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Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and
Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes:
Further Qualitative Research into Implementation



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and Extended Schools Childcare
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Research into Implementation*

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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 or the Department for Work and Pensions.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

BA	Benefits Agency
CIS	Children's Information Service
CPM	Childcare Partnership Manager
CTP	Childcare Taster Pilot
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EZ	Employment Zones
ESCP	Extended Schools Childcare Pilot
IS	Income Support. Income Support is a noncontributory, income-assessed benefit available to people who are not required to work.
Jobcentre Plus	References to Jobcentre Plus should be taken also to refer to the Employment Service, which operated until 31 March 2002. Initially, there were 56 Jobcentre Plus pathfinder offices offering fully integrated work and benefit services, and a further 200 fully integrated Jobcentre Plus offices were opened between October 2002 and April 2006. Full integration of all ES and BA local offices will take several years, during which time services will continue to be provided in social security offices and Jobcentres as was the case during this research.
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LA	Local Authority
LPWFI	Lone Parent Work Focused Interview
NDLP	New Deal for Lone Parents
NDP	New Deal for Partners
QWFI	Quarterly Work Focused Interviews
WFI	Work Focused Interviews

Executive Summary

1 Background and Aims

This report presents the interim findings of the evaluation of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot and Childcare Taster Pilot. It contains the findings from two stages of fieldwork. In February-March 2005, the first interviews were carried out with the second and third wave pilot areas, which had started ESCP/CTP in October 2004 and January 2005. Twenty-two qualitative interviews were carried out with stakeholders across the eight pilot areas. The research included staff from the Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus and Children's Information Service. In June-July 2005 the first wave pilot areas which had started ESCP/CTP in April 2004, and who were interviewed in June-July 2004 were re-visited. Forty qualitative interviews were carried out with stakeholders across the three pilot areas. The research included staff from the Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus, Children's Information Service, schools and childcare providers.

The aim of the pilots was to explore the assertion that a lack of affordable, accessible childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support. Lone parents were the principal target group for the pilots, but 'partners' of benefit recipients who have childcare responsibilities were also a key client group.

In the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP), the Local Authority gave parents the opportunity for Childcare Chats (in-depth discussions with the LA about childcare issues), accompanied visits to childcare providers, and Childcare Tasters (the opportunity to try out formal childcare for free for up to a week). In the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) – the Local Authority supported initiatives to ensure a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible, formal childcare for lone parents to move into work, and engage with schools to integrate this with their services, where possible.

The aims of the research were to assess the progress made by the pilots, to explore the impacts being made by the pilots and to identify lessons which can be learned from these pilots. Additional aims of the interviews with pilot areas who had already been interviewed in 2004 were to re-visit the issues raised by these stakeholders when they were originally interviewed and to discuss the pilot areas' plans for the future.

2 Findings

2.1. Progress in pilot areas

- The second and third Wave pilot areas which had started in October 2004 and January 2005, were still in the early stages of development at the time of being interviewed. They were in the process of recruiting staff and contacting childcare providers and schools. This was similar to the development time that the earlier starting pilots had experienced. In the design, this development stage had been planned to be shorter, but this expectation may have been misjudged.
- For the pilots which had started in April 2004, the delivery of Chats, accompanied visits and Tasters for CTP were underway, as well as outreach work and creation of childcare for ESCP.

2.2. Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP)

- Whilst the main aim of the ESCP had been to develop or create childcare, in the first wave pilot areas, ESCP had altered during development to include outreach work with lone parents as well as the development of childcare places.
- There were a number of reasons why outreach work became an element of the ESCP:
 - Stakeholders' perceptions that parents were mostly not job-ready and had financial concerns that delayed them from searching for work, and these needed addressing prior to childcare. There were some childcare issues, with some reporting parents unable to find convenient childcare vacancies to match their working hours, or a preference for nurseries over childminders. However, the key difficulty for the childcare was perceived to be affordability, especially the deposits in advance required to secure vacancies;
 - In some pilot areas, Development Workers were put in post during the Summer Holidays when the schools were closed. In order to make use of the Development Workers, it was decided that they could begin their work by carrying out consultations with lone parents.
- Two types of outreach work were being carried out by pilots in the first wave areas:
 - One type involved identifying parents, giving them information and sign-posting them to other services, for example referring them to the Jobcentre;
 - The other form of outreach work gave one-to-one support to parents, encouraging them to look or work by addressing their barriers.
- The in-depth work carried out with parents led pilot staff to believe for some parents, returning to work would be a long-term goal and they would require sustained personal support and encouragement.
- The development of childcare provision within primary schools was also taking place under the ESCP. Development Workers worked out business plans with the schools and helped apply for funding, aiming to make the childcare sustainable once funding had run out.

2.3. Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP)

- In some areas, CTP was also operating differently than designed, with the Taster used to allow parents to test a specific childcare provider or to cover the cost of the first week of childcare when the parent entered work. This was contrary to the underlying design where CTP was to allow parents to test out differing childcare providers. However, the areas had been advised from the outset that they should operate the design flexibly.
- There was positive feedback about the Childcare Chats. They were seen to be useful for parents who were job-ready and for whom childcare was a barrier. The Chats were able to address parents' questions and concerns and give parents the self-confidence to approach providers.
- The take-up of Childcare Tasters was lower than for Childcare Chats and accompanied visits. Mostly stakeholders suggested that this was due to the Chat being sufficient to satisfy the parent's information needs. However some found that this was because parents did not consider childcare issues seriously until they had already found the job, and many parents were not yet job-ready.
- Some pilot staff and childcare providers thought that giving parents the opportunity to test out different forms of childcare was less useful than helping a parent to trial a specific provider with the aim of using that service in the future. This allowed the child to 'settle-in' at the childcare service.

2.4. Operational issues

- Key issues observed with the progress of the pilots related to the slow development compared to the relatively short timescale of the 2 year pilot.
- In addition, the lack of Jobcentre funding had an impact on Jobcentre Plus' ability to engage with the pilots. There was evidence that the referral process (both for CTP and ESCP) was not operating as effectively as was hoped

2.5. Perceived impacts of pilots

- The pilots were thought to be successfully advancing services to parents.
- A key success was seen to be the greater partnership working between the stakeholders, particularly the Local Authority, Jobcentre Plus and the Children's Information Service.
- Mostly, ESCP had achieved outreach work however some extra childcare provision was created in before and after-school clubs.
- Childcare Chats had addressed childcare information needs for parents, and where visits or Tasters had occurred, they appeared to resolve parental concerns.

2.6. The Future

- Generally the pilot areas did not have concrete plans for the future and were waiting for direction from the DfES. They did, however, express a desire for the funding to continue.
- Many pilot areas believed that the pilot work would continue through the Children's Centres and the Extended Schools work would continue because of Sure Start targets.
- There was a desire for certain elements of the pilots to be incorporated into future work, namely the outreach work carried out by Development Workers, the Childcare Chats and the partnership working and joint events.

1 Introduction

The Department for Education and Skills, with funding from the Department for Work and Pensions, developed two closely related pilot programmes in eleven Local Authority (LA) areas in England to help lone parents to move into work. These were the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP) and the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP). The pilots were designed to explore the assertion that a lack of childcare is a significant barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support (IS). The aim was to ensure sufficient supply of childcare for lone parents to enable them to enter employment. Past research has found that non-working lone parents cite a lack of affordable, accessible childcare as a significant barrier to work¹. Many express preferences for informal care which suggests that insufficient trust in formal providers may also be at work. It was hoped that the CTP/ESCP pilots would show whether more lone parents claiming IS take up employment opportunities if suitable formal childcare is available to them through the ESCP and if parents' knowledge of and trust in formal childcare is facilitated through the CTP.

