

Table 5.5 Weekly spend on childcare (including subsidies), by provider type*Base: All families paying for provider in last week*

	Median £	Mean £	Mean standard error	Weighted base	Unweighted base
All	27.00	53.99	±1.87	2380	2682
Early years provision and formal childcare					
Nursery school	24.00	48.66	±5.19	134	195
Nursery class	5.36	24.15	±2.86	184	283
Day nursery	77.29	90.62	±3.51	536	593
Play group or pre-school	10.00	15.33	±0.87	374	527
Childminder	50.00	63.31	±3.22	314	320
Nanny or au pair	120.00	162.01	±17.08	62	78
Baby-sitter	20.00	23.60	±1.53	75	95
Breakfast club or after school club on school site	7.50	17.44	±2.06	422	460
Breakfast club or after school club off school site	6.50	12.87	±1.50	189	204
Informal childcare					
The child's grandparents	20.00	34.15	±5.75	110	98
A friend or neighbour	17.40	26.59	±5.31	50	56

The average weekly cost of childcare varied depending on family characteristics. Comparisons between different family types are based on the mean weekly spend and conducted at the level of the selected child rather than the household⁵⁶. Table 5.6 shows that couple families spent more, on average, than lone parents. For both couple families and lone parents, working was associated with higher spending on childcare for the selected child. Higher income families spent more on childcare than lower income families. The age of the child also made a difference to the cost, with more being spent on childcare for younger children compared with older children. These findings reflect the fact that higher income families and those with younger children were more likely to use more expensive providers, such as nannies or day nurseries (see Chapter 2).

⁵⁶ Mean figures are necessary to allow for any differences between sub-groups to be tested for statistical significance. The analysis was conducted at the child level to control for the fact that household costs are influenced by family size.

Table 5.6 Weekly spend on childcare (including subsidies), by family characteristics

Base: All children paying for childcare used in last week

	Mean (£)	Mean standard error	Weighted base	Unweighted base
All	38.76	+1.67	1892	2072
Family type				
Couple	40.32	+1.97	1494	1660
Lone parent	32.89	+2.17	398	412
Family working status				
Couple - both working	46.30	+2.37	1075	1157
Couple - one working	26.35	+2.79	377	450
Couple - neither working	12.90	+2.79	42	53
Lone parent - working	41.30	+3.13	253	252
Lone parent - not working	18.22	+2.69	145	160
Family yearly income				
Under £10,000	20.27	+2.71	162	178
£10,000-£19,999	25.06	+1.88	355	400
£20,000-£29,999	33.91	+2.70	395	426
£30,000-£44,999	41.33	+2.76	336	379
£45,000+	56.10	+3.84	533	564
Age of child				
0-2	65.43	+3.41	466	550
3-4	50.30	+2.47	472	712
5-7	19.90	+2.12	364	309
8-11	18.59	+2.70	458	378
12-14	25.33	+8.86	132	123

Weekly spending on childcare is likely to be influenced by a number of overlapping factors. The differences presented above may be the result, for example, of differences in income, in the types of providers used, or in the number of hours of childcare used per week.

Multivariate analysis (binomial logistic regression) was run to isolate the independent effect of these different variables on weekly spending (see Table D.5.1 in Appendix D). Unsurprisingly, the number of hours of childcare used made a difference to weekly spending on childcare, the amount spent increased with the number of hours used. However, even after controlling for other relevant factors, higher family income, being in a working family, having children aged 0-2, and having only one child aged 0-14 were all independently associated with above average weekly childcare costs. After controlling for all other factors lone parents were more likely to spend above the median amount compared with couple families. There were regional differences in the weekly amount spent on childcare, with families in London being more likely to pay above average. Using informal childcare also made a difference to weekly spending; families using informal childcare were less likely to have spent above average, compared with families using formal childcare only.

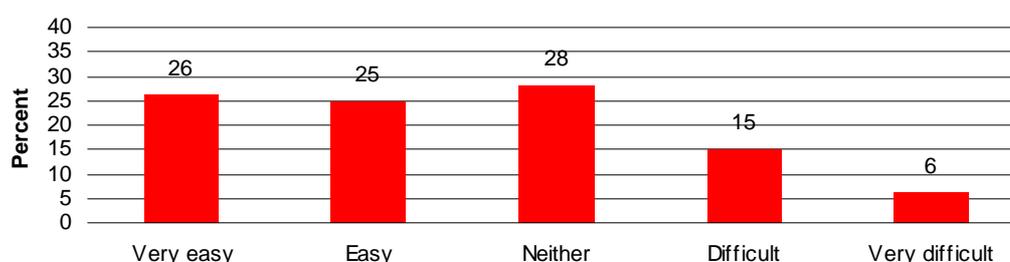
After controlling for other factors there were no significant differences in the weekly spend on childcare according either to ethnicity or whether or not a parent worked atypical hours.

5.4 Difficulties with meeting the cost of childcare and early years provision

Families who usually paid something towards childcare (after subsidies) were asked how easy or difficult they found it to meet the costs of childcare. Views on affordability among those paying for care were mixed (Figure 5.1). However, over twice as many families said they found it either very easy or easy to meet the costs (51%) than said they found it difficult or very difficult (21%). The proportion of families finding it difficult to meet the cost of childcare has not changed since 2004. However, it should be borne in mind that the cost of childcare may be even more of a problem for those not currently using any provision. The extent to which lack of affordable provision acts as a barrier to the take-up of childcare is explored in Chapter 6.

Figure 5.1 How easy or difficult families find it to pay for childcare

Base: All families who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies



Unsurprisingly, parents' views on affordability varied depending on family characteristics. As in 2004, lone parents were more likely to report difficulties with meeting the costs of childcare than couple families (Table 5.7). Among lone parents, although work status made no difference to the proportion reporting *difficulty* in paying (the differences are not statistically significant) working lone parents were more likely than non-working lone parents to report that they found it *easy* to meet the costs of childcare. Among couple families, not working was associated with finding it more difficult to meet costs.

Table 5.7 Difficulty paying for childcare, by family type and working status

Base: All families who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies

	Couple families			All	Lone parents		
	Both	One	Neither		Working	Not	All
	working	working	working		working	working	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Very easy	25	37	23	28	13	27	18
Easy	27	24	15	26	23	21	22
Neither easy nor difficult	30	25	26	29	30	23	27
Difficult	14	10	29	14	24	17	22
Very difficult	4	4	7	4	11	12	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1340</i>	<i>438</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>1836</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>166</i>	<i>486</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1423</i>	<i>610</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>2116</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>496</i>

Although they were, on average, paying less, lower income families were still more likely to report having difficulties in meeting the cost of childcare than higher income families (Table 5.8). This was also found to be the case in 2004.

Table 5.8 Difficulty paying for childcare, by family yearly income

Base: All families who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000- £19,999 %	£20,000- £29,999 %	£30,000- £44,999 %	£45,000+ %
Very easy	27	22	24	27	29
Easy	19	22	22	23	33
Neither easy nor difficult	21	29	28	33	27
Difficult	20	21	20	12	8
Very difficult	14	6	6	5	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>457</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>441</i>	<i>597</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>543</i>	<i>492</i>	<i>655</i>

How easy or difficult parents found it to meet the cost of childcare did not vary by region (see Table C.5.1 in Appendix C). This is despite the fact that there were regional differences in the weekly spend on childcare.

The number of children in the family made no difference to the proportion of families reporting difficulty in paying for childcare (Table C.5.2).

Table 5.9 shows that there was a positive relationship between the amount spent on childcare per week and reporting difficulty in meeting the costs of childcare. Overall, those paying the least for childcare were less likely to report having difficulty meeting the costs than those paying more. This is despite the fact that higher spending on childcare was associated with families being in work and having higher household incomes, characteristics which reduced families' difficulty in paying.

Table 5.9 Difficulty paying for childcare, by weekly spend on childcare

Base: All families who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies

	Under £5 %	£5 to less than £10 %	£10 to less than £20 %	£20 to less than £50 %	£50 to less than £100 %	£100 or more %
Very easy	68	37	21	15	8	7
Easy	19	30	31	24	28	20
Neither easy nor difficult	8	21	29	37	36	38
Difficult	3	10	15	19	20	23
Very difficult	1	3	4	5	8	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>424</i>	<i>278</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>480</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>378</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>483</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>423</i>	<i>527</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>421</i>

5.5 Hourly cost of childcare and early years provision

Weekly spending on childcare will vary according to the number of hours of care used, so it is helpful to also look at hourly costs. The section compares the hourly cost of childcare across different types of provider and families with different characteristics. The hourly cost was calculated by dividing the total weekly cost by the total number of hours of care used by each child.

Inclusive of subsidies, the median hourly cost of childcare across all provider types was £1.71⁵⁷. The cost of provision varied by provider type (Table 5.10); the highest hourly costs were for nannies and au pairs, followed by day nurseries and childminders. The lowest hourly costs were for nursery classes, perhaps reflecting that payments for nursery classes were most likely to be for refreshments and other extras. Grandparents received less per hour than most formal providers, with the exception of nursery classes.

Table 5.10 Hourly cost of childcare (including subsidies), by provider type

Base: All families paying for provider in last week

	Median	Mean	Mean standard error	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	£	£			
All	1.71	2.42	±0.08	2375	2674
Early years provision and formal childcare					
Nursery school	2.67	3.23	±0.38	134	195
Nursery class	0.36	1.74	±0.22	184	282
Day nursery	3.75	4.22	±0.14	535	592
Play group or pre-school	1.80	1.99	±0.08	374	525
Childminder	3.40	4.03	±0.23	314	320
Nanny or au pair	4.68	5.33	±0.47	62	78
Baby-sitter	3.00	3.49	±0.21	75	95
Breakfast club or after school club on school site	2.50	3.12	±0.20	421	459
Breakfast club or after school club off school site	2.75	4.08	±0.36	188	203
Informal childcare					
The child's grandparents	1.25	2.10	±0.20	110	98
A friend or neighbour	2.96	3.47	±0.39	50	56

The comparison of the hourly cost of childcare across different families was based on a comparison of the mean hourly cost for the selected child⁵⁸. It is clear that variations in weekly cost observed between families were not simply because of differences in the number of hours of childcare used.

⁵⁷ The mean hourly cost was higher at £2.42.

⁵⁸ Mean figures are necessary to allow for any differences between sub-groups to be tested for statistical significance. The analysis was conducted at the child level to control for the fact that household level costs will be influenced by family size.

The hourly cost of childcare varied by work status and income, with working families and higher household incomes being associated with higher costs (Table 5.11). These differences probably reflect differences in the types of providers used by families depending on their employment status and income.

The hourly cost of childcare also varied according to the child's age. The highest hourly cost was for children aged 0-2, reflecting the high use of expensive providers, such as childminders and day nurseries, among this group. The hourly cost was lowest for 3 to 4 year olds. This may partly reflect the fact that families tend to underestimate the full value of subsidies such as the free entitlement. As will be discussed later in the chapter, many families benefiting from the free entitlement did not mention receiving help from the Local Education Authority when asked about subsidies.

Table 5.11 Hourly cost of childcare (including subsidies), by family characteristics

Base: All children paying for childcare used in last week

	Mean £	Mean standard error	Weighted base	Unweighted base
All	2.58	±0.09	1889	2068
Family type				
Couple	2.66	±0.10	1492	1657
Lone parent	2.27	±0.19	397	411
Family working status				
Couple - both working	2.77	±0.12	1073	1155
Couple - one working	2.47	±0.16	377	449
Couple - neither working	1.50	±0.21	42	53
Lone parent - working	2.39	±0.26	252	251
Lone parent - not working	2.06	±0.28	145	160
Family yearly income				
Under £10,000	1.90	±0.23	162	178
£10,000-£19,999	1.93	±0.19	355	400
£20,000-£29,999	2.43	±0.20	394	425
£30,000-£44,999	2.67	±0.20	335	378
£45,000+	3.23	±0.15	533	563
Age of child				
0-2	3.23	±0.20	466	550
3-4	2.13	±0.12	471	710
5-7	2.50	±0.22	363	308
8-11	2.50	±0.23	457	377
12-14	2.31	±0.27	132	123

The mean hourly cost of childcare varied by region (Table 5.12). Hourly costs were highest in London, followed by the South East. Costs were lowest in Yorkshire and the Humber and the East Midlands. As discussed above, the proportion of families reporting difficulties in paying for childcare did not vary by region despite these differences in the hourly cost of care. Differences in the cost of care may be balanced by regional differences in income.

Table 5.12 Hourly cost of childcare (including subsidies), by government office region

Base: All children paying for childcare used in last week

	Mean £	Mean standard error	Weighted base	Unweighted base
North East	2.35	+0.77	67	88
North West	2.05	+0.13	225	260
Yorkshire & the Humber	1.95	+0.17	165	189
East Midlands	1.96	+0.19	136	159
West Midlands	2.48	+0.29	229	240
East	2.51	+0.26	242	258
London	3.50	+0.27	272	254
South East	3.03	+0.23	365	407
South West	2.27	+0.21	176	202

Multivariate analysis was again conducted to isolate the independent influence of different factors on the hourly cost of childcare (see Table D.5.2 in Appendix D). After controlling for other relevant variables, higher family income, being a lone parent, being in a family where (both) parents work, and having very young children was associated with paying higher than average hourly costs for childcare. In addition to the regional variations already described, living in the least deprived areas was associated with paying higher than average hourly costs. Again using formal childcare only was associated with paying above average hourly costs.

5.6 Financial help towards childcare and early years provision

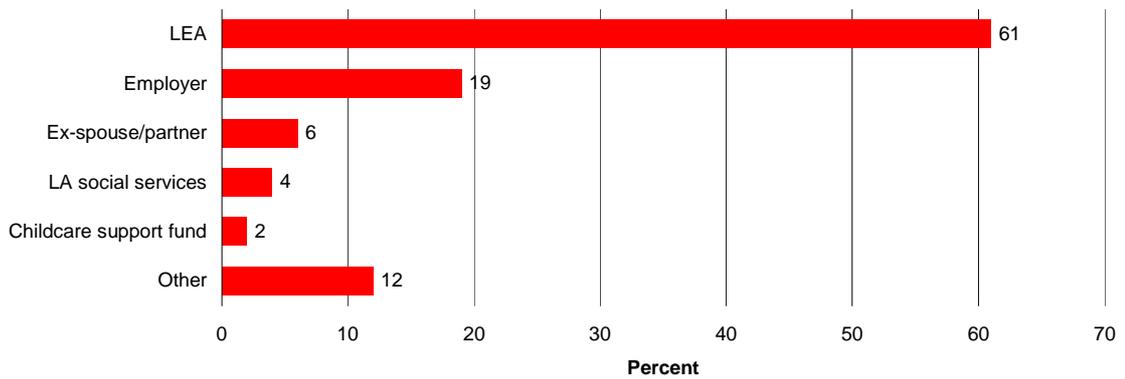
Help with the cost of childcare is available from a wide range of sources. 18% of families paying for childcare in 2007 said that they had received some financial help. This was higher than the 15% receiving help in 2004. The sources of financial help reported ranged from payments made by the local authority, to help from employers (e.g. childcare vouchers), or money received from an ex-partner. Money received via tax credits was explicitly excluded and covered separately. It should be emphasised that, given that figures rely on parents' own reporting of help received, they are likely to underestimate the true extent of subsidies. For example, whilst receipt of the free entitlement would be counted as help for the Local Education Authority (LEA), many parents in receipt of the free entitlement did not mention the LEA as a source of financial help.

Despite likely under-reporting it was still the case that the most common source of financial help mentioned was the LEA (Figure 5.2), with 61% receiving help mentioning this source. As well as the free entitlement other sources of LEA help include assisted places for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and help with childcare costs for student parents. The second most common subsidy, cited by 19% of families in receipt of help, was help from employers (most likely to come in the

form of childcare vouchers). The proportion of families receiving help from an employer was higher in 2007 (19%) than in 2004 (7%), which might reflect the 2005 reforms to the tax and National Insurance exemptions for employers offering support with childcare and the subsequent increase in employers offering support⁵⁹. Of those families receiving help with the cost of childcare from their employer in 2007, the majority (77%) received help at the cost of sacrificing salary or other flexible benefits. The remainder (23%) reported receiving financial help with childcare in addition to their salary.

Figure 5.2 Sources of financial help

Base: All families who received financial help



As in 2004, lone parents were more likely to say they had received help than couple families (Table 5.13). For couple families work status was not associated with the receipt of financial help. However, among lone parents those not in work were more likely to have received financial help than those in work. The proportion of families receiving help did not vary by household income (the differences are not statistically significant).

⁵⁹ Kazimirski et al (2006b).

Table 5.13 Whether financial help received, by family characteristics*Base: All families who had paid for childcare*

	%	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Family type			
Couple	18	1942	2255
Lone parent	21	539	556
Family working status			
Couple - both working	17	1390	1487
Couple - one working	18	485	668
Couple - neither working	18	67	100
Lone parent - working	15	341	316
Lone parent - not working	31	198	240
Family yearly income			
Under £10,000	23	236	249
£10,000-£19,999	17	490	583
£20,000-£29,999	18	515	586
£30,000-£44,999	19	460	518
£45,000+	18	627	689

Note: Row percentages

Unsurprisingly, lone parents in receipt of financial help were more likely than couple families to have received help from an ex-partner (Table 5.14). In contrast, couples in receipt of help were more likely to have received help from an employer, reflecting the greater likelihood of couple families having at least one parent in employment.

Table 5.14 Source of financial help, by family type*Base: All families who received financial help*

	Couple %	Lone parent %
Local Education Authority	65	47
Local Authority Social Services Department	3	6
An employer	24	3
Childcare support fund / Access fund	1	9
An ex-husband / wife / partner	1	20
Other person (e.g. relative) or organisation	10	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>342</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>452</i>	<i>131</i>

Table 5.15 shows that higher income families were more likely to have received help from an employer than lower income families, and less likely to have received help from an ex-partner, which reflects the association between higher income families and couple families.

Table 5.15 Sources of financial help, by family yearly income*Base: All families who received financial help*

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000- £19,999 %	£20,000- £29,999 %	£30,000- £44,999 %	£45,000+ %
Local Education Authority	67	62	60	64	56
Local Authority Social Services Department	6	5	2	5	3
An employer	0	10	13	26	33
Childcare support fund / Access fund	1	5	4	+	2
An ex-husband / wife /partner	13	9	6	3	4
Other person (e.g. relative) or organisation	18	12	19	9	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>111</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>144</i>

The receipt of financial help also varied depending on the children's age. Families with a selected child aged 3 to 4 were the most likely to have received financial help (Table 5.16). The age of the child also made a difference to the type of help received (Table 5.17). Families where the selected child was aged 3 to 4 were the group most likely to have received help from the LEA. It is probable that this is due to these families receiving the free entitlement from the LEA.

Table 5.16 Whether financial help received, by age of child*Base: All families who had paid for childcare*

	%	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
0-2	19	701	712
3-4	34	597	831
5-7	11	406	461
8-11	10	523	550
12-14	10	254	257

Table 5.17 Sources of financial help, by age of child*Base: All families who received financial help*

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
Local Education Authority	41	80	64	42	42
Local Authority Social Services Department	5	3	2	4	7
An employer	34	12	16	9	8
Childcare support fund / Access fund	2	2	2	12	0
An ex-husband / wife / partner	2	3	11	11	28
Other person (e.g. relative) or organisation	18	7	6	23	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>276</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>31</i>

5.6.1 Receipt of tax credits

Families were asked separately about their receipt of tax credits (Table 5.18). Two-thirds (66%) of families received Child Tax Credit, either on its own (42%) or in combination with Working Tax Credit (25%)⁶⁰. The proportion of families receiving Child Tax Credit has not changed since 2004.

Take-up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit remains very low with only a small minority of eligible families claiming it. As in 2004, only one in ten of families receiving Working Tax Credit, and therefore eligible, said they were receiving the childcare element (a further 6% were unsure)⁶¹.

Table 5.18 Receipt of tax credits

Base: All families, except for the childcare element figure which is based on those claiming WTC

	2004	2007
	%	%
None	36	34
Child Tax Credit	38	42
Working Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit	27	25
Childcare element	11	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7703/2044</i>	<i>7052/1729</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7691/2034</i>	<i>7054/1750</i>

Eligibility for tax credits is dependent on family income and work status. The proportion of families receiving tax credits also varied according to other family characteristics. Lone parents were more likely to be in receipt of Child Tax Credit combined with Working Tax Credit than couple families (Table 5.19). This is consistent with the fact that lone parents tend, on average, to have lower incomes than couple families. Looking just at those families receiving the Working Tax Credit, lone parents were also more likely than couple families to be receiving the childcare element. The same pattern was found in 2004.

⁶⁰ Child Tax Credit is a payment to support families (whether working or not) which is paid in addition to Child Benefit and any Working Tax Credit. Working Tax Credit is a payment to top up the earnings of working people on low incomes, and includes support for the costs of qualifying childcare (the childcare element).

⁶¹ Families can also benefit from the childcare element even if they are only receiving Child Tax Credit - as long as they are receiving more than the family element, meet the work criteria and declared eligible childcare costs in their application.

Table 5.19 Receipt of tax credits, by family type

Base: All families, except for the childcare element figure which is based on those claiming WTC

	Couple %	Lone parent %
None	37	26
Child Tax Credit	42	40
Working Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit	21	34
Childcare element	6	17
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>5099/1073</i>	<i>1953/656</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>5270/1218</i>	<i>1784/532</i>

Families with older children were less likely to be receiving Child Tax Credit than families with younger children (Table 5.20). Among those families receiving Working Tax Credit, families where the selected child was aged 3 or 4 were the most likely to be receiving the childcare element.

Table 5.20 Receipt of tax credits, by age of child

Base: All families, except for the childcare element figure which is based on those claiming WTC

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
None	29	29	34	35	39
Child Tax Credit	51	45	40	38	38
Working Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit	21	27	26	27	23
Childcare element	16	19	9	7	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1445/299</i>	<i>989/264</i>	<i>1107/283</i>	<i>1701/458</i>	<i>1809/424</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1405/329</i>	<i>1423/363</i>	<i>1169/288</i>	<i>1648/422</i>	<i>1409/348</i>

The receipt of tax credits varied with ethnicity (Table C.5.3). Asian families were the most likely group to be claiming both Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. However, there was no significant variation, on the basis of ethnicity, in the proportion of families receiving Working Tax Credit who also received the childcare element.

There was also an association between family size and the receipt of tax credits. Those with only one child were the least likely to be receiving Child Tax Credit. However, among families receiving Working Tax Credit, larger families (i.e. those with 3 or more children) were the least likely to be receiving the childcare element (Table C.5.4).

5.6.2 Take-up of free entitlement to early years education for 3 and 4 year olds

In 2007 parents were asked for the first time about their take-up of the weekly offer of 12 and a half hours of free early years education for 3 and 4 year olds, therefore comparable figures are not available for 2004. The analysis reported here focuses on take-up by the selected child.

86% of 3 and 4 year olds eligible for the free entitlement had received childcare under the scheme.⁶² Take-up was higher among 4 year olds (93%) compared with 3 year olds (79%), unsurprising given that the figure includes children attending reception classes (Table 5.21)⁶³. Of children benefiting from the free entitlement, nearly three-quarters (73%) had used 12 hours or more of free childcare (Figure 5.3).

Table 5.21 Receipt of free entitlement

Base: All eligible 3 and 4 year olds

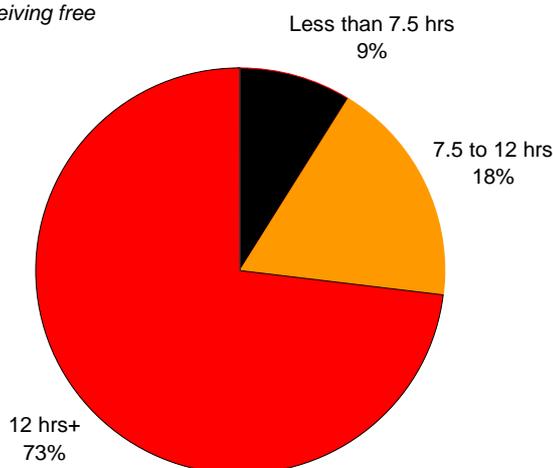
	3 years old	4 years old
	%	%
Received free entitlement	79	93
Received eligible childcare but not free entitlement	11	4
No eligible childcare	10	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>434</i>	<i>475</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>607</i>	<i>711</i>

⁶² Take-up of the free entitlement from the Early Years Census and Schools Census (at 98%) is higher than that reported by this survey. It is likely that this is due to different data collection methods; the Early Years Census and Schools Census is a complete count of children accessing the free entitlement, collected from childcare and early years providers. The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents is a sample survey and relies on parents reporting using the free entitlement. Parents may not report this if the free entitlement is taken as part of a package of longer childcare hours, or if they do not know the official name for the offer. See Section 5.6 for more information on under reporting.

⁶³ Children are eligible for the free entitlement from 1 April, 1 September, or 1 January following their 3rd birthday, and are entitled to up to 6 terms of provision before reaching statutory school age which is the first term following their 5th birthday. However, even though it is not compulsory for children to attend school until the first term following their 5th birthday, some 4 year olds attend a reception class attached to a primary school. The base for the figures on the free entitlement are all children who are eligible, to ensure that the take-up of the free entitlement does not appear artificially low children attending reception classes are included here in the proportion of children receiving the free entitlement.

Figure 5.3 Amount of early years education received per week via free entitlement

Base: All eligible 3 and 4 year olds receiving free entitlement



There was some variation in the take-up of the free entitlement according to family characteristics. Among children from couple families take-up varied according to household work status, with work having a positive association with take-up (Table 5.22). However, there was no difference in take-up between children of working or non-working lone parents.

Table 5.22 Receipt of free entitlement, by family type and work status

Base: All eligible 3 and 4 year olds

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both working	One working	Neither working	All couples	Working	Not working	All lone parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Received free entitlement	91	83	77	87	87	85	85
Received eligible childcare but not free entitlement	7	7	10	7	9	7	8
No eligible childcare	2	10	12	6	4	8	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>658</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>203</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>505</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>1009</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>309</i>

Despite being free to parents, take-up varied according to income and was higher among higher income families (Table 5.23). The difference in take-up is linked to the lower use of childcare by children from lower income families, rather than by lower income families using childcare but not accessing the free entitlement. Take-up also varied by ethnicity, being highest among children from White families and lowest among children from Asian families (Table C.5.5). Again, this reflects differences between ethnic groups in the overall use of childcare.

Table 5.23 Take-up of free entitlement , by household income*Base: All eligible 3 and 4 year olds*

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000- £19,999 %	£20,000- £29,999 %	£30,000- £44,999 %	£45,000+ %
Received free entitlement	84	82	88	88	92
Received eligible childcare but not free entitlement	8	8	6	8	6
No eligible childcare	8	10	5	4	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>213</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>202</i>	<i>212</i>

5.7 Awareness of childcare costs and help with payments

One barrier to the take-up of affordable childcare may be a lack of awareness among parents of the true costs of childcare or the nature of the financial help available to them. The previous section considered families' take-up of financial help with the costs of childcare, including tax credits. This section looks at levels of awareness of tax credits, specifically the childcare element, among families not currently receiving it. We then consider families' awareness of which provider types are covered by tax credits. Parents' awareness of the cost of childcare was also measured, by asking them how much they thought a daily session with a day nursery or childminder would cost.

5.7.1 Awareness of the childcare element

Awareness of the childcare element among families not currently receiving it has not changed since 2004. In both 2004 and 2007, 65% of families not currently receiving the childcare element (but paying for childcare) were nevertheless aware of it. However, just over a third of families not currently receiving the childcare element (but paying towards childcare) were unaware that it existed.

Table 5.24 Awareness of Childcare element, by family characteristics*Base: All families not receiving childcare element and who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies*

	%	Weighted base	Unweighted base
All	65	6949	6935
Family type			
Couple	64	5098	5256
Lone parent	68	1851	1679
Family working status			
Couple - both working	67	3210	3028
Couple - one working	61	1556	1811
Couple - neither working	46	332	417
Lone parent – working	76	855	660
Lone parent - not working	61	996	1019
Family yearly income			
Under £10,000	59	1119	1026
£10,000-£19,999	67	1691	1774
£20,000-£29,999	67	1273	1323
£30,000-£44,999	68	1138	1091
£45,000+	68	1210	1199
Age of child			
0-2	62	1404	1360
3-4	63	946	1379
5-7	64	1097	1155
8-11	64	1689	1632
12-14	69	1813	1409
Ethnicity of child			
White	69	5966	5893
Black	41	261	258
Asian	38	420	508
Other	41	295	265

Note: Row percentages

Awareness of the childcare element did vary by family characteristics (Table 5.24). Among those families not currently receiving the childcare element but paying for childcare, lone parents were more likely to be aware of it than couple families, whilst higher income families were more likely to be aware than lower income families. Families with older children were more likely to be aware of the childcare element than families with younger children. Finally, awareness varied by ethnicity, with White families being the most likely to be aware of the childcare element. This finding is consistent with evidence from an in-depth study of Black and Minority Ethnic families, based on the 2004 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, which showed that awareness of help with the financial costs of childcare was lower among Black and Asian parents (particularly those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin) compared with White parents⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ Kazimirski et al (2006a).

All families who either received or said they were aware of the childcare element were asked where they had obtained information about it. Respondents could give more than one source. As Table 5.25 shows, the most common source of information was from having received a Tax Credits application pack (25%), followed by TV adverts (21%), and friends and family (17%). The sources of information used in 2007 were similar to those used in 2004. However, TV advertising was a less common source of information in 2007 compared with 2004 (when it was cited by 30% of respondents).

Table 5.25 Sources of information on childcare element

Base: All families who were receiving or who were aware of the childcare element

	%
Received tax credits application pack	25
TV adverts	21
Relatives / Friends / neighbours	17
Job Centre / Job Centre Plus / New Deal advisor	8
Tax Credit Office or Inland Revenue Official	8
Newspaper / magazine	7
Employer/Workmates	7
Letter from Inland Revenue	5
Other leaflets	5
Internet	4
Letter from Department of Work and Pensions	4
Department of Work and Pensions (formerly Department of Social Security) office/official	4
Radio adverts	3
Childcare provider	3
Hospital/ surgery / clinic / GP / Health visitor (include maternity / bounty pack)	2
Notice in Child Benefit book	2
Leaflet in Post Office	2
Accountant / solicitor / financial advisor	1
Other advert	1
Children's Information Services	1
Source of Tax Credit childcare info: Citizen's Advice Bureau	+
Just started claiming Child Benefit	+
Voluntary organisation e.g. Day Care Trust/Opportunity Links	+
Radio/TV news	+
Welfare Rights Worker	+
From own / partner's employment being related to tax credit system	+
Other	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>4618</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>4587</i>

5.7.2 Awareness of eligibility for the childcare element

The childcare element of the Working Tax Credit currently covers only certain types of formal provider. The evidence suggests that there is currently some confusion among parents as to which provider types are covered. This is perhaps not surprising when take-up of the childcare element remains so low.

Parents were given a list of provider types and asked which they thought were eligible for the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. All parents were asked this question, including those who had not previously heard of the childcare element. Table 5.26 shows the proportion of parents who thought each provider type was eligible. The table is split between provider types that are generally eligible and those that are not generally eligible.

A sizeable proportion of parents did not recognise many eligible providers as being so. The highest recognition was for registered childminders (67%). However, only 39% of families recognised out-of-school clubs as being eligible. There was also some misunderstanding about other providers which are not generally eligible for the childcare element; 19% of families thought that nannies and au pairs were eligible, whilst 14% thought that grandparents were eligible.

Awareness of which provider types are eligible for the childcare element had not changed since 2004.

Table 5.26 Awareness of eligibility for childcare element

Base: All families

	2004	2007
	%	%
Generally eligible		
Registered childminder	68	67
Local authority day nursery	55	58
Private day nursery	53	54
After school club / holiday club	37	39
Not generally eligible but thought to be		
Nanny or au pair	20	19
Grandparent	14	14
Friend or neighbour	8	7
Unregistered childminder	4	5
Another type of provider	1	1
None of these	9	12
Don't know	8	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7802</i>	<i>7136</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7802</i>	<i>7136</i>

5.7.3 Awareness of the costs of providers

To gain some idea of parents' perceptions of childcare costs, all parents (regardless of their own use of childcare) were asked to estimate the cost of using a childminder and a day nursery for a typical eight-hour day (Table 5.27). The median estimated cost of a childminder was £30, while the median estimated cost of a day nursery was £35.

Parents' perceptions of costs differ from the real cost of these provider types (as calculated from the actual costs information provided by parents in this study). As was also the case in 2004, parents tended to overestimate the cost of childcare provision. This was the case for both childminders (real median cost=£27) and day nurseries (real median cost=£30).

Table 5.27 Perceived and real costs of childcare

Base: All families for the 'estimated' column, and families who had used a childminder/day nursery for the 'real' column

	Median cost		Weighted base	Unweighted base
	Estimated	Real		
	£	£		
Childminder	30	27	3051/314	3765/320
Day nursery	35	30	3060/535	3788/592

Note: Extreme values (over £500) excluded from estimated costs

5.8 Summing up

Just over half of all families using childcare paid for it, a similar proportion to 2004. The median weekly spend on childcare by families, inclusive of subsidies, was £27, whilst the median hourly cost of childcare was £1.71. These cost estimates should be treated with some caution as they rely on parents' awareness of subsidies received. However, the results do provide an insight into the characteristics that are associated with different childcare costs. Spending more than average on childcare was associated with being in work and having a higher household income. There were also regional variations with the highest hourly costs found in London and the South East. Paying higher than average hourly costs was also associated with using formal childcare only as opposed to relying on informal care.

The cost of childcare continues to be a problem for some families, with 21% of families paying something towards childcare saying that they found it difficult to meet the cost. Lone parents and lower income households were more likely to report difficulties in meeting the costs of childcare. Around a fifth of families paying for childcare had received some financial help, a higher proportion than in 2004. The majority of eligible 3 and 4 year olds had benefited from the offer of free early years education, with three-quarters of those taking up the offer receiving 12 or more hours of free care per week.

The proportion of families receiving Child Tax Credit was unchanged since 2004. Take-up of the childcare element remains low with only one in ten families on Working Tax Credit receiving it. There is scope for improving parents' awareness of tax credits, especially the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. Around a third of families not currently receiving the childcare element were not aware that it was available, the same proportion as in 2004. There remains considerable confusion among parents about which providers are covered by the childcare element.

6 THE BARRIERS TO USING CHILDCARE OR EARLY YEARS PROVISION

6.1 Introduction

As seen in Chapter 2, the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series continues to identify lower use of formal childcare amongst certain disadvantaged groups. Given the reported positive effects of pre-school education on children's development, it is important to identify the reasons parents choose not to use formal childcare, or engage with the labour market, and identify any barriers that parents might perceive or experience so that where possible policies can be developed to address these. For whilst the majority (57%) of parents reported a preference for parental care (see Table C.6.1 in Appendix C) this preference may be related to their perceptions of the childcare available, for example in terms of quality or cost.

This chapter covers a wide range of issues that may impact on families' use of childcare and early years provision. They include both barriers experienced by parents and parents' perceptions about local provision which might influence their childcare decisions. These are investigated in terms of: cost and affordability; the *times* when childcare and early years provision are available; availability of places; quality; and access to information on childcare and early years services.

Some of the questions on barriers are general questions, asking about a broad range of issues which cut across the six areas listed above. For these questions, rather than repeat them within each section, we have provided full tables in Appendix C, referring to them as relevant and picking out the key points within the text in each section.

6.2 Perceptions on the affordability of local childcare

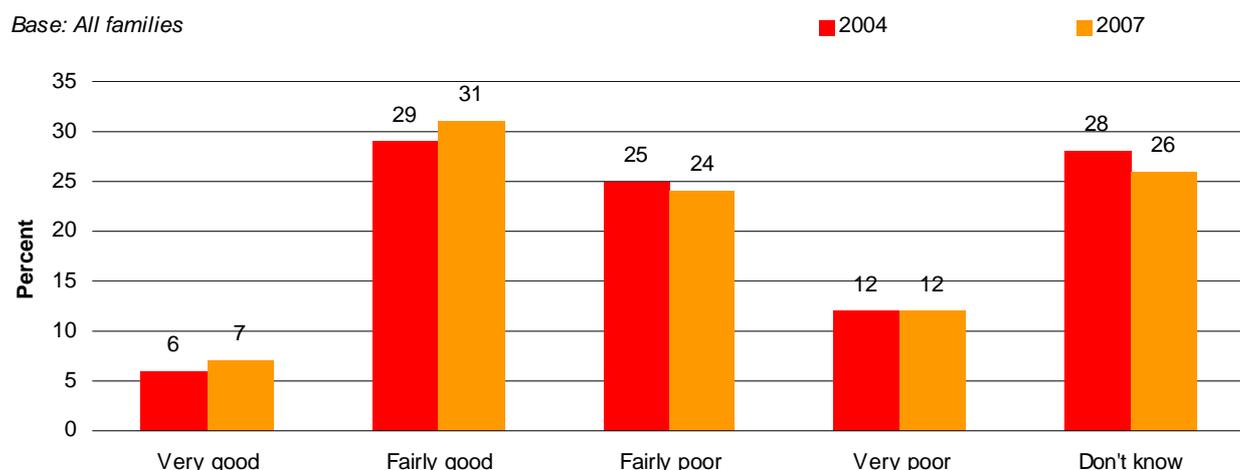
Parents' views on the affordability of local childcare are shown in Figure 6.1⁶⁵. As a significant number of parents (26%) could not answer the question about the affordability of childcare in their local area they have been included in the analysis in Figure 6.1, as excluding them (as done elsewhere for other question responses) would have considerably affected the figures.

It was rare for parents to rate the affordability of local childcare as very good. However, whilst around twice as many parents rated local affordability as very poor than very good (12% compared with 7%), most parents chose more moderate ratings. The most commonly expressed views were that affordability was either fairly good (31%) or fairly poor (24%). This represents an improvement since 2004; the proportion of parents who thought that childcare affordability in their local area was very good or fairly good has risen from 35% in 2004 to 38% in 2007.

In the rest of the section we explore how perceptions of affordability of local provision varied across different groups.

⁶⁵ Parents were asked: 'And thinking about the overall affordability of childcare provided in your local area, for a family like yours, how good would you say this is?'

Figure 6.1 Views of affordability of childcare in the local area, 2004-2007



6.2.1 Affordability in the local area by use of childcare

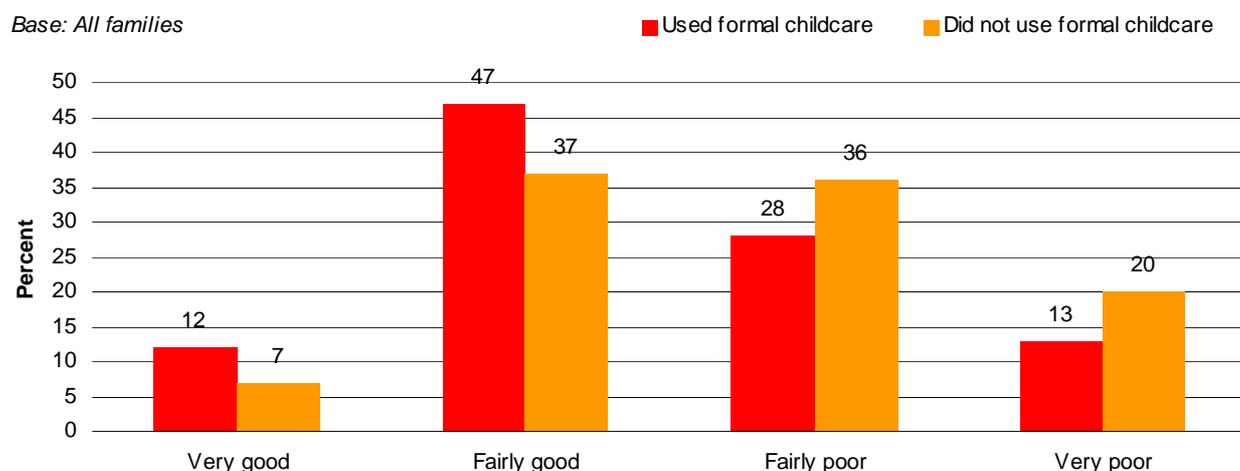
Turning to how views on affordability vary for different groups of parents, as might be expected, some parents are more knowledgeable about the affordability of childcare in their local area than others. 36% of parents who had not used formal childcare in the last week reported that they did not know how affordable childcare was in the local area, compared with 12% of parents who had used formal childcare in the last week. As this large variation in the level of knowledge between these two groups of parents would have a corresponding large impact on the distribution of the other responses, parents who felt that they did not know about the affordability of childcare in their local area are excluded from Figure 6.2⁶⁶.

Parents who had used formal care in the last week were more likely to think that the affordability of childcare in their local area was very good or fairly good than parents who had not used childcare (59% compared with 44%) and correspondingly were less likely to think that the affordability of childcare in their local area was very poor or fairly poor (Figure 6.2).

These differences could be due to one of a number of reasons. For instance, parents who used childcare may be more positive about its affordability through personal experience of the cost of childcare. Alternatively, it could be because parents who use childcare often come from more affluent groups who are more able to pay. These issues are explored in the following sections.

⁶⁶ As can be seen later in the chapter, the same is true when looking at how views on affordability vary for different groups of parents and parents who felt that they did not know about the affordability of childcare in their local area are also excluded from Table 6.1 to Table 6.4.

Figure 6.2 Views of affordability of childcare in local areas, by whether or not the family used formal childcare in the last week



6.2.2 Affordability in the local area by income

Parents with different household incomes had differing levels of knowledge about the affordability of childcare in their local area. Parents with higher incomes were more likely to feel that they knew about the affordability of local childcare than parents with lower incomes (e.g. 32% of parents with an income under £10,000 did not know how affordable local childcare was, compared with 19% of parents with an income of £45,000 or more). Table 6.1 shows the views of parents who did know about the affordability of childcare in their local area. Here we can see that parents with higher incomes rated the affordability of local childcare more favourably. This is unsurprising since, as discussed in Section 5.3 in Chapter 5, higher income groups felt better able to pay for their childcare, with families on lower incomes experiencing greater difficulties.

Table 6.1 Views of affordability of childcare in local area, by family yearly income

Base: All families

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
Very good	10	7	8	9	13
Fairly good	36	40	41	42	49
Fairly poor	30	33	35	35	27
Very poor	24	20	16	14	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>775</i>	<i>1249</i>	<i>1007</i>	<i>910</i>	<i>990</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>739</i>	<i>1358</i>	<i>1086</i>	<i>918</i>	<i>1019</i>

6.2.3 Affordability in the local area by the amounts paid for childcare

Table 6.2 shows how affordability was rated amongst families who paid different amounts for their childcare. Since it was mainly formal childcare that was paid for, these views are likely to reflect those of families who had used mainly formal provision. Among parents paying for childcare in the last week, parents paying less for childcare were more likely to rate the affordability of childcare as very good or fairly good (e.g. 63% of those paying less than £5 expressed positive views about the affordability of local childcare, compared with 46% of parents paying £100 or more).

Table 6.2 Views of affordability of childcare in local area, by how much the family paid for providers in the last week

Base: All families who used and paid for childcare in the last week

	Less than £5 %	£5 to less than £10 %	£10 to less than £20 %	£20 to less than £50 %	£50 to less than £100 %	£100 or more %
Very good	18	15	13	11	8	6
Fairly good	45	48	50	50	53	40
Fairly poor	26	21	28	27	28	39
Very poor	11	16	9	11	11	15
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>338</i>	<i>248</i>	<i>322</i>	<i>445</i>	<i>365</i>	<i>349</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>388</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>388</i>	<i>492</i>	<i>391</i>	<i>393</i>

6.2.4 Affordability in the local area by family type and working status

In the same way that knowledge of the affordability of local childcare varied clearly by use of formal provision and household income, there was variation in the level of knowledge between different family types. 25% of couples reported that they did not know how affordable local childcare was compared with 30% of lone parents. Similarly, working families were more likely to feel knowledgeable than non-working families; 25% of working lone parents did not know how affordable local childcare was compared with 34% of non-working lone parents, and 23% of dual-earning couples did not know how affordable local childcare was compared with 31% of couples where neither parent was in work.

Table 6.3 shows the views on the affordability of local childcare by family type and working status. Couples were more positive about the affordability of local childcare, with 54% of couples thinking that affordability was very good or fairly good, compared with 42% of lone parents. Again, this reflects the findings in Section 5.3 in Chapter 5, showing that lone parents were more likely to experience difficulties paying for childcare than couples. Working status was also important, but only for lone parents, whilst there was no difference between the views of couples with different working circumstances, working lone parents were more likely to feel positively about the affordability of local childcare than non-working lone parents (46% compared with 39%).

Table 6.3 Views of affordability of childcare in local area, by family type and working status

Base: All families

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both working	One working	Neither working	All couple families	Working	Not working	All lone parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	9	10	11	10	6	9	7
Fairly good	44	46	43	44	40	30	35
Fairly poor	33	28	32	32	34	31	33
Very poor	13	16	14	14	20	30	25
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2509</i>	<i>1140</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>3878</i>	<i>718</i>	<i>660</i>	<i>1378</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2485</i>	<i>1390</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>4170</i>	<i>590</i>	<i>707</i>	<i>1297</i>

6.2.5 Affordability in the local area by the age of children

The age of the selected child is indicative of the age profile of children in the family. For that reason we have looked at how views on the affordability of childcare in the local area are associated with the age of the selected child in the household. Firstly, parents of older children were less knowledgeable about the affordability of local childcare than parents of younger children (e.g. 41% of families with a selected child aged 12-14 did not know how affordable local childcare was, compared with 19% of families with a selected child aged 0-2). When we focus only on parents who knew about the affordability of local childcare (Table 6.4), we can see that child's age was associated with views on affordability. Families where the selected child was aged 3-4 were the most positive (61%, compared with between 48% and 50% for families in all other groups). This finding may reflect that families with a 3 or 4 year old are entitled to 12.5 free hours of early years education, which substantially reduces the overall cost of childcare for these families.

Table 6.4 Views of affordability of childcare in local area, by age of child

Base: All families

	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	7	12	11	7	9
Fairly good	41	49	39	43	39
Fairly poor	34	27	33	31	35
Very poor	19	12	17	19	17
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1174</i>	<i>862</i>	<i>882</i>	<i>1254</i>	<i>1084</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1165</i>	<i>1235</i>	<i>949</i>	<i>1234</i>	<i>884</i>

6.2.6 Key characteristics associated with views of affordability of childcare in the local area

Views on the affordability of childcare in the local area are likely to be influenced by a number of overlapping factors. The differences presented above may be the result, for example, of differences in income, working status, or in the age of the child.

Multivariate analysis (binomial logistic regression) was used to explore the independent association between views of affordability of childcare in the local area, and the families' demographic profile. All of the sub-groups discussed above were included, as well as use of informal childcare, region and index of multiple deprivation (see Table D.6.1 in Appendix D).

After controlling for other relevant factors we found that a higher family income, using formal childcare, having older children, being a working couple family, and paying a lower amount for childcare were all significantly associated with having more positive views about the affordability.

After controlling for other factors, there were no significant differences in views of affordability of childcare in the local area by whether the family used informal childcare, the region the family lived in, or the index of multiple deprivation for the area.

6.3 Costs as a barrier to using childcare

Although many parents have positive views about the affordability of childcare in their local area, we have also seen that 36% of parents in 2007 thought that affordability was fairly poor or very poor. In Chapters 7 and 8, which focus on parents' reasons for choosing their providers, we highlight the extent to which cost and affordability played a role in their decision making. Here we look at the extent to which cost and affordability are cited as barriers to using childcare or barriers to entering the labour market.

6.3.1 Cost as a reason for not using childcare and early years education

Parents who had not used any childcare in the past year were asked about their reasons they had chosen not to do so (Table C.6.1). If we combine the proportion of parents who reported that they could not afford childcare, or afford the initial registration/ administration fees, we find that 13% of parents reported cost a barrier to using childcare (which shows no significant change between 2004 and 2007).

Table C.6.2 to Table C.6.6 show how the reasons for not using childcare over the past year vary for different family types. Although there are indications that lower income families and non-working couple families might find cost a greater barrier, these differences are not statistically significant. However, Table C.6.5 shows that the extent to which cost is a barrier to using childcare does vary by child's age, with cost proving a greater barrier to families with younger children. For example, whilst cost was reported as a barrier by 25% of families where the selected child was aged 0-2, this was the case for only 8% of families where the selected child was aged 12-14. Likewise, families with a greater number of children were more likely to perceive cost to be a barrier than families with fewer children (19% of families with 3 or more children perceived cost to be a barrier, compared with 11% of families with only 1 child - see Table C.6.6).

In addition to asking parents who had not used childcare in the last year why they had chosen not to do so, we asked a similar question with parents with children aged 2-5 who had not used any early years education in the last week. In terms of *formal* childcare for pre-school children, cost appeared to be a barrier to using early years education for a sizeable minority of parents. Table C.6.7 shows the various reasons why parents chose not to use early years education in the last week. Just under a quarter (24%) said that this was because they could not afford it, although this is greater than the 19% of parents that reported this in 2004, the difference is not statistically significant.

Where parents had taken their children to an early years education provider for some, but not all weekdays, they were asked why they had chosen not to use early years education every day (Table C.6.8). 27% of these parents said that this was because they could not afford any more sessions. Therefore, whilst the free entitlement to early years education for 3 and 4 year olds would appear to have enabled many families to use early years education, a number are apparently prevented from extending these hours through their own resources, because of cost issues. In addition, this problem seems to have grown since 2004, since at that time only 21% of parents reported that cost meant that they were unable to use their early years provider every day⁶⁷.

The extent to which cost was reported as a barrier to using early years education every day did not differ between different family types.

6.3.2 Cost as a reason for not working

Parents who were not working (excluding those on maternity leave, long term disabled or sick) were asked if issues about childcare were part of their decision to remain at home. Again, the cost of childcare was an issue for a sizeable minority of non-working parents; 17% said that they could not find childcare that would make working worthwhile and 11% said that they could not afford quality childcare. Here we should note that since it is formal childcare that parents generally pay for (see Chapter 5, Table 5.1), it is likely that these cost factors are related to perceived or actual barriers to using formal rather than informal childcare.

In total, 22% of parents reported that the cost of childcare was a factor that hindered them from entering the labour market. This represents no change since 2004 (see Table C.6.10). Having said that, for a large proportion of these non-working parents, it was their *choice* to stay at home with their child rather than work (46%). On the one hand, for some parents this may represent an uncomplicated preference for parental care, on the other this may relate to parents' perceptions of the affordability or quality of non-parental childcare. Unfortunately it is not possible with the available data to disentangle the relative roles of parental views and the perception of barriers in shaping parents' childcare decisions.

⁶⁷ Since the distribution of the number of days children received early years education is similar between 2004 and 2007 (see Chapter 4), the growth in the proportion of parents perceiving cost to be a barrier to using early years education every day seems to be 'real' growth, and not attributable to a change in the proportion of parents using early years education every weekday.

As with the parents' perceptions of the cost of childcare in the local area, cost was more likely to be considered a barrier to work for non-working families with a lower income (Table C.6.11), which is perhaps not surprising, given that lower income groups are probably in these brackets *because* they are not working. However, these perceptions do reveal that a lack of available, affordable childcare to make working worthwhile is a considerable issue for low-income families. Other groups that were more likely to consider cost a barrier to using childcare included lone parents (Table C.6.12) and those with younger children (Table C.6.14).

6.4 Availability of childcare and early years provision at different times

Over recent years the nature of the labour market in the UK has undergone quite a transformation. The service sector has expanded and more people in the UK work longer hours than anywhere else in the EU⁶⁸. These changes have meant that people increasingly need to access services outside the standard working hours of 9am-5pm. In combination with the globalisation of the UK economy, this has led to the growth of a society that requires work at atypical times.

These atypical times, such as evenings and weekends, have traditionally been regarded as 'family times', however work outside 9am-5pm Monday to Friday is now increasingly common and for many parents it is the norm rather than the exception. Whilst some parents choose to work atypical hours in order to balance their work and family lives or avoid the use of non parental childcare, others feel that they have no choice but to work these hours and experience negative effects, such as disruption to their family lives,⁶⁹ or become more dependent on childcare. This change in the labour market therefore raises issues related to childcare, in terms of availability at different times of day.

In this section we take a brief look at the extent to which the times at which childcare is available may have caused difficulties to parents using childcare or going out to work. We look firstly at childcare during school holidays, secondly at childcare issues for parents working atypical hours⁷⁰ and finally the extent to which lack of childcare at specific times was cited as a barrier to using childcare or going out to work.

6.4.1 Coping with the school holidays

When asked about availability of childcare in the school holidays, 39% of parents reported that their main formal provider (for the selected child) was open, at least some of the time, in the school holidays. This is the same as found in 2004, which is perhaps surprising given the growth of Extended Schools of which holiday care is an integral part⁷¹.

As can be seen in Table 6.5, there are striking differences in holiday opening between different types of settings. Holiday care availability was greatest amongst the services that traditionally have provided 'care' and least amongst those that traditionally provide 'education'. For instance, childminders and day nurseries were most likely to be available in the holidays (84% and 89% respectively), whilst nursery classes, reception classes and playgroups were least likely (12%, 10% and 14% respectively).

⁶⁸ Kodz et al. (2003).

⁶⁹ La Valle et al (2002).

⁷⁰ Given the prevalence of extended working hours, the 'standard hours' for the purpose of this survey were considered as Monday to Friday, 8am until 6pm.

⁷¹ Gilby et al (2006).