In the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP), the Local Authority gave parents the opportunity for Childcare Chats (in-depth discussions with the LA about childcare issues), accompanied visits to childcare providers, and Childcare Tasters (the opportunity to try out formal childcare for free for up to a week)..

In the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) – The Local Authority supported initiatives to ensure a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible, formal childcare for lone parents to move into work, and engage with schools to integrate this with their services, where possible.

Lone parents were the principal target group for the pilots, but partners of benefit recipients who have childcare responsibilities were also included.

The first wave of pilots started on 1 April 2004 and run until 31 March 2006 in Bradford, Haringey and Lewisham Local Authorities. These three Local Authorities had very high numbers of lone parents claiming Income Support at the time. They were all operating the ESCP and CTP. A second wave of pilots started in October 2004 in the following areas: Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell and Greenwich. These areas were also operating the ESCP and CTP. Finally in January 2005, the third wave of pilots began in the following areas: Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale. These areas were only operating the CTP. The pilots were extended to additional Local Authorities in Wales and Scotland. However, this report refers to the English pilots only².

Table 1: First, Second and Third Wave Pilot Areas

First Wave – ESCP and CTP	Second Wave – ESCP and CTP	Third Wave –CTP only
Haringey (April 2004)	Leicestershire (October 2004)	Liverpool (January 2005)
Lewisham (April 2004)	Leicester City (October 2004)	Leeds (January 2005)
Bradford (April 2004)	Sandwell (October 2004)	Rochdale (January 2005)
	Greenwich (October 2004)	Birmingham (January 2005)

¹ Ford (1996), Marsh et al.(1993), Marsh et al (2004).

² Wales has separately commissioned some qualitative research that is based upon the design of this evaluation.

The CTP/ESCP pilots were managed by the Local Authorities strategically and operationally in ways which best reflect local needs and circumstances, with no detailed guidance from DfES. At the same time, the pilots were designed to work in close co-operation with Jobcentre Plus, schools and other stakeholders. This means that there can be considerable variation in delivery of the pilot services between locations. This means that comparisons between areas are complex.

Comparisons between areas are also complicated by other aspects of the local area services. For example, since April 2004, the lone parent advisory services in Haringey have been contracted out to one of the three 'Employment Zone Providers' (companies offering advice and training). From November 2005 all three Employment Zone Providers will be able to offer their services to lone parents. This means that the help available to these customers in Haringey differs from that in standard Jobcentre Plus offices, and the other pilot areas. See Appendix Three for more information about Employment Zones. Additionally, other pilots such as the In Work Credit (IWC) are running in the same areas as the ESCP and CTP (see Section 1.5), which are being evaluated in a separate evaluation commissioned by DWP.

This report presents research evaluating the progress in the pilot areas between the start of the pilots (April 2004 for the first wave pilot areas, October 2004 for the second wave pilot areas and January 2005 for the third wave pilot areas) and summer 2005 through qualitative interviews with stakeholder organisations³. The stakeholders interviewed were Local Authority staff, Jobcentre Plus staff, the Children's Information Service, schools and childcare providers in the CTP/ESCP pilot areas during two fieldwork periods in 2005.

These two waves of qualitative research with stakeholders are part of a wider qualitative evaluation of the two pilots. Research⁴ on initial implementation of the pilots in the first wave pilot areas was published in 2005. The remainder of the evaluation will comprise a final wave of interviews with stakeholders near the end of the pilots, and qualitative research amongst parent participants and eligible non-participating parents. A final report from the evaluation will be published in 2007. Therefore, this report presents interim findings and focuses on the perceptions and experiences of the stakeholder organisations delivering the pilots. We need to wait for the research with parents to draw any firm conclusions about the possible qualitative impacts of the pilots and about barriers to work for lone parents in the pilot areas. A quantitative analysis of the impacts of the ESCP and CTP pilots on benefit exit and employment in these localities is being undertaken as separate research⁵, however these impacts will not be separable but included together with those of the combination of pilot policies in the areas.

Progress in the pilot areas between the start of CTP/ESCP and summer 2005 is reflected in this research. The pilots are initially briefly introduced, with further detailed descriptions in sections 1.2 and 1.3 following a summary of the background which led to the development of the pilots. The links and interactions between CTP/ESCP and other initiatives and pilots are explored in sections 1.4 and 1.5. Section 1.6 presents the research design behind this report. Finally, section 1.7 clarifies the report structure.

³ In this evaluation, the term "stakeholders" refers to the organisations involved in the pilots (Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus, Children Information Services, childcare providers and schools) rather than the parents who participated. Parents will be interviewed at a later stage of the evaluation.

⁴ Barnard and Knight (2005) Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Qualitative Research into Initial Implementation. London: DfES.

⁵ Commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions from the Institute for Fiscal Studies with input from the Policy Studies Institute, and due to initially report in Autumn 2006.

1.1 Policy Background

In Great Britain when the CTP/ESCP pilots were designed, it was estimated that 1 million lone parents were claiming out-of-work benefits, with most claiming Income Support. Almost 71% of partnered mothers were in employment compared with about 54% of lone mothers. A sixth of IS claimants have never experienced paid work (17 per cent)⁶. Work Works, the report of the National Employment Panel's Steering Group on Lone Parents published in April 2003, reported that a lack of affordable, accessible childcare was the single most important barrier to work for lone parents on IS. Work Works highlighted shortages in many local childcare markets in deprived wards, as well as a reluctance of lone parents to use childcare and make the transition from informal to formal care. It was suggested that the use of formal childcare should be encouraged. Its recommendations formed the basis of a range of measures the Government took to help lone parents back to work. The Government's targets relating to these areas were:

- to halve child poverty by 2010;
- to raise the proportion of lone parents in work to 70% by 2010;
- over the three years from Spring 2003 to increase significantly the employment rate of lone parents and reduce the gap between the overall employment rate and the lone parent employment rate;
- to reduce by 12% the number of young children living in workless households by 2006;
- to close the childcare gap in disadvantaged areas (that is, to raise the amount of childcare in disadvantaged areas to the level in the rest of the country).

1.1.1 Lone parents, work and childcare

Surveys have shown that between a quarter and a third of lone parents on IS say they are deterred from entering work by the potential cost of childcare and typically another one in ten say they doubt any facilities of sufficient quality and convenience could be found locally⁷. While not having enough money to live on was the single most important concern for all benefit claimants proximate to leaving benefits for work, 'finding childcare that could be trusted', was also a key concern, mentioned by 11 per cent⁸, with lone parents especially anxious about childcare⁹. The remainder tend to divide between those who say they believe they are better placed at home with their children, for various reasons, and those whose children are in poor health or who are themselves sick or disabled. Lone parents also show greater resistance to formal childcare provision than other parents, preferring informal childcare whenever it is practical.

⁶ Table 2.3, p18, Woodland et al. (2003).

⁷ The most recent picture is provided by the Families and Children Study, see for example Kasparova et al. (2003).

⁸ See p.91 Woodland et al. (2003).

⁹ Ibid p.93.

Yet, early research and more recent subsequent research has shown that childcare concerns were rarely the only concerns of lone parents¹⁰. They were one among many other barriers to work that often had more to do with their fears about the quality of their working lives, and the balance of rewards for themselves and for their children, rather than with any real perception of what childcare might be available or what it might cost. In many cases, in-depth interviews showed that lone parents maintained their doubts about childcare where they faced poor or weak employment prospects. But some brushed them aside when a job only marginally better than their expectations was described to them.