Table 6.5 Whether main provider is open in the holidays, by (formal) provider type*Base: All families with a selected child who use the provider type as their main provider*

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Reception class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	Child-minder	On site Out-of-school club	Off site Out-of-school club
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes or some of the time	36	12	10	89	14	84	28	44
No	59	83	83	9	83	12	68	53
Not sure or don't know	5	5	7	2	4	5	4	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>255</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>435</i>	<i>177</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>235</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>427</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>372</i>	<i>146</i>

Those parents whose main formal provider was open, for at least some time, in the school holidays were asked whether they thought their provider's opening hours in the holidays were sufficient. The vast majority (92%) said that they were, although we have no information about what these opening hours were. This represents the same level of satisfaction as found in 2004.

Parents whose formal providers were not open in the holidays were asked if they would like them to be. Demand was quite high, with 42% of these parents saying that they would like their provider to offer care in the holidays. This does not differ significantly from the level of demand observed in 2004.

Demand was highest among parents with lower incomes; 52% of parents with a family income under £10,000 said they would like their provider to be open in the holidays, compared with 35% of parents in the highest income quintile. Lone parents were more likely to need holiday care, compared with parents in couple families; 47% of lone parents who did not have access to holiday care said they would like it to be available, compared with 40% of couples. This may reflect the reduced ability lone parents have to shift-parent, that is when parents arrange to work different hours from one another in order to minimise or even eliminate the need for non-parental care.

6.4.2 Needing childcare at atypical hours

It seems that working atypical hours (defined as either working before 8am, past 6pm, or at the weekend) was a cause of difficulties for a number of parents in trying to organise and secure their childcare arrangements⁷². A quarter of parents working early mornings or evenings said that their working hours caused problems with childcare arrangements (24% and 25% respectively, which reflects the same level of difficulty reported in 2004). For both morning work and evening work the extent of these difficulties was very much determined by family type and working status, being most difficult for working lone parents and least difficult for sole-earning couples. Whilst 34% lone parents working mornings found that their work caused them childcare difficulties, this was the case for only 23% of dual-earning couples and 11%

⁷² Parents were asked whether working at those times caused 'you or your partner any particular problems in terms of your childcare arrangements?' Please note that no distinction was made between informal and formal childcare at this question, and there was no single question that asked parents what kinds of childcare they wanted to use but could not access.

of sole-earning couples. Similarly, evening work caused childcare difficulties for 35% of lone parents who worked at that time, compared with 23% of dual-earning couples and 14% of sole-earning couples.

Turning to weekend work, 18% of parents who worked on Saturdays and 17% of parents who worked on Sundays experienced problems arranging their childcare around work, again this reflects the same level of difficulty reported in 2004. Lone parents were again the most likely to experience problems with weekend work (28% of lone parents experienced problems with their Saturday work, compared with 16% of dual-earning couples and 30% of lone parents experienced problems with their Sunday work, compared with 14% of dual-earning couples). There were no significant differences between dual-earning couples and sole-earning couples in terms of arranging their childcare and weekend work.

The problems encountered with working at atypical times also varied by household income. Perhaps surprisingly, it is families with a higher household income who were more likely to experience these problems. For instance, 26% of families with an income of £45,000 or more experienced childcare problems through working mornings, compared with 16% of families with an income of under £10,000. This was the same for evening work where 30% of higher income families experienced problems with their childcare, compared with 15% of lower income families. There was no significant difference in relation to weekend work.

6.4.3 Lack of available childcare hours as a barrier to working

As discussed in Section 6.2, parents who were not working (excluding those on maternity leave or long term disabled or sick) were asked if issues about childcare, whether formal or informal, were part of their decision not to work. 7% of non-working parents said this was at least partly due to lack of childcare during the days or hours that they would need to go out to work (Table C.6.10). This does not differ from the corresponding finding in 2004.

6.5 Availability of childcare and early years provision

We have seen that the cost of childcare and the times when it is available are two important barriers to use. However, more generally, the extent to which parents perceive that there are sufficient numbers of formal childcare places available locally may also influence parents' decision making. In this section we report on parents' views, both generally on the availability in their local area and, more specifically, about the extent to which a lack of childcare places has been a reason for not using childcare or not going out to work.

6.5.1 Views on availability of places in local area

Table 6.6 shows the breakdown of parents' views on the overall number of places at childcare services in their local area. More parents thought that there were the right number of places in their local area than in 2004 (44% compared with 40%). However, a large minority (37%) still thought that there were not enough places. In addition, as with perceptions of affordability, a substantial proportion (18%) of parents said that they did not know about the availability of places in their area.

Table 6.6 Views of availability of places in the local area, 2004-2007*Base: All families*

	2004	2007
	%	%
Too many	1	1
About the right number	40	44
Not enough	40	37
Don't know	19	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7798</i>	<i>7134</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7797</i>	<i>7135</i>

As one would expect, parents who had not used formal childcare in the last week felt that they were less knowledgeable about the availability of local childcare, compared with parents who had used formal childcare in the last week (23% said 'don't know' compared with 10%). However, once we focus only on parents who knew about the availability of childcare places in their local area, Table 6.7 shows that there were no differences between the perceptions of parents who had used formal childcare in the last week, compared with those who had not.

Table 6.7 Views of availability of places in the local area, by whether or not the family used formal childcare in the last week*Base: All families*

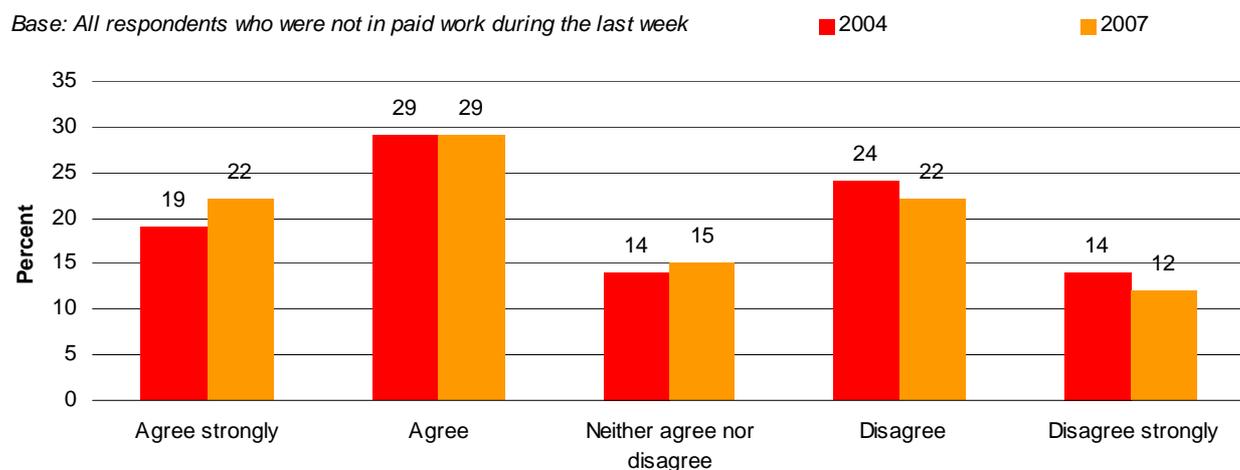
	Used formal childcare in the last week	Did not use formal childcare in the last week
	%	%
Too many	2	1
About the right number	54	53
Not enough	44	46
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2579</i>	<i>3293</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3197</i>	<i>2853</i>

Parents whose selected child was aged between 2 and 5 years old who were not currently using any early years education services were asked why this was (Table C.6.7). 8% of these parents said that this was because they could not get a place or there were no local providers, this has not changed since 2004.

Parents who were not working (excluding those on maternity leave, long term disabled or sick) were asked if issues about childcare were part of their decision not to work (Table C.6.10 to Table C.6.14). As in 2004, 4% of non-working parents said that they did not work, at least in part, because they could not find any formal or informal childcare near to where they lived. This was more likely to be the case for lower income families and lone parents.

Figure 6.3 shows the extent to which non-working parents would prefer to go out to work if they could arrange good quality childcare which was convenient, reliable and affordable. Whilst the question did not distinguish between formal and informal childcare, it did reveal that the availability of childcare would be an important factor in influencing parents' ability to enter the labour market, since just over half of non-working parents (51%) would prefer to go out to work if suitable childcare was available (this does not differ significantly from 2004).

Figure 6.3 Whether the respondent would work if they could arrange affordable, reliable and quality childcare, by whether or not the family used formal childcare in the last week



This was much more of an issue for lower income families (Table 6.8). Twice as many non-working parents in families with an income of under £10,000 said they would work if they could arrange suitable childcare, compared with those with incomes of £45,000 or over (65% compared with 28%).

Table 6.8 Whether the respondent would work if they could arrange affordable, reliable and quality childcare, by family yearly income

Base: All respondents who were not in paid work during the last week

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
Agree strongly	31	23	18	17	11
Agree	34	30	25	26	17
Neither agree nor disagree	14	14	17	16	15
Disagree	15	24	25	26	31
Disagree strongly	6	9	15	16	26
Weighted base	871	706	335	216	265
Unweighted base	818	911	430	247	311

More lone parents expressed this view than couple parents (Table 6.9), which is probably linked to income levels. Earlier in this chapter we discussed lone parents' greater concerns over the cost of childcare, availability of childcare at suitable times, and availability of childcare places. These findings suggest that lone parents may face more difficulty in finding available childcare, ultimately forcing some of them to choose the latter over the former.

Table 6.9 Whether the respondent would work if they could arrange affordable, reliable and quality childcare, by family working status

Base: All respondents who were not in paid work during the last week

	Couple - one working %	Couple - neither working %	Lone parent - not working %
Agree strongly	16	21	32
Agree	25	29	34
Neither agree nor disagree	15	20	12
Disagree	28	19	16
Disagree strongly	17	11	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1291</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>981</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1536</i>	<i>409</i>	<i>1007</i>

6.5.2 Views on availability in different regions

Across the regions there was differing knowledge about the availability of local childcare. The regions with the least knowledge were the South West and London (26% and 25% of parents respectively said they did not know about the availability of childcare in their local area), whereas parents in the North West were most knowledgeable (since only 12% reported that they did not know about the availability of childcare in their local area).

Table 6.10 shows parents' views of availability for those who felt that they knew about the availability of childcare in the local area. Here we can see that parents in London, Yorkshire and the Humber, the East Midlands and the South West were amongst those most likely to think that there were not enough formal childcare places in their local area (47% to 52% said this). This compares with 40% of parents in the North East and West Midlands, who regarded the availability of places as poor.

Table 6.10 Views of availability of places in the local area, by government office region

Base: All families

	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Too many	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1
About the right number	59	54	48	52	59	57	46	57	52
Not enough	40	45	49	47	40	42	52	42	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>868</i>	<i>615</i>	<i>514</i>	<i>663</i>	<i>651</i>	<i>797</i>	<i>936</i>	<i>490</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>342</i>	<i>880</i>	<i>643</i>	<i>563</i>	<i>644</i>	<i>685</i>	<i>720</i>	<i>1009</i>	<i>538</i>

6.6 Quality of available childcare and early years provision

The Ten Year Childcare Strategy focuses on quality as well as quantity of childcare, since a number of studies have shown the importance of childcare quality in terms of children's social and cognitive development⁷³. Here we report on parents' views on childcare quality in their local area and whether a lack of quality childcare has influenced their decisions not to use childcare or not to go out to work, that is to what extent lack of quality childcare is a barrier to use.

Parents were asked to rate the overall quality of the childcare in their local area. As seen in **Error! Reference source not found.**, very few parents rated the quality as poor. However, although one-fifth (20%) felt it was very good, the largest group of parents (43%) rated it as fairly good. As we have seen throughout the chapter when looking at views on childcare in the local area, a substantial proportion of parents (26%) felt they could not make a judgement on the quality of local childcare, reflecting the 2004 findings. There were again variations in level of knowledge. For instance, parents who had used formal childcare in the last week felt more knowledgeable than parents who had not used formal childcare (12% compared with 35% of parents respectively, reported that they did not know about the quality of childcare in the local area). Therefore, whilst the proportion of parents who felt unsure about the quality of childcare in the local area are included in **Error! Reference source not found.**, they are excluded from the subsequent analysis that looks at how views vary across families.

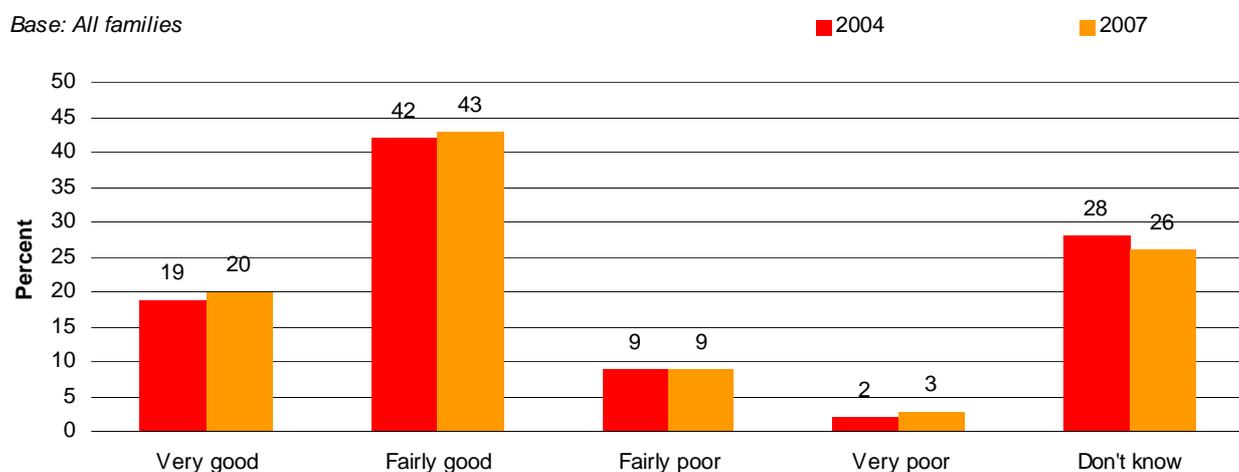
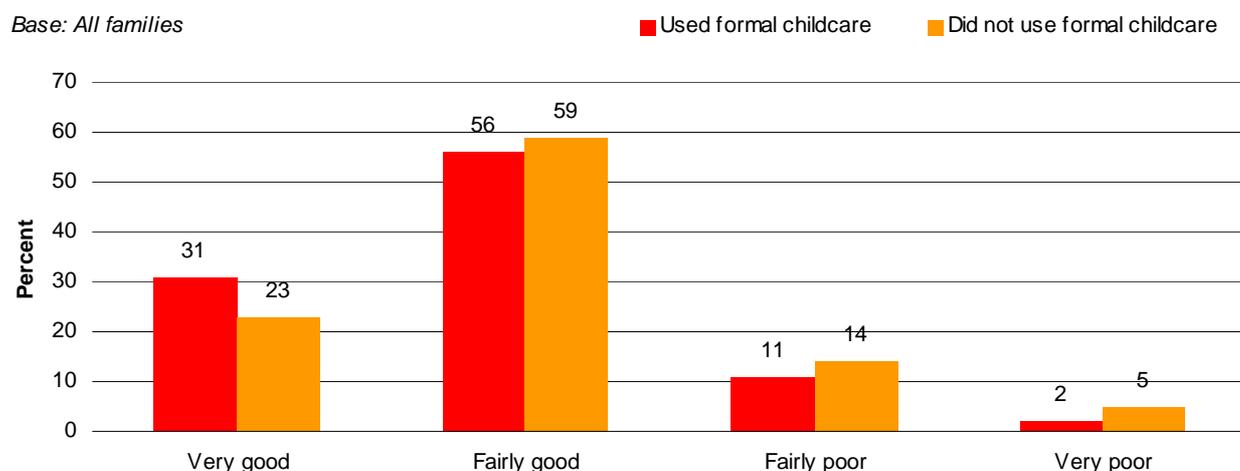


Figure 6.4 Parents views on quality of childcare in the local area, 2004-2007

In Figure 6.5 we can see that parents who had used formal childcare in the last week were more positive about the quality of childcare than other parents (87% compared with 82%). This may reflect the fact that these parents felt that they had found good quality childcare whilst the others may well have not. Alternatively, it could reflect the fact that parents who had used childcare had personal experience of its quality.

⁷³ For example Sylva et al (2004).

Figure 6.5 Parents views on quality of childcare in the local area, by whether or not the family used formal childcare in the last week



Parents with higher incomes, working families and couple families (all of whom were more likely to have used childcare themselves) were all more likely to feel knowledgeable about the quality of local childcare and to rate it more positively than their counterparts (Table 6.11 and Table 6.12).

Table 6.11 Parents views on quality of childcare in the local area, by family yearly income

Base: All families

	Under £10,000	£10,000 - £19,999	£20,000 - £29,999	£30,000 - £44,999	£45,000 +
	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	19	25	27	30	33
Fairly good	57	58	58	57	55
Fairly poor	16	13	12	11	10
Very poor	8	3	3	2	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	823	1274	1006	909	947
<i>Unweighted base</i>	790	1403	1102	915	982

Table 6.12 Parents views on quality of childcare in the local area, by family type and working status

Base: All families

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both working	One working	Neither working	All couple families	Working	Not working	All lone parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	30	28	23	29	22	19	20
Fairly good	57	59	62	58	58	54	56
Fairly poor	10	11	10	10	16	21	18
Very poor	2	3	5	3	5	7	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	2499	1148	249	3896	691	695	1386
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2473	1427	325	4225	572	745	1317

Table C.6.1 compares the reasons parents gave for having chosen not to use childcare in the last year. A very small proportion of parents had done so due to a lack of quality childcare (2%), this was also the case in 2004.

When non-working parents were asked about their choices and barriers to work, 5% cited a lack of good quality childcare, whether formal or informal, as a reason for not working, this is the same as found in 2004 (Table C.6.10). This suggests that lack of quality childcare plays quite a small role in parents' decision not to work. However, lack of quality was a more significant barrier to work for lone parents (7% compared with 3% of couples - Table C.6.12), and low income families (7% of families in the lowest income quintile, compared with 2% in the highest income quintile - Table C.6.11).

6.7 Access to information on childcare and early years provision

Potentially a major barrier to accessing good quality, affordable childcare at the times when parents need it could be a lack of information about how and where to find it. Therefore, we report here on the sources from which parents get their information on childcare, what they think about it, and what more information they would like.

6.7.1 What sources of information do parents use?

Parents were asked about the sources of information they had used within the last year to find out about any kind of childcare in their local area (Table 6.13)⁷⁴. Parents got their information most frequently from talking to friends and relatives (36% said 'through word of mouth'). Among more formal routes, schools played an important part in providing information, with 18% of parents citing this as a source. All the remaining sources of information were each cited by less than 10% of parents. However, we should note in particular that 7% of parents used Children's Information Services (CIS) and 2% Childcare Link. A substantial proportion of parents (41%) had not found out any information about childcare from any of the sources listed (or from any alternative sources which they could have mentioned).

In terms of how this compares with 2004, the largest change can be seen in internet usage, with more people using the internet in 2007 than 2004⁷⁵. Likewise, there was a small increase in the use of CIS, although there was a corresponding decrease in the usage of the local authority. Since the most common way in which local authorities distribute information is through CIS, these two changes in use may represent similar use of the CIS, but increased awareness of the brand name.

⁷⁴ Parents were given a showcard with a list of the most common sources and were also able to say whether they had received information from sources not listed on the card. Any parents who did not use any sources of information to find out about childcare (which may have been because they did not need any information) are included in the category 'no sources of information used'.

⁷⁵ A small increase in use is also apparent for SureStart and a small reduction in use apparent for local advertising.

Table 6.13 Where respondents found information about childcare in their area, 2004-2007

Base: All families

	2004	2007
	%	%
Word of mouth (e.g. friends or relatives)	37	36
School	19	18
Health visitor / clinic	8	8
Internet	4	8
Children's Information Services	6	7
Local Authority	8	7
Local advertising (e.g. in shop windows, local newspaper)	9	7
Jobcentre, Jobcentre Plus Office or Benefits Office	5	5
Local library	4	5
Childcare provider	5	5
Doctor's surgery	4	4
Your employer	3	3
ChildcareLink (the national helpline and web site)	2	2
Yellow Pages	2	2
Local community centre	2	2
Church or religious organisation	3	2
National organisation(s) (e.g. 4Children, Citizens' Advice Bureau)	1	1
Sure Start	+	1
Other - please specify	1	2
None of these	40	41
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7793</i>	<i>7119</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7793</i>	<i>7124</i>

In Table 6.14 and Table 6.15 we look at the different sources of information cited by different types of family. Not surprisingly, parents who had used formal childcare in the last week were more likely to have found out *any* information; parents who had not used childcare were more likely to say that they had used none of the listed sources (53% compared with 23%) (Table 6.14). Likewise, almost all sources were used more by parents who had used formal childcare in the last week than by parents who had not.

Table 6.14 Where respondents found information about childcare in their area, by whether or not the family used formal childcare in the last week

Base: All families

	Used formal childcare in the last week %	Did not use formal childcare in the last week %
Word of mouth (e.g. friends or relatives)	50	26
Children's Information Services	11	4
ChildcareLink (the national helpline and web site)	4	1
National organisation(s) (e.g. 4Children, Citizens' Advice Bureau)	1	1
Local Authority	10	4
Jobcentre, Jobcentre Plus Office or Benefits Office	4	6
Your employer	3	3
Local advertising (e.g. in shop windows, local newspaper)	9	6
Yellow Pages	3	1
Doctor's surgery	4	4
Health visitor / clinic	11	6
Local community centre	2	2
Local library	6	4
Internet	13	4
Childcare provider	8	4
School	21	16
Church or religious organisation	3	2
Sure Start	1	1
Other	2	1
None of these	23	53
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2877</i>	<i>4242</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3517</i>	<i>3607</i>

Information sources used by parents with children of different ages differ greatly (Table 6.15). In almost all instances the group of parents who were most likely to use each information source were families where the selected child was aged 0-2. The notable exceptions to this are firstly, families where the selected child was aged 3-4 were more likely to have used information from the local authority or from a childcare provider. This is probably attributable to promotion of the 3 and 4 year olds early years education offer. Secondly, as may be expected, families where the selected child was aged 5-7 or 8-11 were the most likely to have received information on childcare from a school.

Table 6.15 Where respondents found information about childcare in their area, by age of child

Base: All families

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
Word of mouth (e.g. friends or relatives)	54	51	40	28	18
Children's Information Services	10	11	10	5	3
ChildcareLink (the national helpline and web site)	6	3	2	2	+
National organisation(s) (e.g. 4Children, Citizens' Advice Bureau)	1	1	2	1	+
Local Authority	8	11	8	6	4
Jobcentre, Jobcentre Plus Office or Benefits Office	6	5	7	5	3
Your employer	5	2	2	3	3
Local advertising (e.g. in shop windows, local newspaper)	10	8	5	7	6
Yellow Pages	4	2	2	1	1
Doctor's surgery	6	4	4	2	3
Health visitor / clinic	22	12	5	2	2
Local community centre	3	2	2	2	2
Local library	6	5	5	6	3
Internet	16	12	6	5	3
Childcare provider	8	11	6	3	2
School	8	15	27	27	13
Church or religious organisation	3	2	2	3	2
Sure Start	1	1	1	+	+
Other	2	2	2	2	1
None of these	21	24	34	47	65
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1450</i>	<i>997</i>	<i>1120</i>	<i>1721</i>	<i>1831</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1412</i>	<i>1434</i>	<i>1183</i>	<i>1666</i>	<i>1429</i>

6.7.2 Were the sources of information helpful?

For each of the five main sources of information that parents cited we have looked at parents' perceptions of how helpful these sources were. In each case satisfaction with sources of information was very high (Table 6.16).

Table 6.16 Parents' perceptions of childcare information sources

Base: All families

	Very helpful or quite helpful %	<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Children's Information Services	87	<i>504</i>	<i>531</i>
Internet	85	<i>558</i>	<i>552</i>
Health visitor / clinic	81	<i>562</i>	<i>645</i>
Word of mouth (e.g. friends or relatives)	79	<i>2547</i>	<i>2749</i>
School	78	<i>1267</i>	<i>1405</i>

6.7.3 Childcare Link

2% of parents said that they had used ChildcareLink to find out about childcare in their local area. Any parents who had not mentioned ChildcareLink as an information source were asked directly whether or not they were aware of it. This prompting demonstrated that awareness of ChildcareLink was low, with 85% of parents being unaware of it. However this is a slight improvement on 2004 when 87% of parents were unaware. Those most likely to be aware were parents in higher income families (Table 6.17), couples (as opposed to lone parents), working lone parents (as opposed to non-working lone parents) (Table 6.18) and families where the selected child was aged under 8.

Table 6.17 Awareness of ChildcareLink, by family yearly income

Base: All families

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
Yes	9	14	16	17	18
No	91	86	84	83	82
Weighted base	1131	1770	1323	1159	1217
Unweighted base	1036	1860	1373	1118	1208

Table 6.18 Awareness of ChildcareLink, by family working status

Base: All families

	Couple families			Lone parents	
	Both working %	One working %	Neither working %	Working %	Not working %
Yes	16	16	13	15	8
No	84	84	87	85	92
Weighted base	3267	1566	329	962	1000
Unweighted base	3091	1827	415	769	1022

Parents aware of ChildcareLink were asked whether they had ever used it. Here we found that in total 5% of parents had used this service at some point in the past⁷⁶, which is an increase of 1 percentage point since 2004. Reflecting levels of awareness, parents with higher family incomes were the most likely to have used ChildcareLink. Similarly, couples were more likely to have used it than lone parents, and working families more likely to have used it than non-working families (Table 6.19).

⁷⁶ The 5% of parents who had used ChildcareLink in the past includes both those who reported that they had used it in the last year (unprompted) and those who said that they had used it as some point (after prompting).