Lack of childcare is a barrier to work. But it is potentially the last barrier of a row of hurdles that lone parents have to cross on their way from Income Support to full time work. Research shows that often they have to recover from a painful break-up, recover their self confidence, adjust to new accommodation, become more confident that their children can accept what amounts to a further reduction in time spent with their parents, modernise their skills or qualifications, improve their health, actually find a job whose hours and location suits them and their children, and then address themselves to the issue of childcare¹¹. Some research seems to suggest that many lone parents voice concerns about the cost and availability of childcare as a short-hand emphasis over deeper concerns about their capacity to work and combine this with sole responsibility for their children¹².

1.1.2 Workless households

Partners of benefit recipients in workless households also play a role in contributing to the number of children in workless households, and increasing employment for this group contributes to government goals set out in objective 1: Ensure the best start for all children and end child poverty by 2020¹³.

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in the UK in Spring 2003 there were 10.3 million couples where one or both partners were in work and 700,000 couples where neither partner works (Arrowsmith, 2004). Forty three per cent of workless couples had dependent children, and for couples with dependent children, the woman is much more likely to never have worked than for couples without children (*ibid*). Partners' transitions from worklessness to work are not independent – the likelihood of one partner finding work increases when the other partner finds work (*ibid*). In the 2001 Families and Children Study (FACS), amongst workless couples with dependent children, 49 per cent of partners say that they have caring responsibilities for children. This compares to 61 per cent of workless lone parents who say that they have caring responsibilities for children (Marsh et al. 2001). As such, the issue of childcare is important to this group, but the scale is smaller than for lone parents.

¹⁰ Ford, R. (1996), Kasparova et al. (2003).

¹¹ Bell et al. (2005).

¹² Finlayson et al. (2000).

¹³ For more information on these government objectives and the DWP see http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2004/autumnreport/aims/summ_perf.asp.

1.2 Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP)

The Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) was a pilot initiative. It was part of the extended schools programme¹⁴, which is a broader DfES initiative. The aim of the broader extended schools programme is for all schools to offer a range of extended services by 2010. 'Extended services' are services such as childcare, adult education, parenting support and access to social care that schools offer to children, families and other members of the community, often beyond the school day.

ESCP was a specific pilot programme aiming to ensure provision of enough affordable, accessible, formal childcare for lone parents, most of whom will be on IS and have school age children, to enable them to enter employment. This would enable examination of issues about the childcare availability barrier and whether, if it is removed, other barriers then come to the fore as being the main obstacles preventing lone parents working.

It was expected at the start that this pilot would help parents of school-age children (which in this context means children aged 5 to 14, or 16 for children with special needs), but could also provide childcare for younger or older children if that would help lone parents to go to work.

The pilot also aimed to improve the capacity of the local Children's Information Service (CIS) to manage existing childcare vacancies, so that places would be filled and existing providers would become more viable and sustainable. It was expected that additional childcare would need to be created to meet demand. The childcare tax credit would be available to all suitably eligible parents using the childcare.

It was envisaged that any new childcare provision would be based on networks centred on secondary schools, which would work together with their feeder primaries or other groups. The schools in this pilot would either provide the childcare themselves or work with other local providers, such as out of school clubs, childminders, nurseries and playgroups. Childcare not based in and around schools could also be supported where this would meet local needs.

New childcare would be responsive to local needs, but in most cases would be available throughout the year, and cover full daytime working hours (e.g. 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday). The childcare would be accessible for all local families in the relevant areas, not just lone parents. Lone parents were the chief aim of the ESCP, but they should not be singled out and instead all parents would be eligible to benefit from improvements to or additional childcare provision through the ESCP. Childcare for those working shifts, at night or at weekends could be provided where there was demand and capacity. Take-up of places would be voluntary. The working assumption in the design was that the pilot would potentially create 1,200 new childcare places in the three early pilot areas but with the proviso that new places would only be created where needed.

1.3 Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP)

The Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP) provided an opportunity for parents to talk over childcare issues in depth (termed Childcare Chats), a visit to childcare providers (which could also include being accompanied on the visit by a Local Authority Childcare Adviser) and, particularly, a free experience of formal childcare for up to a week (Childcare Tasters).

¹⁴ For more information on Extended Schools, see <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/impact/extendedschools/>

The overall aim of the CTP was to help parents to build trust and confidence in using formal childcare, and knowledge of formal childcare in their area.

By providing parents with this service the aim was to achieve the following objectives:

- raise the parents' awareness of the quality of formal childcare;
- address their concerns regarding using formal childcare by providing information and giving a short experience of what childcare can be like;
- help them with making choices about suitable childcare through clarifying the types available in the area and issues to be considered;
- help them to feel more comfortable with the thought of leaving their child(ren) with a childcare provider through the above and, where desired, to provide an opportunity for them to leave the child(ren) in the care of the provider for a short time (Childcare Tasters).

Childcare Chats were open to all parents in the relevant areas who were eligible for New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) (which is open to all lone parents out of work or working less than 16 hours a week), or New Deal for Partners (NDP) (which is available to all partners of benefit recipients). Childcare Tasters were subject to parents being on NDLP or NDP. Take-up of places was voluntary.

1.4 Links between CTP/ESCP and other initiatives

The pilots had closest links to NDLP and NDP. Those who wished to experience a free session of childcare (Taster) via the Childcare Taster Pilot needed to be participants on NDLP or NDP but Chats were available to all parents whether or not they are job-ready. The Extended Schools Childcare Pilot was aimed at helping lone parents who are ready to move into employment. Lone parents could take part in either pilot or both (in LAs where both were available), but there was no obligation for them to participate.

The design of the pilots had the aim that locally in each of the pilot areas the pilots should link with other relevant initiatives aiming:

- to create employment opportunities and a strong local economy (e.g. regeneration projects);
- to help lone parents to prepare for, go to, and stay in work;
- to develop childcare and other services for parents (such as extended schools and Children's Centres).

1.5 Other lone parent pilot initiatives

There were in all five related types of additional provision being tested over the similar time period of the ESCP and CTP. The other three initiatives were:

- In Work Credit pilot (IWC);
- Work Search Premium pilot (WSP);
- Quarterly Work Focused Interviews (QWFI).

The five different services being piloted can be expected to have significant interactions. Appendix 2 details the eligibility, geographical locations and timing of these 5 pilots, and

Tables A1 and A2 describe the pilots as they were planned in 2004. Originally there were 2 year pilots of IWC, WSP, QWFI together with ESCP/CTP in 8 Jobcentre Plus districts from April to October 2004. Since then, changes occurred so that 5 pilot areas became NDLPplus (April 2005), IWC was extended (April & October 2005) and its duration was extended. Hence, since 2005 there were 4 ‘policy packages’ across the areas. In addition, these five initiatives were later supplemented in April 2005 by a wider reaching set of initiatives called *New Deal Plus for Lone Parents* in the first and second wave ESCP/ CTP areas up to April 2006. The distribution of policy packages across areas became as follows:

- NDLPplus (Leicestershire; Bradford; SE London; N London; Dudley and Sandwell)
- IWC & WSP (W London; Cardiff; Edinburgh; Lancashire West)
- IWC only (Staffordshire; Leeds; most of London; Surrey & Sussex; Essex; Kent; Berks, Bucks & Ox; Beds & Herts; Hants & IoW)
- ESC and QWFI (Grampian & Tayside; Forth Valley; SE Wales).

Twelve further initiatives were introduced and operated by Jobcentre Plus. These were:

Action Plans for Lone Parents	More voluntary contact with LPs between WFIs
Childcare Assist	Additional Childcare Partnership Managers
Discovery Weeks	Jobpoints in Children’s Centres
In work Emergencies Fund	Access to Flexible Provision
Extra Admin Support for Personal Advisers	A Marketing package
Enhanced Training for LP Personal Advisers	In Work Support for Lone Parents

The *New Deal Plus for Lone Parents* pilots will be evaluated separately by DWP and is outside the scope of this report.

1.5.1 In Work Credit (IWC)

In Work Credit (IWC) was an additional payment for moving into to work that was not included in tax or other benefit calculations. Lone parents on IS and JSA, who have been on IS for 12 months or more, were participants in NDLP and who move into work, were eligible in the IWC pilot areas for an additional payment of £40 per week, for the first year in employment. The conditionality of being on NDLP ceased to apply from 4th April 2005.

It was decided to operate both WSP and IWC in most English Jobcentre Plus districts in which there is an ESCP. Whereas the ESCP were on the basis of Local Authority areas, the IWC (and WSP) pilots operated throughout the relevant Jobcentre Plus district. In some cases this may be identical, but in others the Jobcentre Plus district will be larger. In addition, IWC was available alone in four Jobcentre Plus districts: Central London; Leeds; North London; and Staffordshire. It was also available in a further eight districts in conjunction with the WSP (see below). In addition, IWC was rolled out to all parents in London from Spring 2005 and then from October 2005 to the additional areas of a) Berks, Bucks and Oxford, b) Beds and Herts, c) Essex, d) Hants and Isle of Wight, e) Kent and f) Surrey and Sussex.

1.5.2 Work Search Premium (WSP)

The Work Search Premium was another additional payment not included in tax or other benefit calculations, to encourage job search activity. Lone parents who had been on IS for 12 months or more, and who were willing to engage voluntarily in job search activity, were eligible to claim a WSP of £20 per week for a maximum of 6 months. The WSP was payable to lone parents who are participants on NDLP and who agree an action plan with their

Personal Adviser (PA). The payments were not tied into specific job search activities but rather their receipt of the WSP was at the discretion of their PA with whom they would discuss job search on a fortnightly basis. WSP operated in eight areas in tandem with the IWC (Bradford; Cardiff and Vale; Dudley and Sandwell; Lancashire West; Leicestershire; London South East; London West; and Edinburgh), and in most additional areas where there was an ESCP – see Table A2 Appendix 2.

1.5.3 Quarterly Work Focused Interviews (QWFI)

There is an established pattern of mandatory Work Focused Interviews (LPWFI) for lone parents claiming IS. All lone parents claiming IS are now expected to take part in a series of mandatory LPWFI as follows (see Appendix 3 for more detail on LPWFI and Review Meetings):

- For new / repeat claims; initial interview at start of claim, review meeting at 6 months, further review at 12 months, then annual LPWFI;
- For existing IS recipients; an initial interview followed by annual LPWFI were extended to lone parents in receipt of IS via a phased rollout (based on the age of the lone parent's youngest child). The final group (those with a youngest child aged 0-5) have been included from 5 April 2004. However, given the volumes involved, an eighteen month period was allowed for the completion of rollout to these lone parents (i.e. to September 2005).

It was announced in the 2004 Budget that Quarterly Work Focused Interviews (QWFI) would be introduced for all lone parents whose youngest child is aged 14 or over, nationally from October 2005. As a pilot of QWFI, in all Local Authority districts in which an ESCP was operating, there are mandatory LPWFI at quarterly intervals, for lone parents whose youngest child was aged 12 or above, and who have been on IS for 12 months or more from 30th September 2004. These are to enable Jobcentre Plus staff to regularly engage with lone parents in the ESCP areas, ensuring that the pilot opportunities being provided in these areas are drawn to the attention of lone parents and are utilised to the fullest possible extent. Such contact could assist these lone parents with their circumstances, especially as they approach the limit for receipt of benefit payments, related to the youngest child reaching 16 years.

Partners of benefit claimants in Jobcentre Plus offices were offered Work Focused Interviews from April 2004, together with access to an enhanced NDP. In areas where the ESCP was taking place, there was an extension of quarterly WFI to partners who had children aged 12 or over to ensure that this initiative was extended to all workless households, but these were voluntary.

1.6 Qualitative Research Design

The overall design and timeline of the research, in five phases, is shown in the table below:

Feb-March 05	Telephone interviews with stakeholders in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale
June-July 05	Face-to-Face and telephone interviews with stakeholders in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford
Nov-Dec 05	Face-to-Face interviews with stakeholders in Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale
Feb-March 06	Telephone interviews with stakeholders in Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford
May 06	Telephone sift with participating and non-participating parents

June-July 06	Face-to-Face interviews with participating and non-participating parents
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This interim report focuses on two stages of fieldwork with stakeholder organisations¹⁵. Twenty-two qualitative interviews were carried out over the telephone in February-March 2005 with stakeholders in the second and third wave pilot areas: Leicester City, Leicestershire, Sandwell, Greenwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Rochdale. The respondents comprised staff from the Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus and Children's Information Service. Forty qualitative interviews (a mixture of face to face and telephone interviews) were then carried out with stakeholders across the three areas in which the pilots were first introduced: Haringey, Lewisham and Bradford. This fieldwork took place during June and July 2005 and the respondents comprised staff from the Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus, Children's Information Service, schools and childcare providers. The design was partially longitudinal as the interviews with the same stakeholder organisations were repeated over time, but the staff responding for the stakeholder organisation might have changed over time.

The objectives of these two stages of the evaluation were:

- To assess the progress made by the pilots
- To explore the impacts of the pilots as perceived by the interviewed stakeholders
- To re-visit the issues raised by stakeholders when interviewed in June/July 2004 (first wave pilot areas only)
- To assess pilot managers' / practitioners', schools' and childcare providers' perceptions of take-up of the pilots by parents, and whether the pilots are changing parents' attitudes to work and getting back to work
- To identify lessons which can be learned from these pilots
- To discuss the pilot areas' plans for the future (first wave pilot areas only).

The stakeholders interviewed were as follows:

- Local Authority staff
The Local Authority staff included the project managers for the pilots; and staff who were to establish links with schools and childcare providers, develop new childcare provision where necessary, conduct outreach work to encourage parents to take up the pilot services; and deliver Childcare Chats, accompanied visits and Childcare Tasters;
- Jobcentre Plus staff
The key member of staff in Jobcentre Plus was the Childcare Partnership Manager¹⁶, who acted as a bridge between the Local Authority and Jobcentre Plus. NDLP and NDP advisors and managers were also involved in the pilots as they were to introduce lone

¹⁵ In this evaluation, "stakeholders" refers to the organisations involved in the pilots (Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus, Children Information Services, childcare providers and schools) rather than the parents who participated. Parents will be interviewed at a later stage of the evaluation.

¹⁶ Childcare Partnership Managers (CPMs) were introduced in April 2003 to identify and help Jobcentre Plus customers to overcome childcare issues; to improve access to, and co-ordination of childcare information for out of work parents; and keep Jobcentre Plus front line staff up to date on childcare issues and initiatives. CPMs also contribute to developing the childcare workforce and childcare capacity through their work with Local Authorities and providers. In order to achieve this, CPMs work alongside Jobcentre Plus colleagues, Local Authorities, Childcare Partnerships (Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in England, Childcare Partnerships in Scotland, Children and Young People's Partnerships in Wales), Children's Information Services (CIS) and other local childcare organisations and providers.

parents and partners of benefit claimants with dependent children to the initiatives and refer them to the relevant services;

- Children's Information Service¹⁷ (CIS)
CIS is part of the Local Authority and provides childcare advice to parents as well as working with childcare providers. Staff within the CIS were to manage vacancies and match them to lone parents' needs, and were a key source of information for CTP/ESCP pilot staff about need and provision of childcare in the area;
- Schools and childcare providers (first wave pilot areas only)
The pilots were to include both secondary and primary schools and a range of childcare providers, from nurseries to childminders.