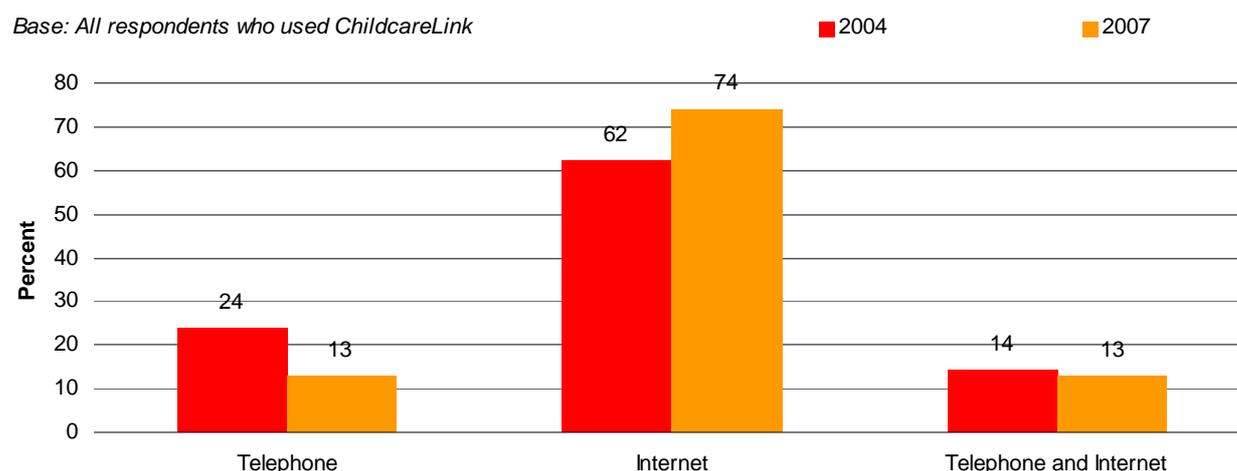
Table 6.19 Use of ChildcareLink, by family yearly income

Base: All families

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
Yes	2	4	6	8	9
No	98	96	94	92	91
Weighted base	1131	1770	1322	1159	1216
Unweighted base	1036	1860	1372	1118	1207

The method used to contact ChildcareLink can be found in Figure 6.6. In 2007, the vast majority of users had done so via the Internet, on its own or combined with telephone (87%), compared with only 26% who had contacted them by telephone, again on its own or combined with the Internet.

Figure 6.6 Method used to contact ChildcareLink, 2004-2007



Children's Information Service (CIS)

As with ChildcareLink, parents who had not mentioned CIS as an information source were asked directly whether they were aware of it, and then whether or not they had ever used it. 7% of parents had mentioned CIS as an information source used within the last year. Once we had prompted the parents that had not mentioned the CIS, in total we found that 29% of parents were aware of CIS, which is an increase of 7 percentage points since 2004 (showing higher levels of awareness for CIS than for ChildcareLink).

As with ChildcareLink, awareness of CIS was higher amongst parents in higher income families (Table 6.20) couples and working families (Table 6.21).

Table 6.20 Awareness of CIS, by family yearly income*Base: All families*

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
Yes	20	27	29	36	35
No	80	73	71	64	65
<i>Weighted base</i>	1132	1771	1323	1159	1218
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1036	1862	1373	1118	1208

Table 6.21 Awareness of CIS, by family working status*Base: All families*

	Couple families			Lone parents	
	Both working %	One working %	Neither working %	Working %	Not working %
Yes	33	27	22	28	22
No	67	73	78	72	78
<i>Weighted base</i>	3273	1563	331	963	1000
<i>Unweighted base</i>	3097	1823	416	770	1022

Reflecting the higher levels of awareness for CIS than for ChildcareLink, more parents had used the former at some point in the past (13% compared with 5%)⁷⁷. Furthermore, use of CIS has grown since 2004, with 13% of parents having used CIS in 2007, compared with 10% in 2004. Like for ChildcareLink, use of CIS was greater for parents with higher family incomes (Table 6.22).

Table 6.22 Use of CIS, by family yearly income*Base: All families*

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
Yes	9	10	12	16	19
No	91	90	88	84	81
<i>Weighted base</i>	1132	1771	1323	1159	1218
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1036	1862	1373	1118	1205

6.7.4 Do parents have enough information about childcare?

Given that a large proportion of families had not used any information on childcare in the last year, we now turn to the issue of whether parents feel that they have sufficient information about childcare services in their local area. From Table 6.23 it is clear that a sizeable proportion (35%) of parents would have liked more information. However, the situation has improved since 2004; more people now think that the information available to them is about right (43%, compared with 38% in 2004).

⁷⁷ The 13% of parents who had used the CIS in the past includes both those who reported that they had used it in the last year (unprompted) and those who said that they had used it as some point (after prompting).

Table 6.23 Whether parents receive enough information about childcare in their local area, 2004-2007

Base: All families

	2004	2007
	%	%
About right	38	43
Too much	1	1
Too little	38	35
Not sure or don't know	23	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>7798</i>	<i>7136</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7797</i>	<i>7136</i>

Understandably, parents who had used formal childcare in the last week felt more sure about the sufficiency of the information available to them than parents that had not (12% compared with 27% of parents who had not used formal childcare in the last week said that they did not know whether they had enough information available to them). Furthermore, parents who were not using childcare were more likely to want additional information than those who did use childcare (47% compared with 41%).

Table 6.24 Whether parents receive enough information about childcare in their local area, by whether or not the family used formal childcare in the last week

Base: All families

	Used formal childcare in the last week	Did not use formal childcare in the last week
	%	%
About right	58	52
Too much	1	1
Too little	41	47
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2534</i>	<i>3088</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3098</i>	<i>2657</i>

Again, families where the selected child was older were less likely to feel that they knew how much childcare information was available in their local area. Focusing only on those who believed they did know about the level of available information, we can see that families where the selected child was aged 3-4 were most likely to think that they had the right amount of information, perhaps due to promotion of the 3 and 4 year olds early years education offer and the greater probability that they are engaged with providers of early years services. Those most likely to think that they had too little information were families where the selected child was aged 0-2.

Table 6.25 Whether parents receive enough information about childcare in their local area, by age of child

Base: All families

	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
About right	51	63	54	53	56
Too much	1	1	1	1	1
Too little	48	36	45	46	42
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1245</i>	<i>871</i>	<i>951</i>	<i>1295</i>	<i>1259</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1214</i>	<i>1248</i>	<i>1002</i>	<i>1275</i>	<i>1016</i>

Parents within different family types were equally likely to feel that they were aware of how much information was available about local childcare. However, couples were more likely to be satisfied with the level of information available than lone parents (Table 6.26) (the difference between working lone parents and non-working lone parents is not statistically significant).

Table 6.26 Whether parents receive enough information about childcare in their local area, by family working status

Base: All families

	Couple families			Lone parents	
	Both working %	One working %	Neither working %	Working %	Not working %
	About right	58	58	54	51
Too much	1	1	2	1	2
Too little	41	41	44	48	52
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2560</i>	<i>1210</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>765</i>	<i>818</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2507</i>	<i>1453</i>	<i>339</i>	<i>617</i>	<i>839</i>

Taking all these trends in parental views of the childcare information available, it seems that parents wanting more information were generally more likely to come from the family types who were less likely to be using childcare (Table 6.24 to Table 6.26). This points to a potential need to increase awareness of where parents should go for information on childcare (at least in parallel with the need for an increase in the information available).

6.7.5 What more information would parents like?

Parents who said that they thought there was too little information available about childcare were asked what more information they would like. They were given a list of options (plus the ability to give another answer) and asked to pick as many as applied to them. The most commonly cited areas about which more information was needed were:

- Costs of available childcare (39%)
- General information about childcare in local area (36%)
- Childcare during the school holidays (35%)
- Childcare before or after the school day (26%)
- Quality of available childcare (24%)

It is interesting that parents' top priority for greater information was on the cost of childcare, because this information is amongst the least likely to be available through organisations like CIS and ChildcareLink. As such, this may well be an area for improvement.

6.8 Summing Up

Views of the affordability and availability of local childcare have improved slightly between 2004 and 2007. However, a substantial minority of parents still thought that affordability was fairly poor or very poor, or that there were not enough childcare places in their local area. Views on the quality of childcare in the local area were more positive than views on affordability and availability. The balance of these perceptions are reflected in the reported barriers to work, for whilst over half of all parents who were not currently working said that they would work if they could arrange 'good quality childcare that was convenient, reliable and affordable', only a small proportion of non-working parents reported lack of quality childcare. Lack of affordable (quality) childcare was a more substantial barrier. Although even greater still were factors such as a desire for parents to stay with their children, a concern that their children are too young for childcare and a concern that their children would suffer if they went to work.

There was no change since 2004 in the proportion of parents who reported that their main provider was open during the school holidays (39%). However, this may be something that changes more in future as the Extended Schools programme gets rolled out further. If this does happen we may also expect take-up to increase since demand for holiday opening remained high. Turning to childcare outside 'standard' hours (i.e. before 8am or after 6pm and at the weekends) little in terms of policy has been proposed to facilitate provision, which can be problematic for parents who are required to work at these times. Although having said that, parents with younger children can benefit from a number of policies that promote ways of working that enable employees to combine paid work with other aspects of their lives, such as the right to ask for flexible arrangements (e.g. part-time work, term-time only contracts).

Availability of information on childcare has improved since 2004, yet over a third of parents still reported that they had too little information about local childcare. This suggests there may be scope for greater dissemination of information about local childcare services, particularly for families with young children.

7 PARENTS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THEIR CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS PROVISION

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at what parents think about the early years education and childcare that their children receive and to what extent parents' views have changed since 2004. Given differences in the educational and care needs of pre-school and school age children, and in the kinds of childcare provision used by the two groups, we report on the two groups separately. In this chapter we focus on the views of parents of pre-school age children and in Chapter 8 we focus on the perspective of parents who have school age children.

Here we have defined pre-school as 'children aged 5 and under and who do not yet attend full-time school'⁷⁸. The chapter starts by looking at the key factors that influence parents' choice of provider and whether some parents have more choice than others. The chapter then moves on to look at what parents think about their provider in terms of the improvements they feel need making. We then focus on parents' awareness and use of Ofsted reports and look at parents perception of the quality of their provider. We look at the feedback childcare providers give to parents and the availability and take-up of other services offered as part of initiatives such as Children's Centres and Extended Schools. The final part of this chapter examines the transition to reception class for children who have recently started school.

7.2 Main provider

Throughout this chapter (and Chapter 8) we focus primarily on the *main* formal childcare or early years provider used for the selected child⁷⁹.

Table 7.1 shows the main formal providers parents used for their pre-school children, categorised into group and individual providers and broken down by age. As found in Chapter 2 in relation to all providers used, it can be seen that more children were attending a group setting as their main provider (88%) than an individual provider (11%). The most common main group providers were day nurseries (30%), nursery classes and playgroups or pre-schools (used for one-fifth of children in each case) and nursery schools (14%). Childminders were the most common individual formal providers, they were the main provider for 8% of pre-school children, compared with 2% of nannies or au pairs and 1% of baby-sitters.

The breakdown of formal providers by age shows that there is a clear link between the age of the child and the type of main provider used. Childminders were the most commonly used form of individual provider for younger children. Younger children were also more likely to go to day nurseries as their main provider, whilst older children more commonly attended nursery classes.

⁷⁸ Thus children who attend full-time school but have not yet reached the age at which they are legally required to attend school are counted as school age. This definition of the pre-school: school age split was decided on the basis of changes in childcare requirements once a child starts full-time school.

⁷⁹ The computer programme identified the formal provider used for the greatest number of hours in the last week. Respondents were asked whether this was their main formal provider and had the opportunity to identify an alternative if appropriate.

Table 7.1 Main formal provider types by different age groups*Base: All pre-school aged selected children, whose main provider in the last week was formal*

	0-1	2-3	4-5	All
	%	%	%	%
Group providers	76	91	94	88
Day nursery	54	28	14	30
Nursery class	2	21	40	21
Playgroup or pre-school	15	23	17	20
Nursery school	3	16	19	14
Reception class ⁸⁰	0	+	6	1
Special day school or unit	0	1	0	+
Breakfast or after school club on school site	0	+	+	+
Other nursery education provider	3	1	+	1
Individual providers	24	9	5	11
Childminder	16	6	3	8
Nanny or au pair	4	2	1	2
Baby-sitter who came to our home	3	1	1	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	214	670	218	1102
<i>Unweighted base</i>	189	992	341	1522

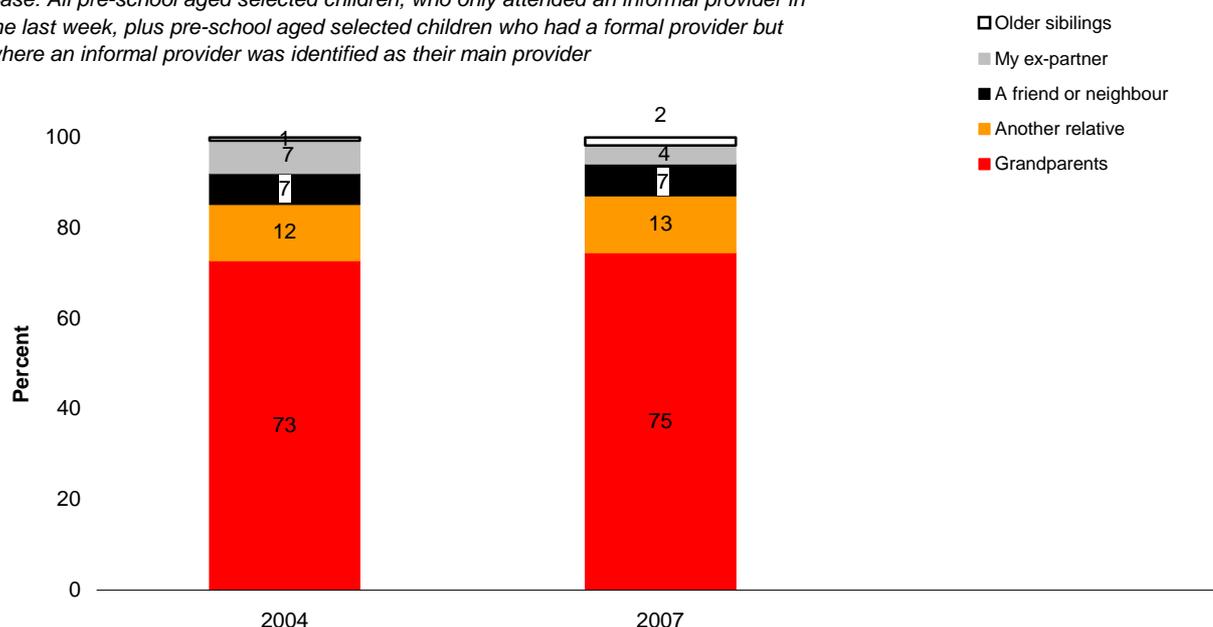
Comparisons between the main formal providers used in 2004 and 2007 reveal that, though there are some small differences, the use of main formal providers has remained fairly stable. A slightly higher proportion of children were attending nursery classes and nursery schools in 2007 as their main provider compared with 2004 (17% children went to nursery classes in 2004, compared with 21% in 2007 and 10% attended nursery schools, compared with 14% in 2007).

Parents who were using both formal and informal providers for their child were asked which was the main provider overall. Figure 7.1 shows the breakdown of the main informal providers, grandparents were by far the most frequently mentioned; in both 2004 and 2007 they were the main informal provider for around three-quarters of children (73% in 2004 and 75% in 2007).

⁸⁰ As noted in Chapter 2, the data on use of reception classes should be treated with caution, as for some four year olds, respondents stated they were attending school (hence likely to be in reception) but did not identify reception class as a provider.

Figure 7.1 Main informal provider for the selected child, 2004 - 2007

Base: All pre-school aged selected children, who only attended an informal provider in the last week, plus pre-school aged selected children who had a formal provider but where an informal provider was identified as their main provider



The rest of this chapter looks at the views of parents of pre-school children using the following rationale:

- We focus on day nurseries, nursery classes, playgroups or pre-schools, nursery schools and childminders (the number of children going to the other providers was too small for separate analysis).
- Where the questions were relevant to childminders they have been included in the analysis of formal group providers, but nannies, au pairs and baby-sitters have been excluded because the questions were not relevant to these providers.
- Formal group providers includes all those listed under that relevant heading in Table 7.1.

7.3 Reasons for choosing providers

There are a range of factors that parents need to consider when choosing a childcare provider. Some of these will be related to what parents want for their child, while others will be related to practical considerations. Parents were asked to give the most important reason why they chose to use their main provider for the selected child (Table 7.2), covering not only reasons for choosing between different types of provider (e.g. day nursery or childminder), but also for choosing one provider over another (e.g. which day nursery to use). The data seem to show that parents based their decisions on 'pull' factors, things that parents *wanted* for their child, rather than practical 'push' factors that meant that they had no choice but to use a particular provider. In fact only 1% of parents said that they had no other choice when deciding which childcare or early years provider to use for their child.

Looking at the reasons why parents chose group providers we can see that the quality of the childcare and educational opportunities were key. The most commonly cited reasons were being able to trust the provider, good reputation, providing opportunity to learn (all 15%) and being able to mix with other children (13%). A good reputation and educational opportunities were most important for parents with children attending a nursery class. This may be because parents know more about the reputation of a provider when it is linked to a larger organisation, such as a school, and feel that links with a school may mean that there is more of an 'educational' focus than at other providers.

The cost of childcare was a main consideration when choosing a provider in very few cases. Some of the least frequently cited reasons were related to money, such as the provider being low cost (2%) or not being able to afford to pay for formal childcare (1%). Whilst cost may not feature highly in the main reasons for choosing a particular childcare provider it still may be a concern, but other reasons, such as the quality of the provider, or educational opportunities were seen as more important.

The reasons for choosing childminders were somewhat different to those mentioned in relation to group providers. Whilst trust in the provider was important for parents whose children attended group settings, trust in the childminder was by far the most important factor for parents of children attending childminders, with 46% choosing this option. This suggests that when children are cared for by one person, trust in that person far outweighs other considerations.

Comparisons with the reasons that influenced childcare choices in 2004 show that what parents value in a provider has remained the same. The majority of parents said that they had chosen a childcare or early years provider for positive reasons, such as quality and educational opportunities, rather than for practical reasons such as cost. This does not mean that these practical reasons do not play a part in parents' decisions about childcare, but instead that there are other considerations that carry more weight when choosing a provider.

Table 7.2 Main reason for choosing main formal providers, by provider type

Base: All pre-school aged selected children whose main provider in the last week was formal (including nannies and baby-sitters)

	Nursery school %	Nursery class %	Day nursery %	Playgroup or pre-school %	All group providers %	Child-minders %
I could trust this person/these people	17	6	20	16	15	46
It had a good reputation	15	20	13	13	15	3
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	17	25	7	13	15	1
I wanted my child to mix with other children	13	11	8	24	13	0
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	5	3	12	4	7	6
It is easy to get to	6	8	4	6	6	1
It was recommended to me	4	4	7	6	6	11
His/her brother(s)/sister(s) went there	4	12	3	4	5	2
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	2	3	1	1	1	0
It was low cost	2	2	2	2	2	3
It fitted in with my / partner's working hours	1	+	7	1	3	6
I wanted reliable arrangements	1	+	5		2	2
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	3	1	1	3	2	7
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	2	0	1	0	1	6
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	0	0	0	0	0	2
My employer subsidises this childcare	0	0	1	0	0	0
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	1	0	1	0	+	0
No other choices available to me	3	1	2	1	1	
Other reason(s)	4	4	6	5	5	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>231</i>	<i>333</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>977</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>357</i>	<i>419</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>1369</i>	<i>99</i>

In the rest of the section we explore how influences on childcare choices vary by child's age, family's incomes and working status.

7.3.1 Child's age

As we saw earlier, the child's age clearly played a role in the type of main childcare or early years provider parents chose. Unsurprisingly then, age is also a key factor in the reasons why the childcare provider was chosen. As shown in Table 7.3, parents of younger children were more likely to select being able to trust the provider as the key factor in their decision. Whilst trust is a key factor for parents of children of all ages, it appears that as children approach the age when they will go to school, other factors, such as being able to provide education as well as care, become increasingly important.

Table 7.3 Reasons for choosing a formal provider, by the age of child

Base: All pre-school aged selected children whose main provider in the last week was formal (including nannies and baby-sitters)

	0-1 %	2-3 %	4-5 %
I could trust this person/these people	28	17	14
It had a good reputation	12	13	17
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	3	15	17
I wanted my child to mix with other children	10	13	10
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	9	7	4
It was recommended to me	6	6	4
His/her brother(s)/sister(s) went there	2	5	9
It is easy to get to	2	5	8
It fitted in with my/partner s working hours	5	3	1
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	4	2	1
I wanted reliable arrangements	4	2	2
It was low cost	3	2	1
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	2	1	1
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	2	1	+
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	1	2	1
My employer subsidises this childcare	1	+	0
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	+	1	+
The person is family	0	0	1
No other choices available to me	1	1	2
Other reason(s)	7	4	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>212</i>	<i>669</i>	<i>216</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>989</i>	<i>337</i>

7.3.2 Family income and working status

As we know from Chapter 2, there were clear links between family income and the type of provider used, which should be borne in mind when interpreting links between parents' reasons for choosing providers and their income (Table 7.4). Parents of children in higher income families were more likely to cite trust as a reason for using a provider. We saw in Chapter 2 that wealthier families had a higher use of individual providers, which may explain this emphasis on trust amongst these families, as trust appears to be particularly important for parents whose child is mainly cared for by one person. For parents of children in lower income families, the opportunity for the child to mix with other children was a particularly important reason for choosing a provider. This may also be linked to the fact that lower income families are more likely to use nursery classes, nursery schools and reception classes.

Because of these links between income, reasons for using providers, and types of providers used, we also looked at the issue of whether parents of children in lower income families were more restricted in their choice of provider than parents of children in families with a higher income. The data suggest that to some extent they were. Parents of children in lower income families were more likely to say that they could not afford to pay for formal childcare or that they had no other choices available to them than parents of children in higher income families. Although cost was not the highest priority for the majority of parents in low income families. For example, the reasons most commonly given by low income parents for choosing their childcare provider was because it offered education as well as care (16%), the opportunity to mix with other children (14%), had a good reputation (15%) and they felt they could trust them (12%). This compares with only 4% of these parents who said their main reason was because they could not afford to pay for formal childcare. So whilst lower income families may be more restricted by cost in their choice of provider, it is not the overriding factor.

Table 7.4 Reasons for choosing a formal provider, by family yearly income

Base: All pre-school aged selected children whose main provider in the last week was formal (including nannies and baby-sitters)

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 + %
I could trust this person / these people	12	13	21	23	24
It had a good reputation	15	12	15	11	14
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	16	16	12	13	10
I wanted my child to mix with other children	14	18	12	9	8
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	4	6	7	7	9
It was recommended to me	4	5	6	5	5
His/her brother(s) / sister(s) went there	5	6	4	5	5
It is easy to get to	9	7	5	3	3
It fitted in with my / my partner's working hours	2	3	3	4	5
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	1	2	1	3	2
I wanted reliable arrangements	1	2	2	2	4
It was low cost	3	2	1	4	2
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	1	1	1	1	2
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	0	0	1	2	2
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	4	1	1	1	0
My employer subsidises this childcare	0	0	0	1	+
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	0	1	1	+	0
No other choices available to me	4	1	2	1	
The person is family	0	0	1	0	0
Other reason(s)	6	5	4	5	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>214</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>319</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>319</i>

There were also differences in the reasons influencing the choice of main provider when looking at potential working status, as shown in Table 7.5. In couple families, parents who were working were more likely to feel that trust was the most important issue when deciding on a provider. This is perhaps explained by the fact that these parents need to use the provider for more hours, compared with parents who do not work, and as such trust in the person or people caring for their child is the most important factor. Unsurprisingly, being able to fit in around work was also more important for parents of children in couple families who worked than those who did not. A similar trend was also seen when looking at lone parents, however the differences are not statistically significant due to the lower base.

Table 7.5 Reasons for choosing a formal provider, by family working status

Base: All pre-school aged selected children whose main provider in the last week was formal (including nannies and baby-sitters)

	Couple families			Lone parents	
	Both working	One working	Neither working	Working	Not working
	%	%	%	%	%
I could trust this person/these people	23	16	13	16	10
It had a good reputation	14	16	7	8	14
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	10	14	15	15	19
I wanted my child to mix with other children	8	16	18	9	16
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	9	4	7	10	4
It was recommended to me	7	5	6	6	5
His/her brother(s)/sister(s) went there	4	7	10	2	5
It is easy to get to	3	7	7	5	8
It fitted in with my /partner's working hours	5	2	0	4	0
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	2	2	2	3	2
I wanted reliable arrangements	3	1		3	1
It was low cost	2	1	4	2	3
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	2	1	0	1	0
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	1	1	0	1	0
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	1	2	2	1	3
My employer subsidises this childcare	1	0	0	0	0
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	+	+	0	3	0
The person is family	+	0	0	0	0
No other choices available to me	1	+	1	3	6
Other reason(s)	4	5	7	8	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>544</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>722</i>	<i>423</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>175</i>

7.4 Improvements to formal providers

As we saw earlier, parents tended to choose their main formal childcare provider for positive reasons, we now look at whether the selected providers lived up to parents' expectations. Looking at the improvements parents wanted to see, the majority of parents appeared to be generally happy with their main formal provider; 63% said that none of the improvements listed on the showcard were needed at their provider, a similar proportion to 2004 (60%).

Parents whose child was cared for by a childminder were even more positive about their provider; 89% could suggest no improvements, compared with 60% of parents whose children went to other settings.

The most frequently cited aspects that parents felt *did* need improving were similar to those suggested in 2004, and included outdoor play opportunities (13%) the building and premises (13%) and the number of staff per group of children (10%). There was some variation in the improvements parents thought necessary depending on which provider they were using. Parents using playgroups or pre-schools were more likely than other parents to feel that the outdoor play opportunities could be improved (25% of children attending playgroups compared with 11% attending other group providers) (Table C.7.1 in Appendix C). This may be related to expectations that parents have of playgroups being places where children can play - inside and out - in contrast to some other providers, such as nursery classes, where parents may expect more traditional learning indoors.

7.5 The role of Ofsted

Since April 2003 Ofsted has routinely inspected early years education and childcare providers in England, including childminders. The proportion of parents aware of these inspections (the majority) has remained stable since 2004. Of those parents whose child attended a formal provider, 71% were aware that their main provider had been inspected before or since the child had started (compared with 73% in 2004).

As Table 7.6 shows, parents whose child went to a day nursery were more likely to say that their provider had been inspected, compared with parents using other group providers. Parents using nursery classes for their child were the least likely say that their provider had been inspected. This difference is unlikely to be due to a difference in the number of inspections being carried out in day nurseries and nursery classes, but rather a lack of awareness. The proportion of parents who said that the provider had *not* been inspected was similar across different provider types. However, parents whose children went to nursery classes were more likely than parents whose children went to other providers to say that they did not know if an inspection had taken place.

Table 7.6 Whether main formal provider was inspected or not, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider or childminder

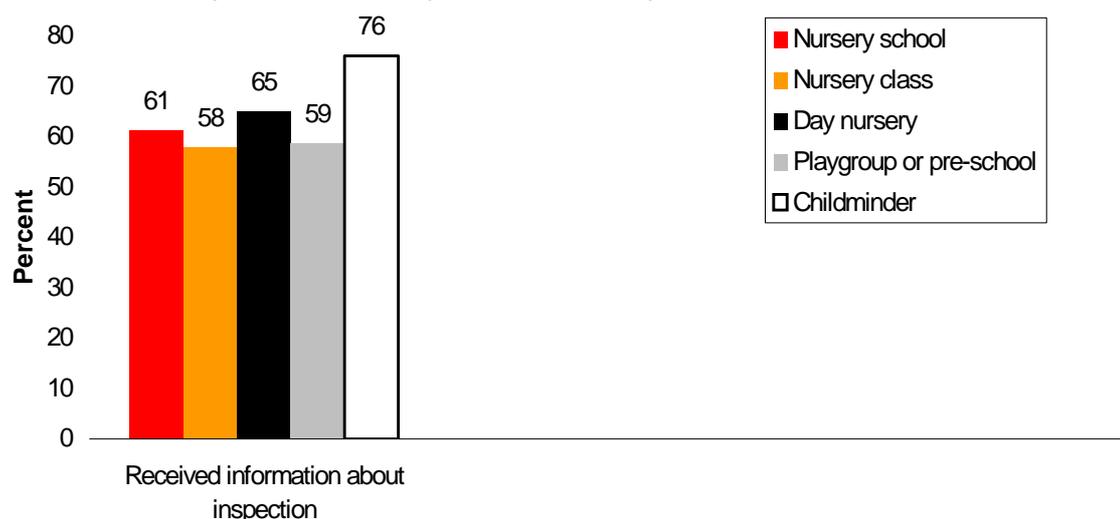
	Nursery school	Nursery Class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	All group providers	Childminder
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Inspected (before or since child attended)	66	63	82	65	70	80
Not inspected	3	3	2	5	3	8
Don't know	30	34	16	29	26	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>157</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>981</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>420</i>	<i>321</i>	<i>1375</i>	<i>101</i>

7.5.1 Did parents receive inspection results?

Almost two-thirds (63%) of parents who knew that their child’s provider had been inspected said that they had received the results of the inspection. As Figure 7.2 shows, parents whose child was cared for by a childminder (76%) were more likely to have received inspection results than parents whose child attended group providers (62%). This may be due to the fact that childminders generally care for a small number of children and parents may have more of an opportunity to discuss issues such as inspections with their childminder than at group providers.

Figure 7.2 Whether parents had received information about inspections at their main formal provider, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was a formal group provider or childminder, where parents said that the provider had been inspected



Parents who had received inspection results were split in their views on whether these had affected their decision to use their formal childcare provider. Just over half said that the inspection results *had* influenced their decision to use the provider (54% of parents whose children used a group formal provider and 56% of parents of

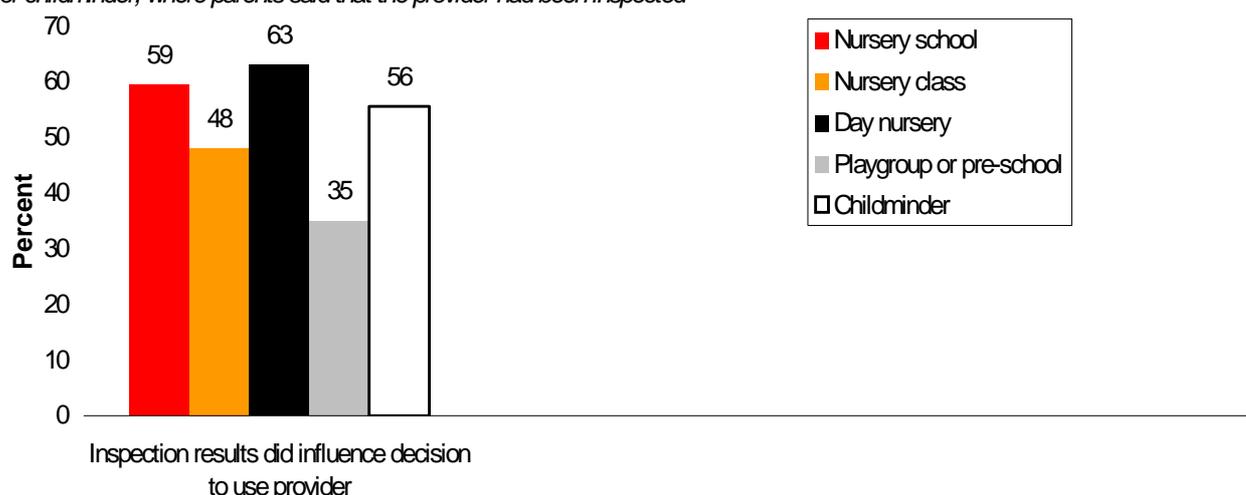
children who went to childminders). However, just under half said that the inspection results *had not* affected their decision (44% of both parents whose child attended group providers and those who went to childminders).

Looking across the different provider types (Figure 7.3), 35% of parents whose child was cared for in a playgroup or pre-school said that inspection reports had influenced their decision to use that provider, compared with 58% of parents using other group providers. Parents tend to use playgroups for only short periods of time and, as such, may see the inspection reports for this type of provider as less relevant to their decision about using the setting, compared with parents whose children spend significant amounts of time at other types of providers.

When asked who had carried out the inspection of their main formal provider most parents said that it was Ofsted (89%), with a small minority stating that it was done by the Local Authority (8%).

Figure 7.3 The impact of inspection reports on parents' decisions

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was a formal group provider or childminder, where parents said that the provider had been inspected



7.6 Parents' views on the skills that their main provider encourages

As discussed above, one of the most commonly cited reasons for choosing the main formal group provider was the availability of education opportunities. Parents were very positive about the education their main provider was offering; only 1% said their provider was not helping their child to develop *any* of the skills listed in Table 7.7, whilst the majority said that they were encouraging their child to learn *all* of these skills.

Looking across the different provider types, there are some small differences. Most notably, parents of children attending childminders were less likely to say that their provider encouraged their child to find out about people or places around the world, perhaps reflecting the more limited teaching resources childminders may have compared with group providers. Parents' perceptions of the academic skills their providers encouraged have remained fairly stable since 2004. There was however an increase overall in the proportion of parents who thought that their provider

encouraged their child to find out about people or places around the world, from 70% in 2004 (for all formal providers) to 75% in 2007.

Table 7.7 Academic skills at main provider, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider or childminder

	Nursery school %	Nursery class %	Day nursery %	Playgroup or pre-school %	All group providers %	Childminder %
Recognising letters, words, numbers or shapes	89	97	93	91	93	80
Enjoying books	94	96	97	92	95	80
Finding out about animals or plants	88	88	93	81	87	78
Finding out about people or places around the world	79	77	80	72	77	53
Finding out about health or hygiene, e.g. washing hands	82	88	93	85	88	80
Not sure	3	1	0	1	1	7
None of these	1	0	+	4	1	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>790</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>355</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>1193</i>	<i>67</i>

7.6.1 Social skills

Parents were also very positive about the social skills that their main formal provider was encouraging their child to develop, less than a quarter of parents said that the different provider types did not encourage the skills listed in Table 7.8. Parents were similarly assured about this aspect of provision in 2004. The only minor differences being a slight increase in the proportion of parents who felt that their provider encouraged their child to play with other children (95% in 2004 and 98% in 2007) and to express their thoughts and feelings (76% in 2004 and 83% in 2007).

Table 7.8 Social skills at main provider, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider or childminder

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	All group providers	Childminder
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Playing with other children and making friends	97	99	98	96	98	96
Good behaviour	91	94	97	94	94	90
Listening to other children and adults	90	92	94	89	92	84
Tackling everyday tasks	87	92	93	91	91	90
Expressing thoughts or feelings	81	84	87	79	83	78
Being independent and making choices	81	81	89	84	84	72
Not sure	1	1	+	2	1	0
None of these	+	0	+	+	+	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>817</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>355</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>1232</i>	<i>67</i>

7.7 Parents' views on the feedback their provider offers

As well as receiving information about Ofsted inspections, many parents will expect to be kept informed about their child's progress. We asked parents about their satisfaction with the level of feedback their provider gives them and, as was the case in 2004, two-thirds of parents said that they were very satisfied (68%). Looking across the different provider types, there were no significant differences in parents' satisfaction with the feedback offered.

Given the age of the children discussed in this chapter, it is not surprising that parents generally received feedback from their early years or childcare provider in informal ways. Methods such as talking with staff (89%), looking at pictures that their child brings home (83%), or displayed in the premises (67%) were more commonly cited than more formal methods, such as parents' evenings or written reports (both reported by 45% of parents - Table 7.9).

Across the different provider types day nurseries appeared to provide the widest range of feedback. Parents of children cared for at these settings were more likely to have received feedback through speaking to staff (94%) and written reports (57%), than parents using other forms of group childcare. We know that children attending day nurseries tend to be very young, which may explain why both spoken and written reports from staff were an important form of feedback from these providers. Parents whose child attended a day nursery were also the most likely to have received feedback from looking at pictures and other things their child had brought home (92%), or displayed on the premises (78%), compared with parents whose children were cared for in other settings.

Table 7.9 Method by which parents receive feedback from their formal providers, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider or childminder

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	All group providers	Childminder
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Talk with staff about how child is getting on	86	87	94	88	89	90
Written reports prepared by staff	49	35	57	39	45	21
Parents' evenings / meetings	42	57	44	32	45	7
Pictures, drawings and other things child brings home	74	81	92	84	83	69
Pictures, drawings and other things displayed on the premises	59	65	78	62	67	36
Other	2	3	2	7	4	5
None of these	3	+	+	3	1	5
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>818</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>355</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>1235</i>	<i>67</i>

Table 7.10 shows whether or not parents thought that they received feedback from their provider often enough, and the majority of parents (87% of those using a group provider) thought that they did. Across the different group providers there were no significant differences in the proportion reporting satisfaction with the frequency of feedback. Comparisons between group providers and childminders, however, show that parents whose child was cared for by a childminder were more likely to feel happy with the frequency of feedback (97%). This may reflect the more 'one-to-one' relationship that parents have with childminders compared with group providers, where there may be fewer opportunities to speak to staff.

Table 7.10 Whether feedback was frequent enough, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider or childminder

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	All group providers	Childminder
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Often enough	84	86	87	91	87	97
Not often enough	15	13	13	7	12	3
Don't know	1	1	0	2	1	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>818</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>355</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>1235</i>	<i>67</i>

7.8 Other services

Childcare and early years providers have been increasingly able to offer additional services which aim to assist parents as well as their children. This development has been part of the government's drive to integrate services for children and their families and to provide a range of services for on one site. However, the data show that there is still some way to go in making these services available to all parents. 62% of the parents interviewed said that there were no services of the kinds listed in Table 7.11 available at their main provider, this proportion is the same as in 2004. Furthermore, there was some discrepancy in the kind of services available and what parents actually wanted. 25% of parents wanted to access health services at their provider, yet only 11% said these were available at the setting attended by their child. This level of demand for health services has remained stable since 2004.

The services most likely to be available were advice or support for parents and parents and toddler sessions. The services most frequently used⁸¹ reflected the services that were most commonly available. However generally the take-up of services was fairly low. For example, 6% of parents said that help in finding additional childcare was available from their provider, but only 1% of parents where this help was available had actually taken up this offer. One way of interpreting this finding is that although many parents *want* more services on offer at their providers, they may not necessarily choose to use them. Another perspective may be that the low take-up reflects limited capacity to meet the needs of all parents who need these services.

Table 7.11 Services available, used, and wanted by parents at their main formal provider

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider, except for the 'service used' column which includes only parents who had access to family services

	Services available %	Services used %	Services wanted %
Health services for families	11	10	25
Advice or support for parents	18	13	16
Courses or training	11	7	16
Parenting classes	9	5	13
Parent or childminder and toddler sessions	15	14	14
Job or career advice	4	1	10
Help in finding additional childcare	6	1	9
Counselling services	4	1	4
Other services	2	2	1
None	62	55	46
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>947</i>	<i>363</i>	<i>966</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1328</i>	<i>523</i>	<i>1353</i>

⁸¹ Parents were asked which services they or their partner had used at their main formal provider.

There were some differences in the availability of services at the different provider types (Table 7.12). Parents of children attending day nurseries were the most likely to say that there were no additional services available, whilst parents using nursery classes were the least like to say that this was the case.

Table 7.12 Services available to parents at their main formal provider, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	All group providers
	%	%	%	%	%
Advice or support for parents	17	19	19	18	18
Parent or childminder and toddler sessions	12	18	9	23	15
Courses or training	12	15	8	8	11
Health services for families	10	16	8	11	11
Parenting classes	11	13	6	6	9
Help in finding additional childcare	8	4	6	7	6
Counselling services	5	4	3	5	4
Job or career advice	4	4	3	4	4
Other services	2	3	2	1	2
None	66	53	71	55	62
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>224</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>947</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>347</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>1328</i>

There also were some differences in the sorts of services used by parents of children at different types of provider, as shown in Table 7.13. The services used generally reflected the services available, although parents who were using day nurseries were more likely to have sought advice or support than other parents. As we already discussed, children attending day nurseries tend to be very young and as such it may well be that their parents are more likely to need advice.

Table 7.13 Services used by parents at their main formal provider, by provider type

Base: All pre-school age selected children whose main provider was a formal group provider where some services are offered

	Nursery school	Nursery class	Day nursery	Playgroup or pre-school	All group providers
	%	%	%	%	%
Advice or support for parents	9	7	23	12	13
Parent or childminder and toddler sessions	11	13	9	20	14
Health services for families	10	9	13	10	10
Courses or training	9	8	7	5	7
Parenting classes	6	2	3	5	5
Job or career advice	0	0	2	0	1
Counselling services	3	+	2	1	1
Help in finding additional childcare	5	0	1	1	1
Other services	1	2	3	1	2
None	57	64	50	52	55
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>363</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>169</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>138</i>	<i>523</i>

7.9 The transition to reception class

Parents whose children had recently started school either full or part-time were asked about the arrangements made to ease their child's transition from childcare to a more formal educational setting in school.

We found that most children had been involved in activities which helped them to develop a sense of familiarity with their new school, 69% of children had visited the school and met their new teacher and 62% had met other children at the school.

Parents were also asked about the sort of information their childcare provider had passed on to the school. Written reports on progress or assessment results were the most common type of information shared (56%), but over a quarter of parents (27%) said no information had been passed from the provider to the school.

Finally, the survey gave parents the chance to explain any difficulties their child had had when starting reception class. Over half of parents (56%) said that their child did not experience any problems. Where children did have difficulties the most commonly cited were; finding the day too long (14%), difficulty in being away or separated from parent in the morning (15%), and problems with lunch (e.g. did not like the food or eating without parent) (13%).

7.10 Summing up

Overall, many more pre-school children attended group care as their main formal provider than individual care. There was a clear link between child's age and the type of main provider they attended, with day nurseries more likely to be the main provider for younger pre-school age children, and nursery classes for older ones.

As it was found in 2004, parents were generally able to choose their child's main formal providers for 'positive' reasons, and were happy with the service it offered. Many parents felt their provider was encouraging the development of their children's educational and social skills, most parents were happy with how often they received feedback, and the majority were unable to think of any improvements.

The proportion of parents aware of Ofsted inspections - the majority - has remained stable since 2004. A substantial minority of parents who were aware of these inspections had not received the inspection report from their main provider. Parents who had seen the inspection results were almost equally split between those who said these had influenced their decision to use their main provider and those who said the Ofsted report had not affected this decision.

The provision of other family services, such as health, advice and support was quite limited, 6 in 10 parents said that there were no additional services available at their child's provider. This figure has not changed since 2004, which is somewhat surprising given the recent expansion of the Children's Centres programme and the Extended Schools initiative. Whilst there was demand for some services, where they were available there was low take-up.

8 PARENTS OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF THEIR CHILDCARE

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on school age children⁸². One of the main options for childcare for these children is through school such as out-of-school clubs. The roll out of the Extended Schools programme to all primary and secondary schools should offer parents more childcare options, through the increase in schools' links with childcare providers, or by the direct provision of before and after school activities. The other main childcare options for this group are childminders or informal arrangements with family and friends.

We begin the chapter by looking at the main provision used by school age children. We then discuss each of the provider types used, examining the reasons why parents chose that provider, the role Ofsted inspections played in their decision and the improvements they think are needed. For reception classes, breakfast and after school clubs we also look at the availability, take-up and need for additional family services.

8.2 Main provider

This chapter focuses on the main formal childcare provider attended by the selected child⁸³, as in Chapter 7, we look primarily at formal providers.

23% of school age children attended a formal setting as their main provider. Table 8.1 shows the breakdown of main formal providers split into group and individual providers. The types of main providers has remained fairly stable over time, the only slight change has been in the proportion of children cared for by baby-sitters, with 4% of children having a baby-sitter as their main formal provider in 2007, compared with 7% in 2004. The other differences between 2004 and 2007 were not statistically significant. Overall, as in 2004, group settings were more likely than individual formal providers to be the main provider. The most commonly used main group providers were breakfast or after school clubs on a school site, used for 33% of children, reception classes, used for 23% of children⁸⁴, and breakfast or after school clubs off the school site, used by 14%.

As discussed in Chapter 1, reception classes were only included as *childcare* if the child had not reached compulsory school age, that is if the child had *not* turned 5 in the previous school term.

Childminders were the most frequently used form of main individual provider, with 1 in 10 (10%) school age children being cared for by a childminder. Leisure or sport activities were the main source of childcare for 9% of children.

⁸² 'School age' children have been defined here as all children aged 6 to 14, plus any 4 or 5 year olds who attend school full-time. Any 4 or 5 year olds not at school or only attending part-time have been included in Chapter 7 as pre-school age children.

⁸³ The computer program identified the formal provider used for the greatest number of hours in the last week. Respondents were asked whether this was their main formal provider and given the opportunity to identify an alternative provider if appropriate.

⁸⁴ As noted in Chapter 2, the data on use of reception classes should be treated with caution, as for some four year olds respondents stated they were attending school (hence likely to be in reception) but did not identify reception class as a provider.

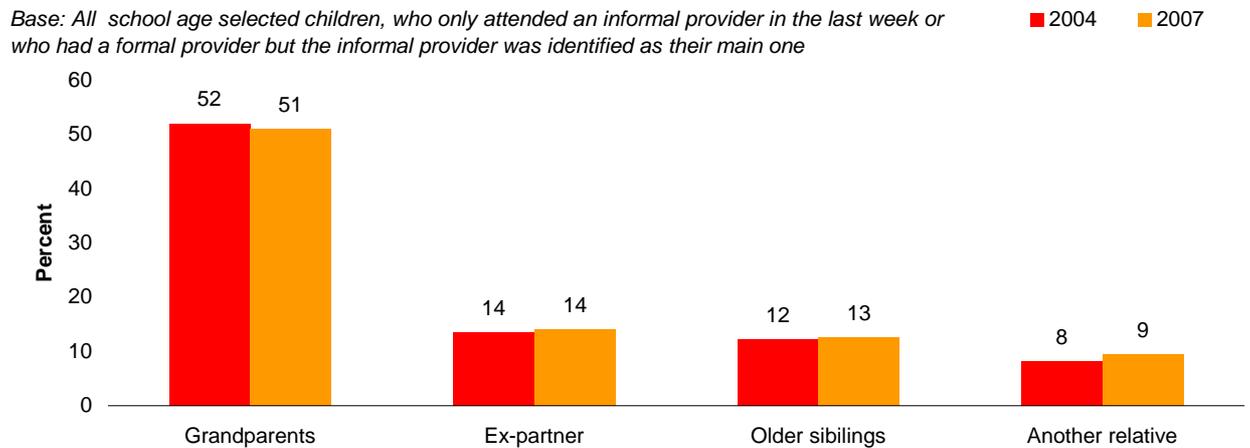
Table 8.1 Main formal provider types used by parents of school age children, 2004 – 2007

Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was formal

	2004 %	2007 %
Group provider	73	74
Breakfast club or after school club on site	36	33
Reception class	21	23
Breakfast club or after school club off site	13	14
Nursery class attached to primary or infants school	1	2
Holiday club / scheme	+	+
Nursery school	+	+
Day nursery	+	+
Playgroup or pre-school	+	0
Other nursery education provider	+	+
Individual providers	18	17
Childminder	9	10
Baby-sitter who came to home	7	4
Nanny or au pair	3	3
Other		
Leisure / sport activity	8	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	1355	1304
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1363	1219

23% of school age children went to an informal carer as their main provider. Figure 8.1 shows that the use of main informal providers in 2007 was very similar to 2004, with around half of children being cared for by grandparents as their main informal provider (52% in 2004 and 51% in 2007).

Figure 8.1 Main informal provider types used by parents of school age children, 2004 - 2007



The rest of this chapter focuses on the main *formal* provider used for school age children. Given the small sample sizes for some groups the analysis focuses on the following providers: childminders, reception classes and breakfast and after school clubs. As use of these providers vary considerably by child's age, which in turn affects the issues being explored, such as reasons for choosing a setting, each provider is examined separately. For each provider we discuss parents' reasons for choosing it, awareness and influence of Ofsted inspections and the availability and take-up of additional family services.

8.3 Childminders

Childminders were the main provider for 10% of school age children. As was the case in 2004, trust was by far the most important factor influencing the choice of a childminder (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Reasons why parents chose to use a childminder for their selected child, 2004 - 2007

Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was a childminder

	2004	2007
	%	%
I could trust this person/these people	44	50
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	4	12
It was recommended to me	8	7
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	3	4
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	3	3
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	5	3
It was low cost	4	2
His / her brother(s) / sister(s) went there	2	2
It fitted in with my / partner's working hours	6	4
It had a good reputation	4	2
It is easy to get to	1	1
I wanted my child to mix with other children	0	1
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	0	0
I wanted reliable arrangements	10	1
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	1	1
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	3	1
My employer subsidises this childcare	0	0
No other choices available to me	2	5
Other reason(s)	1	2
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>132</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>110</i>

The majority (86%) of parents using a childminder said that the provider could *not* be improved in any of the ways listed on the showcard. Where parents using a childminder felt improvements were necessary (see Table C.8.1 in Appendix C for a list of improvements) the most commonly cited one was to outdoor play opportunities (10% of parents mentioned this improvement).

The proportion of parents aware that the childminder who looked after their child had been inspected has not changed much since 2004 (67% in 2004 and 72% in 2007 - this difference is not statistically significant). Parents were asked who had carried out the inspection (if they knew that one had taken place); three-quarters (74%) thought that it had been carried out by Ofsted and one-quarter (26%) by the local authority. Most parents who knew that an inspection had been carried out had received the results of the inspection (72%), but only 22% of these parents said that the inspection results had influenced their decision to use the childminder.

8.4 Reception classes

A reception class was reported as the main provider for nearly one-quarter (23%) of children. The reputation of the reception class and the fact that their child could learn there were the key priorities for parents using this setting, with over one-quarter stating that each of these reasons had been the main factors in deciding to use that setting. Table 8.3 shows that the reasons parents chose to use reception classes in 2007 were very similar to those reported in 2004.

Table 8.3 Reasons why parents chose to use a reception class for their selected child, 2004 - 2007

Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was a reception class

	2004	2007
	%	%
It had a good reputation	22	26
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	26	25
His / her brother(s) / sister(s) went there	12	12
It is easy to get to	10	9
I could trust this person / these people	3	5
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	3	4
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	2	1
I wanted my child to mix with other children	3	2
I wanted reliable arrangements	1	1
It was recommended to me	4	1
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	0	1
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	+	1
It fitted in with my husband/wife/partner's working hours	1	1
It was low cost	+	0
My employer subsidises this childcare	0	0
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	0	0
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	0	0
No other choices available to me	5	3
Other reason(s)	8	9
Weighted base	288	298
Unweighted base	401	350

Whilst 59% of parents whose child attended a reception classes said that they did not think that any of the improvements listed on the showcard were necessary, they were the least likely of all parents using formal childcare to say this. Where parents did think that improvements were needed (see Table C.8.2 for a list of improvements parents would like to see to reception classes) they most often suggested that the class size could be reduced (18%).

Two-thirds (66%) of parents whose child's main provider was a reception class, knew that it had been inspected before or after their child started attending, with the majority (86%) believing the inspection had been carried out by Ofsted. 73% of parents had received the results of the inspection and 38% said that it had affected their decision to use the setting.

As discussed in Chapter 7, many formal childcare providers also offer additional services as part of the national drive to offer a range of integrated services to children and families on one site. Table 8.5 shows that in 2007, although there certainly was not universal availability of additional services associated with reception classes, there may not be that much of a demand for them. Around half of parents (47%) said that there were no services available, but where some services were available 61% of parents said that neither they nor their partner had used any. As discussed in Chapter 7, the low take-up of services may be due to the limited capacity of some services, however, over half of parents said that they would not use services of this type if they were available and this proportion has risen from 2004 (43% in 2004 to 52% in 2007).

Where services were offered the ones most frequently available were advice and support for parents (24%), courses and training (21%), parenting classes (18%) and health services (18%). The services used, or most wanted by parents (where not available) generally reflected the services offered. However, parent and toddler sessions, which were wanted by 14% of parents, were among the services least likely to be offered.

Table 8.4 Services available, used and wanted by parents using reception classes 2004 - 2007

Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was a reception class, except for the 'service used' column which includes only parents who had access to family services

	Services available		Services used		Services wanted	
	2004	2007	2004	2007	2004	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Health services for families	21	18	11	11	21	18
Courses or training	17	21	6	14	19	16
Parent or childminder and toddler sessions	9	9	4	2	17	14
Advice or support for parents	19	24	9	9	16	10
Job or career advice	1	3	0	1	11	8
Help in finding additional childcare	4	7	1	1	11	8
Parenting classes	12	18	10	5	9	7
Counselling services	2	5	0	1	5	5
Other services	2	3	3	2	0	1
None	50	47	62	61	43	52
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>279</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>387</i>	<i>338</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>181</i>	<i>403</i>	<i>350</i>

8.5 Breakfast and after school clubs

Table 8.1 shows that the proportion of families with school age children using a breakfast or after school club as their *main* provider was very similar in 2004 and 2007 (48% in 2004 and 47% in 2007). This is somewhat surprising given the roll out of the Extended Schools programme, which should have increased the availability of out-of-school childcare and activities.

Looking at the reasons parents gave for using breakfast and after school clubs (Table 8.5), we can see that trust was associated particularly with using breakfast and after school clubs *on* the school site (16% of parents using on site clubs compared with 9% using off-site clubs). This may be because parents feel able to trust school staff and activities that happen in a place that they are already familiar with. The reputation of the club was more important for parents whose child used off-site clubs than those using on-site clubs (14% using off-site clubs compared with 5% using on-site clubs). This might be explained by thinking about the types of activities that on and off site clubs may offer. Off-site clubs may involve activities such as sports, arts or music that are led by adults with particular expertise or that involve use of specialist equipment, as such, it makes sense that parents would want their child to attend a club which has a good reputation. Comparisons between the reasons why parents chose breakfast and after school clubs in 2004 and 2007 show that there has been little change.