A full breakdown of the numbers and types of respondents interviewed in each area can be found in Appendix 1.

The evaluation will include further qualitative research with stakeholders, and a combination of qualitative research with lone parents in various sub-groups, and some 'partners'¹⁸, and a final evaluation report will be published in 2007. DWP have commissioned a separate econometric evaluation of the impacts of the pilots on movement into work using administrative data. This research will be reported in a series of interim and final findings throughout the course of the pilots, with the first report due in 2007. Due to significant interactions between them, the impact evaluation using administrative data will cover all five initiatives referred to in Section 1.5. Final findings on impacts will be available after the end of the pilots.

1.7 Report structure

This report does not refer to any individual area in order to preserve anonymity.

A summary of the pilot area experiences in 2005, as collected by the fieldwork with stakeholders, is presented in section 2. Initially, progress in the eleven pilot areas is discussed in section 2.1. Then the operational structures that had developed are detailed in sections 2.2 (ESCP) and 2.3 (CTP). The interactions between the pilots are outlined in section 2.3. Finally, section 2.5 addresses the follow-up of issues that arose during the first stage research, which were presented again in later interviews to establish developments that had occurred.

The stakeholder views of ESCP and CTP form Section 3. ESCP stakeholder views are in section 3.1, with those of CTP presented in section 3.2. The stakeholder perceptions of the pilots' impacts are outlined in section 3.3, with section 3.4 examining the stakeholder views of factors that affect the pilot delivery success.

As part of the research, stakeholders were requested to suggest improvements for ESCP and CTP. These are presented in section 4.1, and the stakeholder plans for the future are recorded in section 4.2.

Section 5 concludes. Appendices contain details of the qualitative research design, as well as the eligibility and timing for lone parent pilot initiatives.

¹⁷ For more information about CIS, please see Appendix 3.

¹⁸ In the rest of this report, the term 'partners' is used to refer to the group of parents who are eligible to receive New Deal for Partners at the Jobcentre and have dependent children. They are described as 'partners' because they are the partner of the benefit claimant.

2 Progress and Structure of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot and Childcare Taster Pilot

This chapter provides a summary of the situation in the pilot areas at the time of the two stages of fieldwork in 2005. The progress made by the eleven pilot areas (Section 2.1) and the operational structures of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) and the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP) (Section 2.2 and section 2.3) are first detailed. Section 2.4 briefly discusses how the two pilots were operating together. The final section (Section 2.5) revisits a number of issues which were raised during the interviews with the first wave pilot areas in June-July 2004 and describes whether these issues were pertinent in successive interviews. The findings from the research carried out in 2004 were published earlier in the report Barnard and Knight (2005) ‘Evaluation of the Childcare Taster Pilot and Extended Schools Childcare Pilot Programmes: Qualitative Research into Initial Implementation’¹⁹.

2.1 Progress

The second and third wave pilot areas were in the process of setting-up their pilots when the stakeholders from these pilot areas were interviewed in February-March 2005. In contrast, the first wave pilot areas were fully operational when they were interviewed in June-July 2005. See Table 1 in Chapter 1 for a breakdown of the different waves of pilot areas.

2.1.1 Second and third wave pilot areas

At the time of fieldwork (February-March 2005), progress in the second and third wave pilot areas (five or two months after pilot start) was varied. It was clear, however, that most of these pilot areas were in the very early stages of development. The progress which had been made centred on recruitment, contacting schools as part of the ESCP and contacting childcare providers, generally as part of the CTP.

2.1.1.1 Delayed Start

The second wave pilot areas officially started in October 2004, whilst the third wave pilot areas had January 2005 as their start-date. In spite of these official start-dates, some of these pilot areas had experienced difficulty in completing their plans and this held up funding from DfES. They had consequently delayed their pilot services start-up and this had an impact on their timetable and their subsequent progress.

2.1.1.2 Recruitment

When the stakeholders from these pilot areas were interviewed (February-March 2005), they were in the process of recruiting staff, in particular Childcare Advisers to work on the Childcare Taster Pilot (CTP) and Development Officers to work on the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP). There were examples of pilot areas which had filled these positions, but generally the pilot areas had drawn up job descriptions and were in the early stages of recruitment or were about to commence recruitment.

¹⁹ The report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the research section of the Sure Start website (www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/research/earlyyears/) or from the research section of the DfES website (www.dfes.gov.uk/research).

Staff requirements and job titles varied amongst the pilot areas. For example one pilot area hoped to appoint five Childcare Advisers who would be able to deliver Tasters. Another pilot area was looking for three Childcare Co-ordinators for the ESCP (Childcare Co-ordinators and Development Officers were both job titles to describe the staff who were working on the ESCP). The importance of finding the right people with appropriate skills was stressed. Recruitment was said to be a lengthy process because job descriptions had to be approved by the Local Authority, hence slowing the progress of the pilot's development. The pilot areas also explained that there was only a small pool of people to draw on for staffing because of other initiatives which were looking for staff with similar skills, for example Sure Start Local Programmes and Children's Centres.

2.1.1.3 Other progress

Some of the second and third wave pilot areas had begun to contact childcare providers and schools, whilst others explained that this was an aim which they hoped to achieve in the next few months. One pilot area explained that they aimed to write to childcare providers introducing them to the CTP and asking them to opt out of the pilot if they were not interested in it.

There were examples of pilot areas, mainly from the second wave (October 2004), who were already offering twenty minute Childcare Chats at Discovery Weeks (see Appendix 2 for a description of Discovery Weeks). These same areas reported that they were almost ready to begin offering Childcare Tasters. Other progress amongst the second and third wave pilot areas was in the advertising and publicity domain. One pilot area explained that they were in the process of developing a website which would enable parents to locate their nearest childcare provider. This pilot area was also organising a conference for all pilot areas to enable them to share information amongst themselves.

There had been some official pilot launches. However, generally the pilot launches were yet to take place at the time of the research.

Some of the third wave pilot areas did not yet have timetables in place. In contrast, some of the second wave pilot areas had a clear idea of the timescale by which they wanted to progress. For example, one pilot area explained that they were planning to work with schools and childcare providers to develop their business plans over the summer term. In September this pilot area envisaged that it would be '*all systems to the deck to get them [the schools and providers] through the [Ofsted] registration process*'. This pilot area's aim was for new childcare places to be available in schools from January 2006²⁰.

2.1.2 First wave pilot areas

The first wave pilot areas, which had started in April 2004, were fully operational. These pilots had both Development Officers and Childcare Advisers/Brokers in post, and had made contact with schools and childcare providers.

Roles and job titles varied between pilot areas. Generally, Development Officers or Childcare Coordinators were employed as part of the ESCP and were responsible for working with schools to create extra childcare places. As described in more detail in later sections, in some pilot areas these members of staff were also carrying out outreach work. Childcare Advisers or Childcare Brokers were employed under the CTP. It was the Childcare Adviser's role to meet parents for a Childcare Chat, accompany them on visits to different providers and organise a Childcare Taster if the parent wished to take up this opportunity.

²⁰ The pilots had an end date of 31 March 2006.

Under the CTP, Chats, accompanied visits and Tasters were taking place in the first wave pilot areas, although a larger number of Chats than Tasters had been carried out. Definitions of these pilot elements are further discussed in section 2.3. The pilot areas were surprised with the low level of Taster take-up and explained that the take-up was much lower than they had anticipated. Possible reasons for this low take-up are discussed in section 3.2.3.