Table 8.5 Reasons why parents chose to use a breakfast or after school club for their selected child, 2004 - 2007

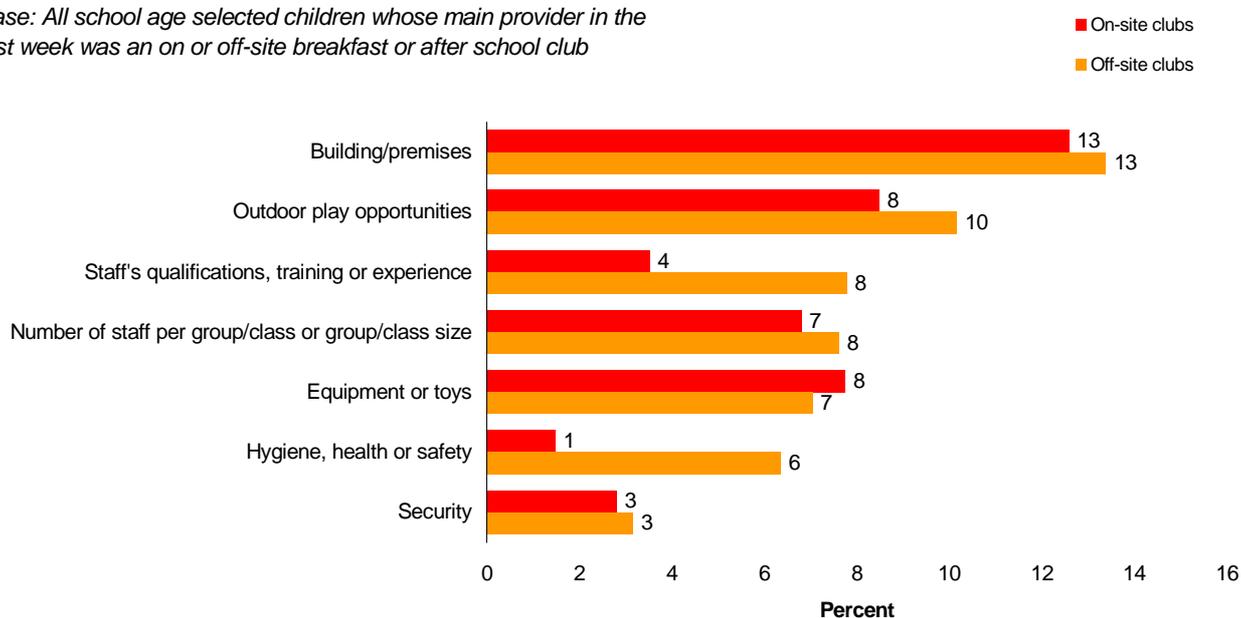
Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was an on or off-site breakfast or after school club

	2007		2004	
	Out –of school clubs on site	Out –of school clubs off site	Total out- of-school clubs	Total out-of- school clubs
	%	%	%	%
I could trust this person/these people	16	9	14	14
I wanted my child to mix with other children	10	15	11	10
It fitted in with my / partner's working hours	10	8	9	9
Child s choice	10	5	8	10
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	7	10	8	9
It is easy to get to	8	4	7	7
I wanted reliable arrangements	8	3	7	9
It had a good reputation	5	14	7	6
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	4	4	4	6
It was low cost	3		2	2
His / her brother(s) / sister(s) went there	1	2	1	1
It was recommended to me	1	6	2	4
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would		2	1	+
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	1		+	+
I could receive help through Tax Credits with this provider	+	1	1	+
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	+	0	+	0
My employer subsidises this childcare				+
No other choices available to me	3	5	3	3
Other reason(s)	14	13	14	9
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>431</i>	<i>177</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>651</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>367</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>513</i>	<i>579</i>

Figure 8.2 shows the improvements parents mentioned in relation to the breakfast and after school club attended by their child. 72% of parents with children attending on or off site clubs felt that none of the improvements listed were necessary. Where improvements were felt necessary, the most commonly cited one was to the building or premises (13% for both off site and on-site clubs). Parents whose child used off-site clubs were more likely to say that they felt that improvements were needed to staff qualifications, training or experience (8% using off-site, compared with 4% using on-site clubs) and to hygiene, health or safety (6% using off-site, compared with 1% using on-site clubs). This may be due to the different nature of on and off-site activities. Off-site activities may take place in spaces considered less 'safe' than schools, such as community or leisure centres or outside, and may involve staff with specialist skills. Staff training and the safety of the activities may therefore be more of a concern for this group of parents.

Figure 8.2 Improvements parents would like to see to breakfast or after school clubs

Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was an on or off-site breakfast or after school club



46% of parents knew that the breakfast or after school had been inspected - a similar proportion to 2004 (50%). 71% of parents whose child used an out-of-school club said that the inspection had been carried out by Ofsted. Over half of parents who knew that an inspection had taken place had received a report (58%), but only 34% of these parents said that the inspection results had influenced their decision to use the club.

There was little availability or demand for additional services amongst parents whose children attended breakfast and after school clubs. 77% of parents said that none of the services listed in Table 8.6 were available from their child's provider. Where some services were available, 75% said that neither they nor their partner had used any. Furthermore, over half said that they would not use any additional services if they were available. Of the parents who *did* think they would use other services, the most commonly cited were health services for families, such as health visitors, nurses, dentists, speech therapists. Comparisons between the services available, used and wanted in 2004 and 2007 show no differences.

Table 8.6 Services available, used and wanted by parents using breakfast and after school clubs

Base: All school age selected children whose main provider in the last week was an on or off-site breakfast or after school club, except for the 'service used' column which includes only parents who had access to family services

	Service available %	Services used %	Services wanted %
Health services for families	5	3	15
Courses or training	10	4	14
Advice or support for parents	8	12	9
Help in finding additional childcare	2	2	9
Job or career advice	1	2	8
Parenting classes	4	2	6
Parent or childminder and toddler sessions	6	6	6
Counselling services	1	0	4
Other services	2	3	1
None	77	75	63
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>598</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>608</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>504</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>513</i>

8.6 Summing up

Nearly one-quarter of school age children attended a formal setting as their main provider. As was the case with pre-school age children, trust was a key factor for parents of school age children. Parents whose child was cared for by childminders or out-of-school clubs on the school site most commonly said that trust was the key reason for using their main providers. Reputation was most important for parents whose child went to reception classes, while having the opportunity to mix with other children was the key reason for choosing breakfast and after school clubs away from the school site.

There was limited availability of additional family services to parents using group providers, this has changed very little since 2004. This suggests that there is still some work to do to expand the core offer under the Extended Schools programme, with regard to providing access to adult and family learning, and parent and family support by 2010. There was not, however, a very high demand for these services amongst parents, so whilst this may be a concern for government, schools and local authorities, it does not appear to be high on the agenda for parents.

9 CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

In this final concluding chapter we comment on the main emergent themes in this report and what we can infer from this update on parents' views and experiences of childcare and early years provision in relation to the progress of the Ten Year Childcare Strategy.

The key areas we will be drawing out relate to:

- Levels of use of formal childcare
- Levels of use of the free entitlement
- Levels of use of out-of-school clubs
- Affordability
- Availability
- Use of informal care

9.2 Levels of use of childcare and early years provision

A key message from this report is that the rise in the use of formal care⁸⁵ identified in the 2004 survey has not continued; in 2007 the same proportion (40%) of families had used formal care in the last week.

This is despite the small improvements in parents' views on the affordability and availability of childcare, and their views on the level of information available. 38% of parents thought that the affordability of local childcare was fairly good or very good, compared with 35% in 2004, 44% of parents thought that there were about the right number of childcare places in their local area, compared with 40% in 2004 and 35% thought they had too little information compared with 38% in 2004.

The predominant reason among parents for not using childcare was preferring to look after their children themselves (57% gave this as a reason for not using childcare in the last year). This is however likely to hide the complexities behind parents' childcare decisions, as parents may still base the decision to look after children themselves on the perception that parental care is more cost-effective or more easily available, which might be linked to having little information on what childcare is available. Although the barriers to childcare are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, it is difficult to untangle from the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents data the exact role that parental views have in relation to the use of childcare versus the external barriers of affordability, availability, and (lack of) awareness about childcare options.

A continuing concern is the concentration of 'non-users' of childcare in the lowest income groups, given that a key focus of the Ten Year Childcare Strategy is increasing the use of formal care amongst disadvantaged families, with the ultimate aim of facilitating parents' move into work and hence alleviating poverty. Reflecting the pattern identified in 2004, only a third of families (33%) with a yearly income

⁸⁵ The providers defined as formal are: nursery schools; nursery classes; reception classes; special day schools; day nurseries; playgroups or pre-schools; childminders; nannies or au pairs; baby-sitters; and out-of-schools clubs (also see Chapter 1).

below £10,000 had used formal childcare in the last week, compared with around half of families (52%) with a yearly income of £45,000 or more.

Although the relationship between the use of formal childcare and income is maintained even once working status is taken into account, families in the lowest income groups will nevertheless largely consist of non-working households, for which the current childcare options and existing work incentives are clearly not sufficient for them to move into work. These families are more likely to cite affordability as a barrier and awareness is also an issue, as their lower use of sources of information like ChildcareLink and CIS indicate. Exactly who these families are and how the different barriers interact could be an area for exploration through further analysis of the existing data.

The rise in formal care identified in 2004 was largely due to a rise in the use of early years provision, as a result of the extension of the free entitlement to early years education for 3 and 4 year olds, and a rise in the use of out-of-school clubs⁸⁶. Levels of use of both of these are discussed further below.

9.3 Levels of use of the early years education

Although take-up of the free early years education entitlement is high (86% of eligible 3 and 4 year olds), the fact that take-up varies according to family income despite the provision being free is worthy of more investigation. As noted in Chapter 5, the difference in take-up is linked to the lower use of childcare by children from lower income families, rather than lower income families using childcare but not accessing the free entitlement. From the 2007 survey we know that a lack of availability of early years provision features in parents' reasons for not using it. Whereas the availability of day nurseries and childminders might be an issue in deprived areas, affecting low income families' take-up of the free entitlement, the more even availability of schools with nursery and reception classes should, in theory, counteract this. In the 2008 wave of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents awareness of the free entitlement, as well as reasons for not taking-up the provision will be covered in more detail⁸⁷.

Take-up of the free entitlement also varied by ethnicity, being highest among children from White families and lowest among children from Asian families. Again, this reflects differences between ethnic groups in the overall use of childcare. Among children from couple families, take-up varied according to household work status, with work having a positive association with take-up. There was no difference in take-up between children of working or non-working lone parents.

A primary aim of the free entitlement is to enable families to access the proven benefits of early education delivered in a group setting and employing an educational curriculum⁸⁸. Another aim is to encourage maternal work, the number of hours provided (12 and a half hours in most areas⁸⁹) however, may restrict the extent to which this aim can be achieved. Parents working more than three half-days a week will need to use additional childcare, as well as the early years provision. In addition, the number of hours of free entitlement does not quite match the 16 hour

⁸⁶ Bryson et al (2006); Butt et al (2007).

⁸⁷ The 2007 survey asked about reasons for not using early years education in general, rather than specifically asking about the free entitlement.

⁸⁸ Sylva et al (2004).

⁸⁹ 15 hours in Pathfinder areas.

employment threshold for receipt of the working tax credit, which might be an issue for some families. The plan to extend provision to 15 hours by 2010 and increasing the flexibility of the provision (by spreading the hours over the week) will help, but may not be sufficient to have much impact on take-up.

9.4 Levels of use of out-of-school clubs

The use of out-of-school clubs (whether on or off the school site) has not changed since 2004. This is despite the roll out of the Extended Schools programme and an increase in primary schools in particular, providing childcare 8am till 6pm⁹⁰. This programme does not entail free care as the 3 and 4 year olds programme does, hence cost may still be a barrier. Parents' or children's preferences in relation to the types of activities undertaken may also play a bigger part in relation to out-of-school clubs than other types of childcare.

The Extended Schools policy aim is for all schools to offer high quality childcare, 8am till 6pm, by 2010. The extent to which this planned roll out will be successful is unclear. There is some resistance, especially from secondary schools, against the extension of their role to providing childcare⁹¹. The likely impact on take-up by families may be limited.

The 2008 wave of the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents is due to cover in more detail the use of out-of-school clubs and activities, and reasons for lack of use.

9.5 Affordability

Despite a small improvement in parents' views on the affordability of childcare, cost remains an important barrier to the use of childcare for some parents, especially families with a greater number of children or with younger children. The affordability of childcare was also perceived to be a barrier to work by 22% of non-working parents, and 21% of families paying something towards childcare said that they found it difficult to meet the cost. Lone parents and lower income households were more likely than their counterparts to report difficulties in meeting the costs of childcare.

Awareness and take-up of the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit remains very low, with only 1 in 10 families on Working Tax Credit saying they receive it and around 1 in 3 families not currently receiving the childcare element being unaware that it was available. As well as low awareness, another factor likely to have affected take-up may be the problems identified with the administration of tax credits⁹².

The proportion of families receiving financial help has increased and this is largely due to the increase in financial help from employers. This reflects the improvements from 2005 in the tax and National Insurance advantages for employers offering support with childcare and the subsequent increase in employers offering support⁹³. However, the higher income groups are the ones benefiting most here, as higher rate tax payers are more likely to receive employer supported childcare⁹⁴.

⁹⁰ Gilby et al (2006).

⁹¹ Cummings et al (2006).

⁹² House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2007).

⁹³ Kazimirski et al (2006b).

⁹⁴ Kazimirski et al, (2006b)

9.6 Availability

The availability of childcare as a barrier to its use is a recurrent theme, despite a small increase in the proportion of parents who think the number of places available in their local area is about right. Although a high number of vacancies have been reported by childcare providers⁹⁵, 37% of parents thought there were not enough places. This may be because the cost of the places available as well as their accessibility has an impact on parents' views of availability, and parents are identifying gaps in the provision in terms of suitable and affordable care.

A particular area for concern remains availability during holidays and atypical hours. Despite the growth of Extended Schools⁹⁶, there was no change in the proportion of parents who reported that their main provider was open during the school holidays (39%) and demand for holiday opening remains high. In addition, a quarter of parents working early mornings (before 8am) or evenings (after 6pm), a fifth working on Saturdays, and a fifth working on Sundays said that their working hours caused problems with childcare arrangements. Lone parents were particularly affected.

The Extended Schools programme will, in time, help towards improving holiday provision - its focus on provision between 8am and 6pm, however, limits its potential in relation to availability at atypical hours. Expecting childcare providers to meet demand for childcare at atypical hours also raises wider questions. Previous research amongst childcare providers has identified strong negative views towards working atypical hours, primarily because of the impact on their own families⁹⁷. Greater emphasis could potentially be placed on the work rather than childcare end of this dilemma, attempting to reduce the proportion of parents working these hours in the first place through the encouragement of more family-friendly working practices.

9.7 Informal care

Finally, it is worth highlighting again the important role that informal care has, particularly the continued reliance on grandparents for (largely unpaid) childcare, which may hide further juggling of work and childcare, this time by the grandparents rather than parents. Reflecting the reasons for not using any childcare, the reliance on informal care may be linked to having little information on what formal care is available as well as concerns around cost and flexibility.

The sustainability of the reliance on grandparents is also in question; there is some evidence to suggest that pressure for people in their 50s and 60s to stay in paid work may mean fewer grandparents being available to help their working children with childcare arrangements⁹⁸.

The extent to which the government should involve itself in issues about informal care has been debated. Financial help with the use of informal care could potentially increase families' use of childcare and reduce barriers to work. However, the extent to which government could, or should, oversee the quality of informal childcare provided or make financial support is a controversial area. Structured payment for

⁹⁵ Clemens et al (2006).

⁹⁶ Gilby et al (2006).

⁹⁷ Statham and Mooney (2003).

⁹⁸ Mooney et al (2002).

grandparent care may also not be compatible with the part-time and ad hoc involvement grandparents have, and usually prefer⁹⁹.

9.8 Summing up

The evidence suggests overall that the Ten Year Childcare Strategy has not had as much impact as intended, particularly in relation to the most disadvantaged children. Nevertheless, policy plans such as the extension of the free entitlement and the roll out of the Extended Schools programme are likely to contribute to a higher take-up of childcare by families. This report only provides an initial update on parents' views and experiences of childcare and early years provision. The survey includes a wealth of data and there is a great deal more to explore through secondary analysis as well as qualitative research to better understand the complexity of the decisions parents face.

⁹⁹ Arthur et al (2003).

APPENDIX A - SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A.1 Family structures and composition

Almost all (92%) of the parents who answered the questionnaire for this survey were women. The majority (72%) of respondents were part of a couple, while the remainder were lone parents.

The mean size of household was 4 people, the largest household had 12 people, and the smallest, 2.

A.2 Adult age

The mean age of the respondents was 37, and of their partners, 40. Table A.1 shows the proportions of respondents in different age bands by family type.

Table A.1 Age of respondents, by family type

Base: All families

	Couple	Lone Parent	All
	%	%	%
20 and under	1	3	2
21 to 30	15	28	18
31 to 40	47	37	44
41 to 50	33	28	32
51 and over	4	4	4
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>5330</i>	<i>1791</i>	<i>7121</i>

A.3 Marital status

Lone parents fell into several categories with regards to their marital status. Half (50%) were 'single, that is never married', a third (30%) were divorced, a sixth (16%) were married but separated, and 2% were widowed. About 1% said they were married and living with their husband or wife¹⁰⁰.

Of the couple families, respondents were most likely to be married (81%), with a substantial proportion (15%) saying they were never married and therefore were, we assume, co-habiting with their partner. 4% of respondents in couples said they were divorced and 1% told us they were married and separated from their husband or wife. Less than 0.5% were widowed.

¹⁰⁰ This situation is feasible if parents were in a transitional stage or if their relationship was not stable.

A.4 Adult Ethnicity

The majority of respondents (86%) identified themselves as White (Table A.2).

Table A.2 Ethnicity of respondents

Base: All families

	%
White	86
Black – Caribbean	1
Black – African	2
Black – other	+
Indian	3
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	+
Mixed race	2
Other	2
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7131</i>

A.5 Number of children in the household

The mean number of children in the households we surveyed was 2, with a maximum of 8 in some households. To give the study context it is useful to note that of all the families that had only one child, 32% were lone parents and 68% were couple families. Of all the families that had three or more children, 24% were lone parents and 76% were couple families. When looking at the number of families who had at least one child aged five or under, we saw that a quarter (25%) were lone parents and three-quarters (75%) were couple families.

Table A.3 shows the proportion of families with children in the 2-4 age group, by family type.

Table A.3 Number of children aged 2-4, by family type

Base: All families

	Couple	Lone Parent	All
	%	%	%
0	69	76	71
1	28	22	26
2	3	2	3
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>5343</i>	<i>1793</i>	<i>7136</i>

80% of families had at least one school age child present in the family and 39% had at least one pre-school age child (Table A.4).

Table A.4 Presence of preschool and school age children, by family type*Base: All families*

	Couple	Lone Parent	All
	%	%	%
Pre-school age children present	42	32	39
Pre-school age children not present	58	68	61
School age children present	78	83	80
School age children not present	22	17	20
<i>Unweighted base</i>	5343	1793	7136

A.6 Children's characteristics

The gender of the selected child chosen at random in each family was split evenly between boys and girls (52% were boys, and 48% were girls). 8% of the selected children had a special educational need and 8% of the selected children had a long standing illness or disability.

A.7 Income and family working status

Table A.5 shows family income levels, while Tables A.6 and A.7 provide families' profile in terms of working status and working hours. Nearly half of families (46%) were from couple families where both parents worked. Working lone parents were evenly split between full-time and part-time employment, while the predominant working arrangement among couple families was one parent being in full-time work and the other in part-time work.

Table A.5 Family Yearly Incomes*Base: All families*

	%
Under £10,000	17
£10,000 - £19,999	27
£20,000 - £29,999	20
£30,000 - £44,999	18
£45,000 +	18
<i>Unweighted base</i>	6604

Table A.6 Family working status*Base: All families*

	%
Both working	46
Couple - one working	22
Couple - neither working	5
Lone parent working	13
Lone parent not working	14
<i>Unweighted base</i>	7136

Table A.7 Family working hours

Base: All families

	%
Lone parent in full-time employment	6
Lone parent in part-time employment	7
Lone parent not in paid employment	14
Couple - both in full-time employment	17
Couple - one in full-time and one in part-time employment	27
Couple - one full-time one not working	19
Couple - one or both in part-time employment	4
Couple - neither in paid employment	5
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7136</i>

A.8 Atypical hours

We asked respondents whether they ever worked hours considered 'atypical' (Table A.8). The definition of atypical hours is whether they worked usually or sometimes before 8am, after 6pm, or at the weekend.

Table A.8 Atypical working hours

Base: All families

	%
Both working parents doing atypical hours	25
1 parent doing atypical hours	38
At least 1 working but neither parent doing atypical hours	5
Neither parent working	5
Lone parent doing atypical hours	9
Lone parent not doing atypical hours	5
Lone parent not working	14
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7136</i>

A.9 Geographical spread

Table A.9 shows the geographical spread of the families.

Table A.9 Government Office Region

Base: All families

	%
North East	5
North West	14
Yorkshire & the Humber	10
East Midlands	8
West Midlands	11
East	11
London	15
South East	16
South West	9
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7136</i>

The sample was also spread across areas differing according to affluence. Using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) we can see the spread of respondents as shown in Table A.10.

Table A.10 Area of Index of Multiple Deprivation

Base: All families

	%
1 st (Least deprived)	19
2 nd	17
3 rd	19
4 th	21
5 th (Most deprived)	23
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7136</i>

A.10 Qualifications

We asked parents about their highest qualifications. Table A.11 shows the proportion of respondents who had at least one GCSE Grade D-G and Table A.12 shows those who had at least one A-level.

Table A.11 Whether or not respondents received Grades D-G at GCSE

Base: All families

	%
Achieved at least grade D-G at GCSE or higher	77
Did not achieve grade D-G at GCSE or higher	23
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7118</i>

Table A.12 Whether or not respondents received at least one A-Level

Base: All families

	%
Achieved at least one A-level	31
Did not achieve at least one A-level	69
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7118</i>

As well as these qualifications, we asked respondents about their vocational qualifications. 50% had at least one vocational qualification.

A.11 Other characteristics

Over half (58%) of respondents said they were buying their house with the help of a loan or mortgage, while a third (32%) were renting their home (Table A.13).

Table A.13 Tenure status of respondents

Base: All families

	%
Buying it with the help of a mortgage or loan	58
Rent it	32
Own it outright	7
Live rent-free (including rent-free in relative's/friend's property)	2
Pay part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership)	1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7128</i>

Three quarters (75%) of respondents had a driving licence and, of those who had a licence, the vast majority had access to a car (95%).

APPENDIX B - TECHNICAL APPENDIX

B.1 Questionnaire development and the interview

The 2007 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents was the second in a new survey series, the first of which was conducted in 2004. This new series is a combination of two previous studies - the Parents' Demand for Childcare studies (baseline in 1999, repeated in 2001) and the Survey of Parents of Three and Four Year Old Children and their Use of Early Years Services series (1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004). In the rest of the Appendix these studies will be referred to as the Childcare series and the Early Years series respectively.

The interviews lasted on average 43 minutes and consisted of questions on the family's use of childcare in the last week and the last year, details of the cost of this childcare, and a complete attendance diary for one child in the family, randomly selected by the computer programme. This was followed by questions about the main provider used for the selected child, and sections designed to gauge the attitudes of parents to general local childcare issues. The final sections gathered information about the respondent's economic activity, as well as their partner if applicable, and questions to classify the respondent and their family according to income, ethnicity and so on (see Table B.1 for a summary of the questionnaire structure).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face on a laptop computer, using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), programmed using Blaise. Aids to interviewing consisted of a set of showcards, a weekly calendar and a three-year calendar to help with the work history.

As previously mentioned the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents is a combination of two previous survey series. These series focused on children of different ages; the Childcare series focused on children aged 0-14, whilst the Early Years series focused on children aged 2-5. The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series has a particular focus on 2-5 year olds. Topics such as how far the main provider encourages social and academic skills in the child and how much feedback parents get about their child's progress were covered only for parents with a selected child in this age group. Table B.1 indicates the sections of the questionnaire which were only asked of this group of parents.

Table B.1 Questionnaire content

Module A	Household composition
Module B	Household use of childcare in the last year Types of providers used for all children
Module C	Household use of childcare in the last week Types of providers used for all children
Module D	Household childcare costs (for providers used in the last week) Payments to providers including payments in kind Awareness of Tax Credits Details of benefits
Module E	Detailed record of attendance in the last week for selected child Breakdown of childcare use for randomly selected child, hour by hour Details of how child was taken to and picked up from each provider
Module F	Details of main provider for selected child in the last week Why parents chose their main provider <i>Parents of 2-5 year olds only:</i> awareness of skills encouraged at the provider <i>Parents of 2-5 year olds only:</i> parental involvement with the child at home <i>Parents of 2-5 year olds only:</i> information received by parents about their child's progress at the main provider <i>Parents of 2-5 year olds only:</i> the transition to reception class Integrated services offered at the main provider Travel arrangements to the main provider
Module G	Attitudes towards childcare in the local area Views on the affordability, quality and availability of childcare in the local area Sources of information about local childcare
Module H	Reasons for patterns of provision <i>Parents of 2-5 year olds only:</i> why parents used more than one provider for the selected child <i>Parents of 2-5 year olds only:</i> why parents did not use nursery education every day
Module I	Respondent's work Work history in last two years Any atypical hours worked and whether this caused any childcare problems Whether childcare was a barrier to working
Module J	Household and child classification questions Classification of family members according to special educational needs, disability, ethnicity, qualifications and housing tenure
Module K	Provider details, data linkage consent and admin questions
Module L	Partner's economic activity and classification questions Activities Work history in last two years Classification of partner according to ethnicity and qualifications

B.2 Attendance diary

Since the initial section of the program collected information on all the providers used during the reference week, there was a consistency check at the end of the attendance diary to make sure that all the relevant providers had been included. Discrepancies at this point could have arisen: a) because at the start of interview the respondent mistakenly included a provider that they had not used during the reference week or b) because a session of childcare was forgotten within the attendance diary. Where a session of childcare was forgotten within the attendance diary the consistency check prompted the interviewer to return to the attendance diary and enter the details for the session that had been omitted. However, where the mistake occurred earlier in the interview, the complex nature of the program meant that it was not possible to rectify the error.

Since the attendance diary only applies to the selected child these checks are not carried out for all children. As such, the corrections identified in the attendance diary are only applied to analysis of the attendance diary and not to the household level analysis.

B.2.1 Sample management

The selection of the sample was undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), on behalf of HM Revenue and Customs who hold Child Benefit records. The sample was drawn from HM Revenue and Customs' records of recipients of Child Benefit. The sample consisted of parents of children under 15, with a boost sample of parents of 2-4 year olds. Since children get older as fieldwork progresses (with some becoming too old to be eligible for the survey), in order to maximise the likelihood that households would contain children of the appropriate age, the children's ages were measured as of 29th January 2007. This meant that interviewers had almost a month to interview households with 14 year olds who were about to turn 15, or with a 4 year old about to turn 5. However, it also meant that at the beginning of fieldwork some boost cases only contained children who were too young. Where this was the case interviewers were asked to make an appointment to conduct the interview later in the fieldwork period.

Child Benefit records are a highly comprehensive form of sampling method because take-up amongst parents is nearly 100%. A small number of parents are excluded from the sampling frame, according to HM Revenue and Customs' procedures, and the data were weighted to correct for these exclusions (see Section B.8).

As Child Benefit records are recorded on a child level, rather than family level, the following stages were used:

1. Sectors sampled with probability proportional to the weighted number of children aged 0-14 in them.
2. Within the selected sectors Child Benefit recipients were sampled with a probability proportional to the weighted number of children aged 0-14 years for whom they are receiving benefits.
3. Select a single child at random from the selected Child Benefit recipient.

This sampling method meant that each child was weighted - those aged 2-4 given a higher weight to increase the chance of selection.

As explained in stage 3 of the sampling method, during the interview the CAPI program selected a child at random, for which the attendance diary questions were asked. This method also took account of the fact that babies could have been born between the date of sampling and the fieldwork, allowing for babies to be randomly selected as much as older children (as long as they were not the first born). First born children born after November 2006 were still excluded from the sample, so the sample of children under six months will not be representative of all children under six months. Children aged 14½ were not included in the sampling process as they had a high probability of being 15 by the time the interviewer called to do the interview.

B.3 Contacting respondents

All interviews were conducted by NatCen interviewers. Since the sample was drawn from Child Benefit records, interviewers had contact details for named individuals. Each sample member received an opt-out letter introducing the survey in December 2006¹⁰¹. Cases where the respondent did not opt out at this stage were issued for interview. The opt-out rates are provided in Section B.5.

The named person from the sample was the person listed as the recipient of Child Benefit in that household, and in most cases this was the mother. However, it was not necessarily the same person who was interviewed. To be eligible for interview the respondent must have had main or shared responsibility for making decisions about any childcare that the child(ren) in the household may receive. Interviewers were briefed on the possibility that some parents may be under 18 and were issued the standard Guidelines on Interviewing Children and Young Adults for advice.

During fieldwork interviewers followed a procedure for tracing those who had moved house since the Child Benefit records were last updated. When interviewers were able to establish their new address, they were instructed to follow up at the new address as long as it was local to them. Where respondents had moved out of the area the case was allocated to another interviewer where possible. This process was facilitated by the receipt of address updates from DWP towards the end of fieldwork.

If the nominated respondent did not speak English well enough to complete the interview, then interviewers could use another household member to assist as an interpreter. If using a family member as an interpreter was not possible there was an unsuccessful outcome code for the interview.

Where a respondent had a partner living in their household, and the partner was available, a short interview with the partner was also conducted. However, if the partner was not there or was unwilling to take part then the respondent could answer as their proxy.

¹⁰¹ Since the opt-out period was relatively close to the start of fieldwork a decision was made not to send advance letters at the start of fieldwork. However, where respondents were first approached towards the end for fieldwork, this made first contact slightly more difficult and so advance letters will be reintroduced in 2008

B.4 Briefing

All interviewers attended a full day briefing on the project before starting fieldwork, led by the NatCen research team. Interviewers also had comprehensive project instructions covering all aspects of the briefing.

Briefing sessions provided an introduction to the study and its aims, an explanation of the sample and contact procedures, full definitions of formal and informal childcare, and a dummy interview exercise, designed to familiarise interviewers with the questions and flow of the questionnaire. The day also included a session on conducting research with parents, focusing on issues of sensitivity, practicalities and dealing with requests for information.

B.5 Fieldwork and response rates

The survey was in the field from early January 2007 to early April 2007. Table B.2 provides detailed response rates. Overall 19% of the addresses were identified as 'out of scope' either by the interviewer (e.g. those who had moved away without successful tracing, or who had no children in the relevant age group) or because they had opted out before the interview (around 9% of the full sample chose to opt out before the interview). Based on the 'in scope' sample the field response rate was relatively high at 71%. 18% (of the in scope sample) were refusals in the field and 6% could not be contacted or were unable to take part for other reasons.

Table B.2 Parents' Childcare and Early Years Survey 2007 Response Rate

Base: All parents selected for the Parents' Childcare and Early Years Survey 2007

	Main Sample			Boost Sample			Total Sample		
	Count	In scope %	All %	Count	In scope %	All %	Count	In scope %	All %
Full Sample pre opt out	10767	-	-	1490	-	-	12257	-	-
Addresses 'in scope'	8797	100	82	1184	100	79	9981	100	81
Interview	6271	71	58	863	73	58	7134	71	58
- full, no partner	1598			194			1792		
- full, partner interview	1058			167			1225		
- full, partner interview in proxy	3459			471			3930		
- full, partner interview refused	151			27			178		
- partial successful	5			4			9		
Refusal	1915	22	18	239	20	16	2154	22	18
- by household	4			1			5		
- about eligibility	183			31			214		
- by respondent	1217			132			1349		
- by proxy	102			22			124		
- broken appointment	409			53			462		
No contact	611	7	6	82	7	6	693	7	6
- with household	191			30			221		
- with respondent	172			26			198		
- away/ill during fieldwork	74			8			82		
- language difficulties	60			8			68		
- other in scope unproductive	114			10			124		
Addresses 'out of scope'	1970	-	18	306	-	21	2276	-	19
Opt outs and office refusal	959	-	9	121	-	8	1080	-	9
- opt out within opt out period	923			117			1040		
- opt out after opt out period	14			1			15		
- office refusal	22			3			25		
Problems with address	898	-	8	137	-	9	1035	-	8
- mover outside England	20			3			23		
- mover, no follow up address	725			105			830		
- unable to find address	14			1			15		
- vacant/no resident household	129			25			154		
- inaccessible	10			3			13		
Ineligible household	113	-	1	48	-	3	161	-	1
- no children in age range	88			37			125		
- other ineligible	25			11			36		

The survey adhered to NatCen's standard field quality control measures. As part of the routine procedures every interviewer is accompanied in the field by a supervisor for a full day's work twice a year. This system ensures that in general at least 10% of interviewers will have been supervised on this particular survey. In addition, one in ten interviews are routinely back-checked by NatCen's Quality Control Unit. Back-checking is carried out by telephone where possible, or by post. Apart from thanking the respondent for taking part, these calls check whether various procedures were carried out correctly and whether the interviewer left a good impression. No significant problems were revealed by the back-checking of this survey and the feedback on interviewers was overwhelmingly positive.

B.6 Coding and editing of data

The CAPI program ensures that the correct routing is followed throughout the questionnaire and applies range and consistency error checks. These checks allow interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent and were used extensively in the questionnaire.

Following briefings by the NatCen research team, the data was coded by a team of coders under the management of the NatCen Operations team, using a second version of the CAPI program which included additional checks and codes for open answers. 'Other specify' questions are used when respondents volunteered an alternative response to the pre-coded choice offered them. These questions were back-coded to the original list of pre-coded responses where possible (using a new set of variables rather than overwriting interviewer coding). Notes made by interviewers during interviews were also examined and the data amended if appropriate, ensuring high quality data. Queries and difficulties that could not be resolved by the coder or the team were referred to researchers for resolution.

Where a respondent gave details of current or recent spells of employment this information was coded to be consistent with Standard Industrial and Occupational classifications - SIC (1992) and SOC (2000). Industry was classified to a 2-digit level and Occupation to a major group.

Once the data set was clean the analysis file of question-based and derived variables was set up in SPSS and all questions and answer codes labelled. Likewise, the tables used in analysis were generated in SPSS, however significance testing was undertaken using the survey commands in STATA.

90% of respondents agreed for their interview data to be linked to administrative records held at the DfES (now the Department for Children Schools and Families). This will allow future research to be undertaken into the use and views of childcare in relation to the results of the National Pupils Database.

B.7 Provider checks

In both the Childcare series and Early Years series checks were carried out on respondents' classifications of the providers they used in order to improve the accuracy of the classifications. Slightly different methods were used in each survey series and this survey used an adapted version of these to verify the provider classifications of parents in this study.

Checks were carried out for all formal providers except individuals such as childminders, nannies / au pairs and babysitters. The provider types checked were:

- Nursery school
- Nursery class
- Reception class
- Special day school or nursery
- Day nursery
- Playgroup or pre-school
- Breakfast club or after school club, on school site
- Breakfast club or after school club, not on school site
- Holiday club/scheme

Providers checked were those used in the past week by any children in the family, not just the selected child. However, we only contacted the providers of those families who had agreed, when asked in the interview, that this could be done and had provided sufficient contact details. During this process we also checked for duplicate providers; this meant that if a provider was used by more than one family, we ensured they would not be contacted more than once.

Other formal providers such as nannies and au pairs, babysitters and childminders were not included in these checks because experience in previous surveys showed a reluctance by these providers to take part in checks, and by parents to give their contact details.

B.7.1 Provider check procedures

If parents agreed for us to contact their providers, interviewers recorded the addresses and telephone numbers of the providers in the CAPI program during the interview. 90% of parents agreed to supply the contact details of their providers. This meant that we were given contact details for 3893 providers, which was equivalent to 89% of the providers used.

The next steps of the provider checks were divided into three stages.

Provider checks: stage one

Firstly, we contacted those providers who we had full details for and conducted a 4 minute telephone interview with them to check the classifications given by parents. The interview was designed to obtain the following:

- Information about what type of organisation provides the service (Local Authority, private business etc).
- Whether the provider is part of, or linked to an integrated care setting (Children’s Centre, local Sure Start etc).
- What age groups for which the whole provider caters and the age groups covered by individual services, if different.

Of the 3,893 providers whose contact details we obtained from parents, 810 were duplicates. Whilst we ran address and telephone number checks on the contact details obtained, a further 597 still had address details only (and no telephone number), which meant that we were able to issue 2,486 cases for the telephone survey. The fieldwork response rate can be found in Table B.3.

Table B.3 Provider Checks 2007 Response Rate

Base: All formal institutional providers identified by parents, with adequate contact details

	Count	In Scope %	All %
Full Sample	2486		
In Scope	2414	100	97
Interview	2104	87	85
Refusal	50	2	2
- office refusal	10		
- refusal to interviewer	40		
No contact	260	11	10
- with organisation	240		
- other in scope unproductive	20		
Out of Scope	72	-	3
Problems with number	62	-	2
- no trace of organisation	36		
- disconnected/ unobtainable	26		
Ineligible organisation	10	-	+
- closed	2		
- duplicate organisation	8		

With the information collected from the telephone interviews the programmer ran an automated check to verify, change or query parents' original classifications. A number of cases were 'thrown out' during these checks and were passed on to the next stage. These included cases where:

- There was no provider classification available because they had not been contacted, or they had refused the provider interview.
- Parents' and providers' classifications did not match at all.

Provider checks: stage two

After stage one of the checks all remaining providers which still needed a final classification outcome were looked up against the administrative databases or 'census' files provided by the DCSF, which listed childcare providers across England, and substantial information on their services.

A Blaise look-up file was used in order to match providers in the survey data file with providers in the relevant census data file by checking the identity of the provider and locate its unique reference number (URN) in the census data files.

The data sources used were:

- The Early Years and Schools Censuses
- OFSTED database
- EduBase

After this process we had another set of classifications which could be compared with the parents' classifications and (where available) the providers' classifications.

In most cases an automated program of 'logical' checks was then run to check all three sources against each other, using logical rules to determine what the final classification of the provider should be.

Provider checks: stage three

Where cases could not be matched with the census data (usually because of lack of information about providers on which to match), or the census data was not conclusive, manual checks were implemented, using the same rules as used in the automated checks as far as possible. Either the parental or provider classification was determined as the final classification according to pre-specified rules. Table B.4 shows the classifications of the providers we checked, comparing the parents' classification to the final classifications after all checks. As childminders, 'other nursery education providers', 'other childcare providers' and 'sport / leisure activities' were not checked in the original provider checks process these providers only appear in Table B.4 if they were re-classified in to one of these types in the provider check (for example, a playgroup that was re-classified as 'other childcare provider').

Table B.4 Classification of providers before and after provider checks*Base: All formal institutional providers identified by parents*

	Classification according to parents %	Final classification after all checks %
Nursery school	10	7
Nursery class	16	14
Reception class	16	18
Special day nursery	1	1
Day nursery	14	15
Playgroup or pre-school	15	17
Childminder	n/a	+
Breakfast or after school club on-site	18	19
Breakfast of after school club off-site	9	8
Holiday club	+	+
Other nursery education provider	n/a	0
Other childcare provider	n/a	+
Leisure/Sport activity	n/a	+
<i>Unweighted base</i>	3893	3893

B.8 Weighting

B.8.1 Reasons for weighting

The sample for this study was weighted to take account of any under-sampling of certain groups undertaken at the sample selection stage and to balance the effect of a larger 'boost' sample of 2-4 year olds. The weighting procedure for this study consisted of two stages. The first stage was to remove the biases which arose from the sample design, the second was to match the profile of the (weighted) sample to the population for a set of key characteristics.

The childcare sample was designed to be representative of the population of children on the Child Benefit records, rather than the population of Child Benefit recipients. This means the sample was biased towards larger households and needs to be weighted before any analyses can be carried out on household level data. The design also included a boost sample of children aged 2-4 and living in England. These children need to be down-weighted if they are to be included in the core sample analysis. The selection weights will also correct the selection probabilities for cases where the number of children on the sample frame differed from the number of children found in the household at interview.

A further stage of weighting (called calibration weighting) was used to correct for differences due to exclusions from the sample frame¹⁰², random chance in the selection process and the effects of differential non-response.

¹⁰² The DWP exclude a number of cases from the sampling frame before the sample can be drawn. These exclusions include cases which may have participated in previous surveys and sensitive cases (where the child may have died or been removed from the family). These exclusions, coupled with differential non-response, could make the sample unrepresentative of the general population of households with children.

At each responding household a single child was selected for the collection of detailed information on childcare use. The data is analysed at both household and child-level, hence there are two final weights; a household weight for the household-level analyses and a child weight for analyses of data collected about the selected child.

B.8.2 Selection weights

Household selection weight

The sample design means households which contain a large number of eligible children and households which contain children aged 2-4 were more likely to be included in the sample. As previously mentioned the sample was designed to be representative of the population of children on the Child Benefit records and so was not representative of recipients or households. To make the sample representative of households a weight needs to be applied and this weight should be used for all household-level analysis.

Recipients were selected with probability proportional to the weighted number of eligible children for whom they claim Child Benefit. In some households different adults could be claiming Child Benefit for different children within the same household¹⁰³. In these instances the households could be selected via either recipient on the sampling frame, hence the household selection probability was equal to the total weighted number of eligible children in the household.

The household selection weight for each household is the inverse of the household's selection probabilities, this down-weights larger households and households containing children aged 2-4:

$$w_1 = 1/Pr(h)$$

Final household weight

The household weight (w_h) used for all analysis of core household-level data is simply the household selection weight (w_1):

$$w_h = w_1$$

Child selection weight

At each responding household a single child was selected at random during interview. This child was the focus of the detailed childcare section of the questionnaire. In boost households children were eligible if they were aged 2-4 at the time of interview, for core households eligible children were aged 0-14.

The probability a child had of being selected depended on whether its household was in the core or boost sample. Households containing a child aged 2-4 on 29th January 2007 were allocated at random to either the core or boost sample.

¹⁰³ To calculate the selection weights we have made the assumption that all children are living in the same household as the adult receiving their Child Benefit. We were required to make this assumption as we are unable to identify households on the Child Benefit records; the records only allow children and recipients to be identified. If this assumption is made then the probability of a household being selected under our design is equal to the number of eligible children within that household, regardless of which recipient was selected during sampling. For the vast majority of cases this assumption will hold true.

The child selection weight (w_2) is the inverse of the child selection probabilities:

$$w_2 = 1/Pr(c)$$

As before, the assumption was made that all children in the household were living with the adult who claimed their Child Benefit.

Final child weight

The total child weight (w_c) should be used for analysis of the data about the selected child, collected from the detailed childcare questions. It is the product of the household selection weight (w_1) and the child selection weight (w_2):

$$w_c = w_1 * w_2$$

B.8.3 Calibration

The final stage of the weighting procedure was to adjust the weights using calibration weighting in CALMAR¹⁰⁴. The aim of the calibration weighting was to correct for differences between the (weighted) achieved sample and the population profile caused by excluding cases from the sample frame before sampling, random chance in the selection process and the effects of differential non-response.

Calibration weighting requires a set of population estimates to which the sample will be weighted, these estimates are known as control totals. The DWP provided NatCen with a breakdown of the sampling frame (before exclusions) for different variables at recipient and child level. The sample (weighted by the selection weights) and population distributions for these variables are shown in Tables B.5 and B.6.

¹⁰⁴ CALMAR, an acronym for CALibration on MARgins, is a macro program run in SAS which adjusts the margins of a contingency table of survey estimates to match the known population margins.

Table B.5 Comparison of recipient-level population figures to weighted sample

	Population	Sample weighted by household selection weight only
Government Office Region		
North East	5.1	6.2
North West	13.9	13.7
Yorkshire & the Humber	10.2	10.6
East Midlands	8.5	9.4
West Midlands	10.9	9.7
South West	9.4	9.9
East	10.9	11.3
London	15.3	12.9
South East	15.9	16.2
Method of Child Benefit payment		
Direct to bank account	99.1	99.3
By order book	0.9	0.7
Number of children in the household		
1	49.8	45.2
2	37.0	39.8
3	10.2	11.3
4	2.3	2.9
5+	0.7	0.8
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>5,135,805</i>	<i>7,136</i>

Table B.6 Comparison of child-level population figures to weighted sample

	Population	Sample weighted by child selection weight only
Government Office Region		
North East	4.9	5.6
North West	13.7	13.8
Yorkshire & the Humber	10.1	10.5
East Midlands	8.5	9.3
West Midlands	11.0	10.2
South West	9.4	9.8
East	11.0	11.1
London	15.5	13.2
South East	16.0	16.5
Selected child's age		
0-1	10.4	12.2
2-4	20.0	19.4
5-7	19.7	19.1
8-11	28.0	26.6
12-14	21.9	22.7
Selected child's sex		
Male	48.8	48.4
Female	51.2	51.6
Number of children in the household		
1	29.8	26.0
2	44.2	45.7
3	18.2	19.2
4	5.6	6.7
5+	2.3	2.5
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>8,598,260</i>	<i>7,136</i>

Calibration weighting works by adjusting the original sampling design weights to make the weighted survey estimates of the control totals exactly match those of the population. The adjustments are made under the restriction that the initial selection weights must be altered by as small amount as possible, so their original properties are retained.

This means the final calibrated weights are as close as possible to the selection weights whilst giving survey estimates for the control totals that match the population distribution exactly.

The calibration was run twice; once to calibrate the household weight and once to calibrate the child weight. Analysis of data weighted by the household weight will match the population of Child Benefit recipients¹⁰⁵ in terms of the variables used as control totals. Similarly, analysis of data weighted by the child weight will match the population of children on the Child Benefit records in terms of the variables used in weighting.

The control totals for the household weight (wh) were:

- Number of children for whom the recipient claims benefit
- Method of payment
- Regional distribution of recipients on the child benefit records

The control totals for the child weight (wc) were:

- Age
- Sex
- Household size
- Regional distribution of the population of children on the child benefit records

The distribution of the sample weighted by the calibration weights is shown in Tables B.7 and B.8. It can be seen that the distribution of the sample weighted by the final calibrated weights matches that of the population (see Tables B.5 and B.6).

¹⁰⁵ Recipients were used as a proxy for households

Table B.7 Weighted distribution of variables used in household-level calibration

Base: All families

	Sample weighted by final household weight %
Government Office Region	
North East	5.1
North West	13.9
Yorkshire & the Humber	10.2
East Midlands	8.5
West Midlands	10.9
South West	9.4
East	10.9
London	15.3
South East	15.9
Method of Child Benefit payment	
Direct to bank account	99.3
By order book	0.7
Number of children in the household	
1	49.8
2	37.0
3	10.2
4	2.3
5+	0.7
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7,136</i>

Table B.8 Weighted distribution of variables used in child-level calibration

Base: All families

	Sample weighted by final child weight %
Government Office Region	
North East	4.9
North West	13.7
Yorkshire & the Humber	10.1
East Midlands	8.5
West Midlands	11.0
South West	9.4
East	11.0
London	15.5
South East	16.0
Selected child's age	
0-1	10.4
2-4	20.0
5-7	19.7
8-11	28.0
12-14	21.9
Selected child's sex	
Male	48.8
Female	51.2
Number of children in the household	
1	29.8
2	44.2
3	18.2
4	5.6
5+	2.3
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>7,136</i>

The final calibrated household weight should be used for all analysis of household-level data. The final calibrated child weight should be used for all analysis of data about the selected child, collected during the detailed childcare section of the interview. The final weights were scaled to the achieved sample size.

B.8.4 Effective sample size

Disproportionate sampling and sample clustering often result in estimates with a larger variance. More variance means standard errors are larger and confidence intervals wider, so there is less certainty over how close estimates are to the true population value.

The effect of the sample design on the precision of survey estimates is indicated by the effective sample size (n_{eff}). The effective sample size measures the size of an (unweighted) simple random sample that would have provided the same precision (standard error) as the design being implemented. If the effective sample size is close to the actual sample size then we have an efficient design with a good level of precision. The lower the effective sample size, the lower the level of precision. The efficiency of a sample is given by the ratio of the effective sample size to the actual sample size. The sample was designed to be representative of the population of children, hence the child weight is more efficient than the household weight. The effective sample size and sample efficiency was calculated for both weights and are given in Table B.9.

Table B.9 Effective sample size and sample efficiency

	Effective sample size	Sample efficiency
Child weight	6,464	91%
Household weight	5,156	72%
<i>Unweighted sample size</i>	<i>7,136</i>	<i>7,136</i>

B.9 Fieldwork materials

Fieldwork materials (e.g. questionnaire, opt-out letter, etc) can be obtained from Anna Upson, in the Children and Families (Analysis and Research) Directorate at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Anna.Upson@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk) or from the Data Archive (www.data-archive.ac.uk).

APPENDIX C - ADDITIONAL TABLES

C.2.1 Use of provider types in the last week, by family type and working status

Base: All families

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both	One	Neither	All couple	Working	Not	All lone
	working	working	working	families		working	parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Early years provision and formal childcare							
Nursery school	3	4	3	3	2	3	2
Nursery class	4	7	9	5	3	7	5
Reception class	6	10	7	7	5	8	7
Day nursery	12	5	3	9	6	4	5
Playgroup or pre-school	7	11	8	8	3	6	4
Childminder	7	1	1	5	8	1	4
Nanny or au pair	2	1	0	1	1	+	+
Babysitter	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
Out-of-school club on school site	11	7	5	9	11	6	9
Out-of-school club off school site	4	3	2	3	4	2	3
Informal childcare							
Ex-partner/wife/husband	2	1	2	2	20	10	15
The child's grandparents	30	18	12	25	31	18	24
The child's older brother/sister	5	3	3	4	10	4	6
Another relative	6	5	4	6	9	5	7
A friend or neighbour	9	5	2	8	10	6	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>3274</i>	<i>1567</i>	<i>332</i>	<i>5173</i>	<i>963</i>	<i>1000</i>	<i>1963</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3098</i>	<i>1828</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>5343</i>	<i>770</i>	<i>1023</i>	<i>1793</i>

C.2.2 Use of provider types in the last week, by family yearly income

Base: All families

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000- £19,999 %	£20,000- £29,999 %	£30,000- £44,999 %	£45,000+ %
Early years provision and formal childcare					
Nursery school	3	2	3	3	3
Nursery class	7	6	5	4	4
Reception class	7	7	6	7	8
Day nursery	4	5	10	11	14
Playgroup or pre-school	6	7	7	8	7
Childminder	1	3	6	7	8
Nanny or au pair	0	+	+	1	4
Babysitter	1	1	1	2	4
Out-of-school club on school site	5	8	10	8	14
Out-of-school club on school off site	2	2	3	4	5
Informal childcare					
Ex-partner/wife/husband	9	8	5	3	2
The child's grandparents	19	23	30	29	25
The child's older brother/sister	2	5	5	6	6
Another relative	5	8	7	6	5
A friend or neighbour	4	5	7	11	12
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1134</i>	<i>1772</i>	<i>1323</i>	<i>1159</i>	<i>1221</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1038</i>	<i>1863</i>	<i>1374</i>	<i>1118</i>	<i>1211</i>

C.3.1 Use of childcare for economic and educational reasons, by family characteristics

Base: All families

	Used for economic reasons			Used for educational reasons			Weighted base	Unweighted base
	Any	Formal	Informal	Any	Formal	Informal		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Family working status								
Couple - both working	51	30	33	24	21	1	3274	3098
Couple - one working	12	8	5	32	30	1	1567	1828
Couple – neither working	7	5	2	27	26	+	332	417
Lone parent - working	62	26	47	18	16	1	963	770
Lone parent - not working	10	7	4	24	22	1	1000	1023
Family yearly income								
Under £10,000	16	10	9	24	22	1	1134	1038
£10,000-£19,999	32	14	22	23	21	1	1772	1863
£20,000-29,999	43	23	30	26	23	1	1323	1374
£30,000-£44,999	46	26	31	25	23	+	1159	1118
£45,000+	47	33	26	29	26	1	1221	1211
Age of child								
0-2	37	25	20	18	17	1	1227	1415
3-4	46	36	20	69	68	1	939	1435
5-7	32	17	20	17	13	1	1406	1186
8-11	28	12	19	8	5	+	1999	1669
12-14	17	2	15	6	3	1	1566	1431
Index of multiple deprivation								
1 st quintile -least deprived	42	24	27	29	25	1	1361	1394
2 nd quintile	40	23	25	29	26	1	1248	1273
3 rd quintile	38	22	24	27	23	1	1335	1300
4 th quintile	36	19	24	22	20	+	1472	1428
5 th quintile - most deprived	28	15	17	22	20	1	1673	1710

C.3.2 Age of selected child, by family working status

Base: All children

	Couple families				Lone parents		
	Both working	One working	Neither working	All couple families	Working	Not working	All lone parents
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
0-2	15	25	17	18	7	19	14
3-4	12	17	14	13	10	14	12
5-7	19	21	21	20	19	21	20
8-11	30	23	27	27	34	27	31
12-14	25	15	21	21	30	18	23
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>3138</i>	<i>1750</i>	<i>407</i>	<i>5295</i>	<i>831</i>	<i>1010</i>	<i>1841</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3098</i>	<i>1828</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>5343</i>	<i>770</i>	<i>1023</i>	<i>1793</i>

C.3.3 Reasons for using formal childcare, by family characteristics

Base: All families who had used formal childcare in last week

	Economic reasons only	Educational reasons only	Economic and educational reasons	Neither economic nor educational	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	%	%	%	%		
Family working status						
Couple - both working	42	22	26	9	1456	1631
Couple - one working	8	62	11	19	633	933
Couple - neither working	5	67	10	17	113	181
Lone parent - working	50	20	23	7	348	343
Lone parent - not working	12	58	9	22	328	433
Family yearly income						
Under £10,000	16	53	14	17	373	435
£10,000-£19,999	26	45	16	13	608	822
£20,000-29,999	34	0	21	13	563	686
£30,000-£44,999	36	30	23	11	509	609
£45,000+	39	25	24	11	635	723
Age of child						
0-2	44	23	21	12	470	559
3-4	15	52	27	5	796	1218
5-7	42	+	9	19	473	398
8-11	49	19	3	28	439	361
12-14	30	36	4	30	109	99
Index of multiple deprivation						
1 st quintile - least deprived	31	33	21	14	635	788
2 nd quintile	30	37	23	10	531	651
3 rd quintile	32	0	21	13	562	661
4 th quintile	32	35	21	12	538	639
5 th quintile - most deprived	29	42	15	15	595	768

C.3.4 Reasons for using informal childcare, by family characteristics

Base: All families who had used informal childcare in last week

	Economic reasons only	Educational reasons only	Economic and educational reasons	Neither economic nor educational	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	%	%	%	%		
Family working status						
Couple – both working	75	1	1	23	1401	1367
Couple – one working	17	2	1	80	438	506
Couple – neither working	9	0	1	90	65	79
Lone parent – working	79	1	2	18	559	460
Lone parent – not working	12	2	+	85	312	325
Family yearly income						
Under £10,000	29	2	1	68	348	325
£10,000-£19,999	57	+	1	42	682	680
£20,000-29,999	67	+	2	31	572	584
£30,000-£44,999	68	+	1	31	518	507
£45,000+	61	2	1	36	503	489
Age of child						
0-2	56	1	1	43	431	502
3-4	57	1	2	40	328	500
5-7	57	2	1	40	494	424
8-11	58	+	1	41	664	557
12-14	54	1	1	44	428	386
Index of multiple deprivation						
1 st quintile – least deprived	62	1	2	35	589	593
2 nd quintile	61	1	1	37	513	525
3 rd quintile	59	+	2	39	520	509
4 th quintile	59	+	1	40	581	553
5 th quintile – most deprived	50	2	1	47	545	540

C.4.1 Number of days of economic activity and non-economic activities (mother's activities)¹⁰⁶, by age of child

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	<i>Economic activity only</i>					<i>Non-economic activity only</i>				
	Age of child					Age of child				
	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %	0-2 %	3-4 %	5-7 %	8-11 %	12-14 %
0	41	54	47	43	51	45	26	38	42	39
1	8	5	11	13	14	22	9	19	22	23
2	13	7	11	12	9	17	8	15	16	17
3	13	9	9	9	9	9	13	7	9	9
4	11	8	8	8	6	4	10	5	5	5
5	14	16	13	14	11	3	28	13	4	5
6	0	1	1	1	1	0	4	2	1	2
7	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	1	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	740	825	836	994	550	740	825	836	994	550
<i>Unweighted base</i>	868	1260	710	831	501	868	1260	710	831	501

¹⁰⁶ This includes a very small number of female carers who were not the mother of the children (e.g. grandmothers).