Under the ESCP, outreach work and the development of childcare provision were being carried out. The rationale for these two elements of work is discussed in detail in section 2.2 below. Progress on the development of childcare provision varied. Amongst these pilot areas there were examples of additional childcare places being created in existing provision and there were examples of new childcare provision being set up. The bidding system to obtain funding and the recruitment of staff to run the new provision had both delayed the timescales for setting up new provision. Schools also expressed a desire to set up new provision or make new provision available to parents at the start of a new term. As a result, at the time of fieldwork (June-July 2005) pilot staff explained that there were a number of schools who were aiming to set up new provision or create additional childcare places from September 2005.

2.2 Structure and Operation of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots

The main aim of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCP) as designed by DfES was to develop a sufficient supply of affordable, accessible childcare within the pilot areas to meet the needs of lone parents in response to evidence that available and accessible childcare was seen to be a substantial barrier to lone parents going back to work or starting work. Whilst pilot areas were given the objective to develop childcare, DfES believed that this might involve better managing existing childcare places within the particular area, and creating additional childcare places in or through schools if necessary. LAs were given the flexibility to implement the pilots to best meet local needs and circumstances. Further information is given in Section 1.2. No specific targets to create a certain number of childcare places were given to the pilot areas, although a number of the pilot areas pointed out they had Sure Start targets (unconnected to the ESCP and CTP) to create a specific number of childcare places and were using funding from the ESCP to work towards achieving these targets. It was originally envisaged that any new childcare provision would be based on networks centred on secondary schools, working with parents of school age children (aged 5 – 14, or 16 for children with special needs). However, as described later the pilot areas were predominantly working with primary schools. In the Local Authorities, the ESCP was being delivered by *Extended Schools Co-ordination and Development Officers* (whose positions were generally funded by the ESCP pilot).

At the time of fieldwork, the second wave pilot areas (the third wave pilot areas were not participating in the ESCP) were aware of this aim and were planning how they could best meet this aim. In contrast, some of the first wave pilot areas, whilst they were aware of the initial aim of the ESCP being to develop childcare provision, chose to use some of their ESCP funding in a different way. Consequently, two elements to the ESCP developed in some pilot areas: outreach work with parents and the development of childcare provision in or through schools.

2.2.1 Incorporating Outreach with Parents into ESCP

There were a number of reasons why outreach work with parents became an element of the ESCP in some pilot areas. In one of the first wave pilot areas which started in April 2004, Development Officers were put in post during the summer holidays when schools were closed. A decision was made to send these officers to venues where they could meet parents and promote the pilots. By carrying out consultations with lone parents, they discovered that these parents did not feel ready to start work and required extra support to enable them to start

work. The range of barriers facing these parents is discussed in section 3.4. Fear of starting work and lack of training were among these barriers:

'I've found that the childcare was actually in place, but what the parents actually needed was to be trained and access to training and access to advice around employment to enable them to be going to work in the future to fill up the nursery placements.'

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Their discussions with parents had led the pilot areas to believe that there was a group of parents who needed to become 'job-ready' before their childcare issues could be addressed. Development Officers did not want to turn these parents away and therefore it was decided that outreach work would be carried out with these parents in order to help support them into starting work.

A further reason given by one pilot area for putting resources into carrying out outreach work with parents rather than creating extra childcare provision was the fact that they had found there were vacancies in their existing childcare provision. Information was held on Children's Information Service databases detailing the childcare providers in the area and the childcare vacancies. Whilst the pilot area was conscious that there were many reasons why childcare places remain vacant, one suggestion was that there was not sufficient demand for places.

The existence of childcare vacancies and the discussions carried out with parents led some of the first wave pilot areas to believe that the availability of childcare was not the main barrier preventing parents from starting work. Rather than just create additional childcare places, it was decided that the focus of the ESCP would widen and they would work closely with parents to help prepare them for starting work, thus stimulating demand for childcare provision. Once this demand had been created, it was felt that attention could then be turned to developing the childcare provision, if this was in fact necessary:

'...they [the Local Authority] decided to use the Development Officers to stimulate interest in schools to start building this provision by holding information events. As more parents started to think about training and work, the pressure would then come on the school: "can you support us by developing extra services at this school?" It's a longer approach in [pilot area name]'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

In some of the pilot areas, Development Officers were working with parents from a particular school before the school set up its childcare provision. The aim was that when the provision opened, the parents would be ready to go back to work and would use the childcare provision.

2.2.2 Outreach work

The pilot areas from the first wave were engaging in outreach work as well as setting up some new childcare places. At the time of fieldwork, the pilot areas from the second wave were focussing on the aim to develop childcare provision. They were, however, interviewed at an early stage and it will be possible to discover whether they have chosen to carry out outreach work with parents when these pilot staff are interviewed again in November 2005.

There were two types of outreach work which were being carried out in the first wave areas. On a basic level, pilot staff made efforts to engage and identify parents, give them information and sign-post them to other services, if they needed further information. The other form of outreach work was on-going one to one support for parents.

2.2.2.1 Identifying parents and sign-posting them to other services

Staff from the pilot areas performed this engagement work with parents at schools and in community settings, such as Children's Centres, and via the Jobcentre.

Development Officers contacted schools within their area and liaised with the head teachers of these schools about how best to work with parents. Joint stakeholder information events organised by the Local Authority, Jobcentre and Children's Information Service (CIS) were held within schools in order to engage parents. Representatives from each of these organisations attended the events, enabling them jointly to offer information to parents on childcare, benefits and employment and to market the ESCP and CTP. Parents benefited from having a number of different stakeholders in one location, because they could address different issues at one time and could be referred immediately to another stakeholder. For example parents who showed an interest in the New Deal programmes could speak immediately to a Lone Parent Adviser from the Jobcentre.

Development Officers from the Local Authorities encouraged parents to engage in the pilots by setting up drop-in advice sessions and coffee mornings at schools for parents to talk to them about childcare, employment or training issues. There were examples of Jobcentre Plus being actively involved in the training sessions, as described in section 2.2.2.3, one of the sessions at the parents' basic skills six week training courses was carried out by an NDLP adviser. Outreach events were also held at Sure Start Local Programme events and Development Officers explained that they had spoken to parents outside schools and supermarkets.

Pilot staff deemed lone parents to be the main priority group, at whom the pilots were aimed. They explained, however, that they would give information to all the parents they spoke to at events because they did not want to turn any parents away. Marketing material had been produced explaining that the pilots were designed to support lone parents, however stakeholders said that non lone parents often felt a little alienated and questioned why lone parents were being targeted. In these situations, stakeholders would explain that non lone parents were also entitled to access a lot of support. For example, they were often given the opportunity to have a Childcare Chat and were eligible to receive information about different types of childcare.

Lone parents in some pilot areas were also referred by the Jobcentre to the LA when they attended their Lone Parent Work-Focused Interview (LPWFI). Lone parents with children aged twelve or over attended LPWFI on a quarterly basis, whilst lone parents with children aged under twelve were only required to attend LPWFI annually. At these LPWFI, Lone Parent Advisers (at the Jobcentre) were marketing the CTP and the ESCP to their clients. Some pilot areas believed that the ESCP was being marketed to a lesser extent at the Jobcentres than the CTP. It was suggested that this could have resulted from confusion regarding how the ESCP was being delivered. Lone Parent Advisers had originally understood the aim of the ESCP to be the creation of childcare places and did not initially understand the outreach element of the ESCP. Various strategies were adopted to try and address this issue of confusion, for example buddy systems and work shadowing.

Generally, the pilot areas did not spontaneously mention the fact that the pilots were supposed to focus on parents who were eligible for New Deal for Partners in addition to lone parents. When prompted, the pilot areas did appear to be aware of this fact. They explained that they did not tend to come across many of these parents within the community. Some of the first

wave pilot areas said that the direction to work with parents on New Deal for Partners had come later than the direction to work with lone parents. In some cases, the direction had come after they had in fact already printed their marketing literature which said that the pilots were targeting lone parents.

A further difficulty with engaging 'partners' was the fact that in a number of the pilot areas, the jobcentres had not yet become Jobcentre Plus. They therefore did not have specific- NDP Advisers and were not yet carrying out mandatory Work-Focussed Interviews with 'partners'. This meant that 'partners' were not required to come into the jobcentre and it was not consequently possible to engage them in this way.

2.2.2.2 Engaging lone parents

Development Officers explained that it could sometimes be difficult engaging with lone parents. There were a number of reasons why this was felt to be the case. Firstly, it was challenging to distinguish lone parents. In some cases, head teachers were able to identify lone parents to Development Officers, although pilot staff explained that schools often did not have accurate information on which parents were lone parents. When it was not possible for schools to identify lone parents, Development Officers were required to ask parents directly. Some pilot staff felt uncomfortable asking this question straight away, whereas others had strategies for finding out whether a parent was a lone parent. For example, some pilot staff said that they would explain to parents that they were asking personal questions because they wanted to ensure people were receiving everything they were entitled to:

'What I tend to say to people is, there's so much going on now in the area, you may know someone yourself who might be thinking of going back to work, we really don't want them to lose out, because we've got all these financial incentives, and its such a shame if someone lost out.'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

Other staff had a form which they asked parents to fill in which had a section asking them if they are a lone parent or have a partner. Sometimes Development Officers would ask indirectly if the parent knew of any lone parents because they had specific information for this group of parents; this would sometimes result in the parents disclosing that they were in fact a lone parent themselves.

A second difficulty connected to engaging lone parents was the fact that lone parents were sometimes suspicious of the reason why they were being targeted as a group of parents. They were sometimes concerned about giving personal details to the Development Officers in case this affected their benefits. Aside from this difficulty, there was the problem that Development Officers were charged with finding a specific group of people: lone parents who were not working. In some schools, Development Officers thought that this could be a relatively small number of people and finding this precise group of people could be challenging.

When pilot staff were trying to engage with lone parents they sometimes discovered that some communities from ethnic minority backgrounds could close their doors and pretend that lone parents did not exist within their community.

In spite of these difficulties, Development Officers generally found lone parents were happy to give personal information if they believed they were going to get additional help or extra financial support. Successful engagement with parents required officers to persevere with parents, perhaps speaking to them on a number of different occasions.

Development Officers also found that when they were pro-active, they were most successful in engaging parents. They found that lone parents showed little interest when the onus was on them to attend events, for example by attending a drop-in session. However when officers were proactive and approached parents directly in different situations, such as during play ground walks at home time or on sports day, then parents showed more interest in the pilots. It was felt that drop-in sessions were not always successful where attendance was required, perhaps because lone parents did not want other parents to know that they were lone parents who needed support.

An informal setting was also found to be crucial in successfully engaging lone parents. Some parents felt more comfortable being approached in the community rather than an official setting, such as a Jobcentre. Development Officers said that some parents had fears of walking into a Jobcentre because they were concerned about losing their benefits and being forced to start work. Whilst parents felt more comfortable in the school setting, there was also evidence that some parents found this environment to be stressful because it brought back painful memories of their own schools days or they found the other parents to be competitive.

2.2.2.3 Ongoing one-to-one support

In addition to giving basic advice and signposting parents to other services, some of the pilot areas were also offering on-going one to one support for lone parents. The aim of this support with lone parents was to encourage them to look for work by addressing their barriers, and prepare them for starting work.

At outreach events, Development Officers asked lone parents to fill in forms, giving information about themselves. In this way, Development Officers were able to build up a 'caseload' of parents whom they were able to work with on a one-to-one basis over time. For example, one Development Officer in one pilot area explained that she had a caseload of approximately one hundred parents, although the level of support she offered varied from parent to parent.

Development Officers worked with other stakeholders to address parents' barriers to starting work. When parents said they had childcare barriers, Development Officers were able to refer parents to the Childcare Taster Pilot. There was also evidence of pilot staff trying to intervene on behalf of parents who found childcare was too expensive by liaising with a particular childcare provider to waive the cost of the deposit. This is discussed in more detail in section 3.4.3.3. From a financial point of view, Development Officers were able to refer parents to Jobcentre staff who were able to do better-off calculations with parents, in order to help them decide whether it would be financially worthwhile for them to start work.

In response to parents' employment and training needs, Development Officers worked in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and other organisations to provide careers' advice and job seeking support. One pilot area explained that they had worked with an organisation which provided career advice for adults; this organisation used a computer package that gave adults guidance on their possible career options. This was seen to be a useful tool and helpful in engaging parents because it was something tangible to show them. The Development Officers in another pilot area had worked with local training providers to offer parents basic skills training courses in schools. These were six week courses covering confidence building, CV writing and basic interviewing skills. An NDLP adviser came to one session and gave a talk about the benefits and support available to parents if they returned to work. The course was made as welcoming as possible by offering a paid crèche for children and holding the training in a familiar venue; they were conscious that a lot of work had to be done to ensure that parents turned up to these training courses:

‘There seems to be this problem of where training is put on, whether the parents actually get there...If they can afford the bus fare...there's been a lot of hand holding to get parents to participate in these things’

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Pilot staff saw getting lone parents to start work as being a long-term goal and they believed that sustained personal support and encouragement was needed to achieve this aim. They believed that referring parents to other organisations was not sufficient; parents needed to be supported back into employment or back into training:

‘...when we meet a parent we follow them up and we check their progress and it's ongoing support it's not just once we meet them refer them on and then that's it or find them childcare and give them information about childcare we sort of support them all the way into, it might be into employment but it might just be on to a training course or it might just be information about childcare.’

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Development Officers explained that they had to persevere with parents and in some cases they had been required to do a great deal of “*hand-holding*” on an individual basis with parents. They explained that they contacted the parents on their caseload every month to find out how they were and stressed the importance of having the time to work with lone parents. There were examples of Development Officers going round to parent’s houses to encourage them to attend training.

2.2.3 Developing childcare provision

The second element of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot was the development of childcare provision. There were examples of childcare provision being developed in all of the first wave pilot areas.

The original remit of the ESCP was to work with parents of school age children (aged 5 – 14, or 16 for children with special needs). However the pilot areas were generally focussing on developing childcare provision within primary schools because there was felt to be the greatest need for childcare within this age group (ages 5-11). The childcare provision which was being developed took the form of breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday provision. As described later, the Development Workers discussed with the schools whether they were able to set up the provision on schools grounds or whether they would link with other schools and local childcare providers.

The areas explained that work with secondary schools was a longer term goal. Pilot staff did not further discuss in interviews that Quarterly WFI for lone parents on Income Support with children aged 14 and over had been intended to link with the ESCP by providing secondary school childcare through the ESCP.

2.2.3.1 Mapping exercises

The development of childcare under the ESCP was mainly being driven by demand. In order to gauge demand, pilot staff spent time mapping the current childcare provision within their area, identified gaps in provision and sought to understand local childcare needs. They then began to work with schools and childcare providers to try and meet the demand. Whilst the

pilot was aimed at lone parents and partners of benefit claimants with dependent children, it had been decided by DWP and DfES that childcare provision created through the ESCP would be available to all parents and availability would not be limited to lone parents or partners of benefit claimants.