C.4.2 Number of providers used in the last week, by age of child

Base: All children who had received childcare in the last week

	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
1	60	49	58	56	68
2	31	36	29	26	21
3+	9	15	13	17	11
<i>Weighted base</i>	739	825	829	991	550
<i>Unweighted base</i>	867	1259	704	829	501

C.5.1 Difficulty paying for childcare, by government office region

Base: All families who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies

	Very easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very Difficult	Weighted base	Unwtd base
	%	%	%	%	%		
North East	46	15	25	11	2	86	113
North West	25	27	24	17	6	276	324
Yorkshire and the Humber	26	26	31	13	3	219	244
East Midlands	33	19	29	14	5	174	209
West Midlands	26	18	31	17	8	274	289
East of England	25	30	25	14	5	278	316
London	19	25	32	16	8	336	325
South East	22	28	29	16	5	437	512
South West	32	22	26	16	4	226	270

Note: Row percentages

C.5.2 Difficulty paying for childcare, by number of children aged 0-14

Base: All families who usually pay for childcare, after subsidies

	1	2	3+
	%	%	%
Very easy	27	25	25
Easy	25	25	23
Neither easy nor difficult	29	29	27
Difficult	14	16	18
Very difficult	6	5	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	988	999	334
<i>Unweighted base</i>	573	1319	720

C.5.3 Receipt of tax credits, by ethnicity of respondent

Base: All families, except for the childcare element figures which is based on those receiving WTC

	White %	Black %	Asian %	Other %
None	34	29	30	35
Child Tax Credit	42	44	35	43
Working Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit	24	27	36	22
Childcare element	11	6	6	7
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>6064/1440</i>	<i>262/71</i>	<i>422/150</i>	<i>296/66</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>6003/1412</i>	<i>263/70</i>	<i>512/207</i>	<i>265/57</i>

C.5.4 Receipt of tax credits, by number of children 0-14

Base: All families, except for the childcare element figures which is based on those receiving WTC

	1 %	2 %	3+ %
None	36	33	30
Child Tax Credit	40	43	44
Working Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit	25	24	26
Childcare element	10	13	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>351/863</i>	<i>2602/621</i>	<i>934/245</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1860/465</i>	<i>3234/769</i>	<i>1960/516</i>

C.5.5 Take up of free entitlement , by ethnicity of child

Base: All eligible 3 and 4 year olds

	White %	Black %	Asian %	Other %
Received free entitlement	88	83	74	85
Received eligible childcare but not free entitlement	7	13	11	8
No eligible childcare	5	5	15	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>688</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1067</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>105</i>

Table C.6.1 Reasons for not using childcare in the last year, 2004-2007*Base: All families who did not use childcare in the last year*

	2004	2007
	%	%
I'd rather look after my child(ren) myself	58	57
I rarely need to be away from my children	21	22
My child(ren) are old enough to look after themselves	21	21
I cannot afford childcare	11	13
There are no childcare providers available that I could trust	5	4
My/partner's work hours or conditions fit around children	7	4
The quality of childcare is not good enough	1	2
My child(ren) need special care	3	2
I have had bad experience using childcare in the past	+	1
I would have transport difficulties getting to a provider	1	1
I cannot afford the initial registration/ administration fees	N/A	+
Other reasons	9	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	1075	1131
<i>Unweighted base</i>	864	910

Table C.6.2 Reasons for not using childcare in the last year, by family yearly income*Base: All families who did not use childcare in the last year*

	Under £10,000	£10,000 - £19,999	£20,000 - £29,999	£30,000 - £44,999	£45,000 +
	%	%	%	%	%
I'd rather look after my child(ren) myself	65	58	50	44	53
I rarely need to be away from my children	21	25	24	19	18
There are no childcare providers available that I could trust	6	4	2	4	0
I cannot afford childcare	18	11	14	13	10
I cannot afford the initial registration/ administration fees	1	+	1	0	0
The quality of childcare is not good enough	2	2	1	3	0
My child(ren) are old enough to look after themselves	16	17	26	24	34
My child(ren) need special care	2	2	2	1	0
I have had bad experience using childcare in the past	2	+	1	1	1
I would have transport difficulties getting to a provider	1	+	2	0	0
My/partner's work hours or conditions fit around children	1	3	5	8	6
Other reasons	16	18	13	17	13
<i>Weighted base</i>	298	331	170	133	87
<i>Unweighted base</i>	213	294	145	99	68

Table C.6.3 Reasons for not using childcare in the last year, by family working status

Base: All families who did not use childcare in the last year

	Couple families			Lone parents	
	Both working	One working	Neither working	Working	Not working
	%	%	%	%	%
I'd rather look after my child(ren) myself	43	71	70	40	66
I rarely need to be away from my children	20	24	31	18	20
There are no childcare providers available that I could trust	2	4	3	3	7
I cannot afford childcare	11	12	16	16	14
I cannot afford the initial registration/ administration fees	0	1	0	0	1
The quality of childcare is not good enough	1	1	3	0	3
My child(ren) are old enough to look after themselves	35	8	19	23	12
My child(ren) need special care	1	2	3	1	2
I have had bad experience using childcare in the past	+	1	0	0	2
I would have transport difficulties getting to a provider	1	1	+	0	1
My/partner's work hours or conditions fit around children	8	2	2	3	0
Other reasons	15	17	12	23	17
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>252</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>304</i>	<i>261</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>197</i>

Table C.6.4 Reasons for not using childcare in the last year, by family type

Base: All families who did not use childcare in the last year

	Couple	Lone Parent
	%	%
I'd rather look after my child(ren) myself	56	59
I rarely need to be away from my children	23	19
There are no childcare providers available that I could trust	3	6
I cannot afford childcare	12	14
I cannot afford the initial registration / administration fees	+	1
The quality of childcare is not good enough	1	2
My child(ren) are old enough to look after themselves	23	15
My child(ren) need special care	1	2
I have had bad experience using childcare in the past	1	2
I would have transport difficulties getting to a provider	1	1
My/partner's work hours or conditions fit around children	5	1
Other reasons	15	19
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>793</i>	<i>338</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>654</i>	<i>256</i>

Table C.6.5 Reasons for not using childcare in the last year, by age of child*Base: All families who did not use childcare in the last year*

	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
I'd rather look after my child(ren) myself	63	[75]	68	65	47
I rarely need to be away from my children	18	[9]	26	21	23
There are no childcare providers available that I could trust	2	[2]	2	7	2
I cannot afford childcare	25	[16]	17	10	8
I cannot afford the initial registration / administration fees	2	[2]	0	0	0
The quality of childcare is not good enough	+	[1]	3	4	1
My child(ren) are old enough to look after themselves	5	[3]	1	5	41
My child(ren) need special care	+	[1]	2	3	1
I have had bad experience using childcare in the past	+	[2]	1	1	1
I would have transport difficulties getting to a provider	1	[2]	0	1	1
My/partner's work hours or conditions fit around children	3	[0]	3	4	4
Other reasons	20	[10]	20	18	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>507</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>357</i>

Table C.6.6 Reasons for not using childcare in the last year, by number of children 0-14*Base: All families who did not use childcare in the last year*

	1	2	3+
	%	%	%
I'd rather look after my child(ren) myself	51	65	71
I rarely need to be away from my children	21	23	28
There are no childcare providers available that I could trust	4	3	5
I cannot afford childcare	11	14	19
I cannot afford the initial registration / administration fees	+	+	0
The quality of childcare is not good enough	2	1	3
My child(ren) are old enough to look after themselves	27	11	4
My child(ren) need special care	1	2	4
I have had bad experience using childcare in the past	1	1	1
I would have transport difficulties getting to a provider	1	+	1
My/partner's work hours or conditions fit around children	3	4	3
Other reasons	17	15	17
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>718</i>	<i>299</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>357</i>	<i>330</i>	<i>223</i>

Table C.6.7 Reasons selected child does not use early years education, 2004-2007

Base: All families whose selected child is two to five years old and does not attend Nursery school, Nursery class, Reception class, Special day school or nursery unit for children with special needs, Day nursery, Playgroup or pre-school, or other nursery education

	2004	2007
	%	%
Child too young for local providers	41	36
Prefer to look after child at home	35	32
Too expensive/ can't afford it / other cost factors	19	24
Local providers full/ could not get a place	6	7
Prefer to teach child myself	10	7
Child not yet developed enough to benefit	7	5
No local providers	2	2
Child dislikes/ is unhappy in nursery education	4	1
Other	15	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	305	332
<i>Unweighted base</i>	451	487

Table C.6.8 Reasons selected child does not use early years education every day, 2004-2007

Base: All families whose selected child is two to five years old and does not attend Nursery school, Nursery class, Reception class, Special day school or nursery unit for children with special needs, Day nursery, Playgroup or pre-school, or other nursery education every day

	2004	2007
	%	%
Prefer to have child at home some of the time	32	32
Cannot afford any more	21	27
Child is too young to go every day	31	19
I only need to use it on these days / I only work on certain days	18	19
Provider not flexible enough / cannot accept child every day	15	9
Child was unwell	6	6
Could not get a state nursery place	2	2
Prefer to have child with other relatives some of the time	1	1
Other one-off occurrence	4	1
Transport difficulties to get to provider	+	0
Other reasons	8	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	509	543
<i>Unweighted base</i>	794	794

Table C.6.9 Reasons selected child does not use early years education every day, by family working status

Base: All families whose selected child is two to five years old and does not attend Nursery school, Nursery class, Reception class, Special day school or nursery unit for children with special needs, Day nursery, Playgroup or pre-school, or other nursery education every day

	Couple families			Lone parents	
	Both working	One working	Neither working	Working	Not working
	%	%	%	%	%
Cannot afford any more	26	27	[17]	36	27
Provider not flexible enough / cannot accept child every day	6	10	[15]	5	18
Could not get a state nursery place	1	2	[0]	5	2
Prefer to have child at home some of the time	34	40	[19]	19	15
Child is too young to go every day	17	28	[8]	15	13
I only need to use it on these days/I only work on certain days	31	4	[12]	23	7
Prefer to have child with other relatives some of the time	2	1	[0]	0	1
Transport difficulties to get to provider	0	0	[0]	0	0
Child was unwell	4	5	[13]	5	13
Other one-off occurrence	1	1	[3]	2	0
Other reasons	14	15	[30]	18	22
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>387</i>	<i>238</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>76</i>

Table C.6.10 Childcare related reasons why the respondent is not working, 2004-2007

Base: Families where the respondent is not working

	2004	2007
	%	%
I want to stay with my child(ren)	50	46
My child(ren) is / are too young	27	27
My child(ren) would suffer if I went out to work	21	18
I cannot find free / cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile	15	17
I cannot afford good quality childcare	10	11
I cannot find childcare for the hours / days I would need to go out to work	6	7
My child(ren) has / have a long term illness / disability / special needs and need(s) a lot of attention	9	7
I cannot find good quality childcare	5	5
I cannot find reliable childcare	4	4
I cannot find childcare near where I live	4	4
Other reason(s)	3	5
None of these reasons	19	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>2475</i>	<i>2193</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>2774</i>	<i>2560</i>

Table C.6.11 Childcare related reasons why the respondent is not working, by family yearly income

Base: Families where the respondent is not working

	Under £10,000 %	£10,000 - £19,999 %	£20,000 - £29,999 %	£30,000 - £44,999 %	£45,000 +
I cannot find free / cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile	21	16	15	16	9
I cannot find good quality childcare	7	4	3	3	2
I cannot afford good quality childcare	16	9	8	7	5
I cannot find reliable childcare	6	4	2	3	1
I cannot find childcare for the hours / days I would need to go out to work	11	5	5	6	4
I cannot find childcare near where I live	7	3	2	+	1
I want to stay with my child(ren)	36	45	52	54	62
My child(ren) is / are too young	25	30	28	27	30
My child(ren) would suffer if I went out to work	11	17	21	23	33
My child(ren) has / have a long term illness / disability / special needs and need(s) a lot of attention	5	11	9	4	5
Other reason(s)	5	5	4	6	3
None of these reasons	24	21	20	20	15
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>759</i>	<i>558</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>179</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>722</i>	<i>763</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>215</i>	<i>286</i>

Table C.6.12 Childcare related reasons why the respondent is not working, by family type

Base: Families where the respondent is not working

	Couple %	Lone parent %
I cannot find free / cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile	13	23
I cannot find good quality childcare	3	7
I cannot afford good quality childcare	7	16
I cannot find reliable childcare	2	7
I cannot find childcare for the hours / days I would need to go out to work	5	10
I cannot find childcare near where I live	2	6
I want to stay with my child(ren)	52	35
My child(ren) is / are too young	29	24
My child(ren) would suffer if I went out to work	22	12
My child(ren) has / have a long term illness / disability / special needs and need(s) a lot of attention	6	8
Other reason(s)	5	5
None of these reasons	20	24
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>1360</i>	<i>833</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1686</i>	<i>874</i>

Table C.6.13 Childcare related reasons why the respondent is not working, by family working status

Base: Families where the respondent is not working

	Couple families		Lone parents
	One working %	Neither working %	Not working %
I cannot find free / cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile	14	9	23
I cannot find good quality childcare	3	4	7
I cannot afford good quality childcare	7	7	16
I cannot find reliable childcare	2	2	7
I cannot find childcare for the hours / days I would need to go out to work	5	4	10
I cannot find childcare near where I live	2	3	6
I want to stay with my child(ren)	55	38	35
My child(ren) is / are too young	30	24	24
My child(ren) would suffer if I went out to work	24	13	12
My child(ren) has / have a long term illness / disability / special needs and need(s) a lot of attention	6	9	8
Other reason(s)	4	6	5
None of these reasons	18	28	24
<i>Weighted base</i>	1122	239	833
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1382	304	874

Table C.6.14 Childcare related reasons why the respondent is not working, by age of child

Base: Families where the respondent is not working

	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14
	%	%	%	%	%
I cannot find free / cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile	23	18	17	14	8
I cannot find good quality childcare	6	4	5	4	3
I cannot afford good quality childcare	15	9	11	10	6
I cannot find reliable childcare	3	3	5	7	2
I cannot find childcare for the hours / days I would need to go out to work	6	9	8	9	3
I cannot find childcare near where I live	3	2	6	5	2
I want to stay with my child(ren)	53	47	45	43	35
My child(ren) is / are too young	39	37	23	20	9
My child(ren) would suffer if I went out to work	18	20	21	19	11
My child(ren) has / have a long term illness / disability / special needs and need(s) a lot of attention	3	5	8	11	10
Other reason(s)	3	2	4	6	8
None of these reasons	12	19	22	22	37
<i>Weighted base</i>	598	395	391	442	367
<i>Unweighted base</i>	638	630	457	492	343

Table C.7.1 Improvements that parents would like to see of main formal providers, by provider type

Base: All families with a pre-school age selected child, who mainly only used a formal group provider or childminder for this child in the last week

	Nursery school %	Nursery class %	Day nursery %	Playgroup or pre-school %	All group providers %	Childminder %
Outdoor play opportunities	13	12	10	25	14	6
Building /premises	18	10	16	14	14	1
Number of staff per group / class or group / class size	9	11	15	5	11	4
Staff's qualifications, training or experience	5	4	9	5	6	1
Equipment or toys	4	5	5	9	6	2
Hygiene, health or safety	9	3	9	3	6	1
Security	6	7	5	3	5	0
None of these	63	65	58	56	60	89
Weighted bases	157	232	333	223	979	83
Unweighted bases	228	359	419	320	1373	100

Table C.8.1 Improvements parents would like to see to childminders

Base: All families with a school age selected child who mainly uses a childminder

	%
Outdoor play opportunities	10
Equipment or toys	4
Hygiene, health or safety	2
Number of staff per group / class or group / class size	1
Building / premises	1
Staff's qualifications, training or experience	0
Security	0
None of these	86
Weighted bases	132
Unweighted bases	110

Table C.8.2 Improvements parents would like to see to reception classes

Base: All families with a school age selected child who mainly uses a reception class

	%
Number of staff per group / class or group / class size	18
Outdoor play opportunities	12
Building / premises	12
Hygiene, health or safety	9
Security	9
Staff's qualifications, training or experience	5
Equipment or toys	5
None of these	59
Weighted bases	299
Unweighted bases	351

Table C.8.3 Reasons why parents of 'selected' school age children chose to use an informal provider, 2004-2007

Base: All families with a school age 'selected' child who mainly uses an informal provider or who identified an informal provider as the main usual provider

	2004	2007
	%	%
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	5	4
It was low cost	1	1
I could trust this person / these people	60	61
I wanted someone who would show my child affection	4	4
I knew they would bring up my child the same way I would	4	3
I wanted my child to be looked after at home	2	2
It is easy to get to	+	1
I wanted my child to mix with other children	1	1
His/her brother(s) / sister(s) went there	1	+
I wanted someone properly trained to look after child	+	+
It fitted in with my husband / wife / partner's working hours	2	3
I wanted my child to be educated while being looked after	+	+
I wanted reliable arrangements	3	3
It had a good reputation	+	+
It was recommended to me	+	0
No other choices available to me	3	2
Other reason(s)	4	5
The person is family	3	4
So that my child and a relative could spend time together	6	3
Child's choice	2	2
Weighted bases	1438	1205
Unweighted bases	1320	1050

APPENDIX D - REGRESSION TABLES

D.1 Use of formal care

A binary logistic regression was used to explore the characteristics associated with the use of formal care, the results of which are explored in Section 2.8. An odds ratio greater than 1.00 indicates that this category had a greater likelihood of using formal care, relative to the reference group (in bold); an odds ratio below 1.00 indicate a lesser likelihood of using formal care.

Table D.2.1 Use of formal childcare logistic regression model

Base: All children

	Odds ratio	Standard error
Household income (<£10,000)		
£10,000-£19,999	1.18	0.15
£20,000-£29,999	**1.65	0.25
£30,000-£44,999	***1.81	0.26
£45,000+	***3.07	0.48
Household work status (all parents working)		
One working, one not	***0.64	0.06
None working	***0.38	0.04
Age of child (0-2)		
3-4	***10.90	1.19
5-7	**0.74	0.07
8-11	***0.34	0.03
12-14	***0.08	0.01
Weekend working (at least 1 parent in couple family)		
No parent in couple family	***1.42	0.13
Non-working couple household	1.24	0.22
Lone parent household	***1.52	0.16
Area deprivation (least deprived)		
2 nd	*0.76	0.09
3 rd	*0.75	0.10
4 th	**0.67	0.09
Most deprived	0.75	0.11
Ethnicity (White)		
Black Caribbean	0.56	0.26
Black African	1.18	0.32
Indian	0.90	0.22
Pakistani	***0.44	0.10
Bangladeshi	*0.50	0.17
Other	0.99	0.14
Special Educational Needs (Yes)		
No	*0.74	0.10
Number of children (1)		
2	0.92	0.08
3+	*0.78	0.09
<i>Unweighted base</i>		6572

Key: *P<0.05 **P<0.01 ***P< 0.001

D.2 Weekly spend on childcare

A binary logistic regression was used to explore the factors associated with the weekly amount spent on childcare (summarised in Section 5.3). The dependent variable was coded so that 1=weekly spend above median and 0 = weekly spend below median. An odds-ratio greater than 1 indicates a greater likelihood of spending above the median amount (relative to the reference group, in bold), whilst an odds-ratio less than 1 indicates a lesser likelihood of spending above the median amount.

Table D.5.1 Weekly spend on childcare (including subsidies) logistic regression model

Base: All families who had paid for childcare used in last week

	Odds ratio	Standard error
Family working status (all parents working)		
One working, one not	***0.55	0.09
None working	***0.32	0.09
Family type (Couple)		
Lone parent	***2.22	0.42
Family yearly income (<£10,000)		
£10,000-£19,999	1.51	0.44
£20,000-£29,999	***2.90	0.98
£30,000-£44,999	***4.25	1.44
£45,000+	***6.57	2.18
Age of child (0-2)		
3-4	*0.67	0.11
5-7	***0.19	0.04
8-11	***0.22	0.04
12-14	***0.14	0.04
Number of children 0-14 (1)		
2	***0.39	0.06
3+	***0.18	0.03
Government office region (London)		
North East	***0.29	0.10
North West	0.87	0.23
Yorkshire & the Humber	*0.63	0.15
East Midlands	**0.38	0.13
West Midlands	**0.50	0.13
East	*0.58	0.14
South East	*0.62	0.12
South West	*0.55	0.13
Hours of childcare (<10)		
10-19	***3.13	0.62
20-29	***8.21	1.94
30-39	***6.85	1.54
40+	***13.29	2.81
Type of childcare (informal)		
Used formal care only	***2.80	0.38
<i>Unweighted base</i>		1931

Key: *P<0.05 **P<0.01 ***P< 0.001

D.3 Hourly cost of childcare

A binary logistic regression was used to explore the factors associated with the hourly cost of childcare (summarised in Section 5.4). The dependent variable was coded so that 1=hourly cost above median and 0 = hourly cost below median. An odds-ratio greater than 1 indicates a greater likelihood of using childcare with an hourly cost above the median (relative to the reference group, in bold), whilst an odds-ratio less than 1 indicates a lesser likelihood of using childcare with an hourly cost above the median.

Table D.5.2 Hourly cost of childcare (including subsidies) logistic regression model

Base: All families who had paid for childcare used in last week

	Odds ratio	Standard error
Family working status (all parents working)		
One working, one not	*0.69	0.11
None working	*0.57	0.14
Family type (Couple)		
Lone parent	***1.85	0.36
Family yearly income (<£10,000)		
£10,000-£19,999	1.04	0.26
£20,000-£29,999	*1.79	0.50
£30,000-£44,999	**2.15	0.62
£45,000+	***3.09	0.89
Age of child (0-2)		
3-4	***0.35	0.05
5-7	***0.40	0.07
8-11	***0.36	0.06
12-14	***0.26	0.06
Number of children 0-14 (1)		
2	0.99	0.13
3+	***0.59	0.10
Government office region (London)		
North East	**0.35	0.13
North West	**0.56	0.12
Yorkshire & the Humber	***0.48	0.11
East Midlands	***0.33	0.07
West Midlands	0.72	0.15
East	*0.57	0.14
South East	0.90	0.20
South West	*0.57	0.13
Index of multiple deprivation (least deprived)		
2 nd quintile	0.86	0.15
3 rd quintile	0.97	0.16
4 th quintile	***0.49	0.09
5 th quintile - Most deprived	**0.70	0.15
Type of childcare (informal)		
Used formal care only	***3.84	0.41
<i>Unweighted base</i>		1933

Key: *P<0.05 **P<0.01 ***P< 0.001

D.4 Views of affordability of childcare logistic regression model

A binary logistic regression was used to explore the characteristics associated with views of affordability of local childcare, the results of which are explored in Section 6.2. Values greater than 1.00 indicate that this category had a greater likelihood of rating the affordability of local childcare as very good or fairly good (relative to the reference group, in bold); values below 1.00 indicate a lesser likelihood of rating the affordability of local childcare favourably.

Table D.6.1 Views of affordability of childcare logistic regression

Base: Families who had used and paid for childcare in the last week

	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Household income (<£10,000)		
£10,000 - £19,999	1.11	0.26
£20,000 - £29,999	1.21	0.32
£30,000 - £44,999	1.37	0.38
£45,000 +	*1.81	0.50
Use of formal childcare (used formal childcare)		
Used no formal childcare	***0.46	0.09
Age of child (0-2)		
3-4	***1.67	0.23
5-7	1.10	0.19
8-11	**1.50	0.22
12-14	**2.01	0.47
Household work status (couple – both working)		
Couple - one working	1.12	0.16
Couple - neither working	0.60	0.19
Lone parent working	**0.62	0.11
Lone parent not working	0.76	0.18
Cost of childcare (<£5)		
£5 to less than £10	0.88	0.17
£10 to less than £20	0.94	0.18
£20 to less than £50	0.85	0.16
£50 to less than £100	0.73	0.15
£100 to less than £150	***0.37	0.07
<i>Unweighted base</i>		2208

Key: *P<0.05 **P<0.01 ***P< 0.001

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