Some of the pilot areas had engaged in formal mapping exercises to understand childcare supply in their local area. One of the pilot areas explained that they had done a careful and complex mapping exercise to identify areas where there were particularly high levels of lone parents who were unemployed or working part-time. They then looked at the existing before and after school provision within the area to identify whether there were any gaps in the provision of childcare within schools. Generally, they were identifying the type and level of provision in each school. By looking at the corresponding school catchment areas, they were able to make a priority list of schools:

‘What I have done is priority one schools and priority two, and that is with maps of where we know there’s a lots of lone parents that are unemployed and working part time, and also matched that against the existing childcare provision. Priority 1 is where there is a very high percentage of unemployed and part time working lone parents with no current out of school or holiday care...Then Priority two is another round of schools, which is where there is some, like there might be holiday care but no after school, or after school and no holiday care, and then there is priority three and four as well’

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, Second and Third Wave Pilot Area)

Another pilot area explained that they did an extensive mapping exercise of all current childcare provision connected to primary schools and produced a detailed map of breakfast, holiday and after school clubs. This mapping exercise highlighted that there was a difference between the childcare provision in the east of the area compared to the west of the area. This helped them produce a strategy to try and address the difference in childcare provision between areas. Using free school meals information and other indications of deprivation provided by head teachers, they identified schools with a high level of the parents which they would work with for the pilots.

2.2.3.2 Extended Schools and ESCP

Other pilot areas had decided to work with the schools within their area that were already operating as ‘Extended Schools’²¹. For example one pilot area was working with six ‘badged’²² Extended Schools, some of which were consortiums made up of a number of different schools. There were also examples of pilot areas that had subdivided their pilot area and allocated a Development Officer to each area, charged with the responsibility of working with the schools in that area. These officers gained in-depth knowledge of their area as they began to work with schools and parents.

2.2.3.3 Contact and engagement with schools

Development Officers then wrote letters to the head teachers of the schools they were targeting and tried to arrange appointments to meet with them and give them more

²¹ ‘Extended schools’ are schools which provide services for their pupils and the local community beyond the school day. See Appendix for a full description

²² This was a term used by a headteacher, and may have referred to full service extended schools.

information about the pilots. Generally, Development Officers found schools were willing to meet with them and discuss possibilities.

Once contact had been made with the schools, Extended Schools Co-ordinators and Development Officers from the LAs looked in more detail at how they could work with the schools. As previously discussed, they looked at possibilities of carrying out outreach work within the school. The schools were sometimes able to offer Development Officers an office in the schools from where the officers could work. Having an office in a school enabled the officers to have open office hours when parents could drop-in and ask them questions. In addition to outreach work, pilot staff looked at whether the school had childcare provision in place and whether they were interested in starting some. Their aim was to encourage the school to further develop their existing provision or create new provision in the form of breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday provision.

Successful engagement of schools largely depended on the attitude of the head teacher and the ethos of the school. It also depended on the resources and facilities at the school. Sometimes the schools were too small and did not have the space to offer childcare provision. Schools which were already holding out of school hours' activities did not always have an appropriate area to offer new childcare provision. There were also instances where a private provider was already collecting children from the school and taking them to childcare provision within the community and these schools were reluctant to create competition for the outside provider by starting up their own clubs. There were examples of schools working together to create childcare, and of schools working with independent childcare providers.

When Development Officers found schools were not very welcoming, they tried to persuade them of the benefits of breakfast and after school clubs. They talked about the long term goal of the pilot which aimed to get lone parents to start work, how this would have a beneficial effect on the children's quality of life, and that consequently this would mean that they would perform better at school. Pilot staff also high-lighted the specific advantages of breakfast clubs which offer children a meal to start the day on, which they may not receive at home.

Once pilot staff had established that the head teachers were interested in developing new childcare provision, Development Officers carried out surveys and focus groups with different groups of parents from the school, including lone parents. These methods were used to understand parents' needs, gather their views of existing childcare provision and gauge demand. Before setting up any new provision, Development Officers were conscious of the need to ensure that demand existed for the new provision and that the childcare provision which was put in place met the needs of the community:

'We'll explain that it is a special project and that...these are our statistics and analysis. It shows us a need in this area...how best can we set up this provision to meet your community? It may be that the schools get together and say, it will be here, but it is about us helping them develop the provisions in the community.'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, Second and Third Wave Pilot Area)

If the demand for childcare existed, the Development Officers and extended schools co-ordinators worked out a business plan with the school. They looked at the school layout and helped them with the decision whether to run the childcare provision themselves or get a private provider to run the provision within the school. They then helped them apply for funding and supported them with getting OFSTED registration. If a school did not have the space to develop provision on site, the staff would try to link the school with a voluntary or private organisation to ensure some childcare was available through the school. They

sometimes worked with a larger school offering childcare provision in the area and arranged collections from smaller schools so that students from those smaller schools also had access to childcare. Development Officers found that private providers were often happy to collect from schools in order to boost their numbers.

As discussed, pilot staff helped schools with their grant applications to fund the childcare provision. There were examples of schools accessing funding from Sure Start, the New Opportunities Fund (now the Big Lottery Fund) and the Regeneration Fund to help them set up the childcare. Generally, schools were awarded grants which were divided into three yearly payments. There was an aim to make the childcare sustainable once the funding had run out, thus pilot staff suggested to schools that they charge parents for the childcare.

When schools said they were not willing to participate in the ESCP, the Development Officers often tried to get them to engage them with the pilot at a basic level. For example, pilot staff asked the schools to put information in their newsletter about Local Authority services and encouraged schools to allow parents to have access to some childcare provision, perhaps via a private provider. Establishing Childcare Taster sessions in schools as part of the CTP was not discussed by schools in interview, since Tasters had usually been situated at day nurseries and childminders and aimed at parents of younger children.

2.2.3.4 Eligible parents for new childcare provision

As discussed, new childcare provision was not dedicated to lone parents and was generally accessible to parents from the wider community, not just to parents of children who attended the school where the provision had been set up. Some schools explained that parents had to be job-ready before they were able to take up a place. Schools did their own marketing to advertise the provision because they wanted the provision to be successful. Based on the information available to them, LAs thought that few of the childcare places created through ESCP were filled by referrals from the Jobcentre, and some pilot areas believed that the Jobcentre did not generally act as an entry point for lone parents into the ESCP. At most, there were examples of Jobcentre staff showing lone parents lists of schools with breakfast clubs and after school clubs in their area. However, schools were often unable to give much information about the types of parents who were utilising the childcare provision and how they were engaged. Referrals by JobcentrePlus are discussed in more detail in section 3.4.2. The forthcoming research with parents (to report in 2006) may give further evidence on this relationship between Jobcentres and referrals to the pilots.

2.3 Structure and Operation of the Childcare Taster Pilot

Initially, pilot staff began work on the Childcare Taster Pilot by writing to childcare providers within their area to inform them of the CTP and ask whether they would be interested in participating in the pilot. Pilot areas were keen to involve a range of childcare providers because this would enable parents to experience a number of different types of childcare provision, that being the aim of the Childcare Taster Pilot. The pilot areas decided that the CTP would be most beneficial for children of pre-school age (0-5 years) and therefore they mainly chose to contact nurseries and childminders of varying sizes.

The pilot areas were also keen to ensure that the childcare providers who were engaged in the CTP were high quality childcare providers. This was deemed important because the pilot was seeking to reassure parents about formal childcare and this could be done by showing them high quality childcare providers. Thus, the pilot areas generally wrote to childcare providers who had received quality assurance.

Generally, the pilot staff did not have any difficulties engaging childcare providers. Providers were happy to take part in the CTP and could see advantages of participation. They saw there were benefits of being affiliated to the Local Authority because it gave them credibility with

parents. They also envisaged that the CTP would give them more publicity and those with vacancies thought that the pilot would help to fill their vacancies.

There were generally three distinct elements to the CTP: Childcare Chats, accompanied visits and Childcare Tasters. Childcare Advisers or Brokers were delivering these elements of the pilot. Generally, one adviser would offer all elements. However there were pilots in which some staff only delivered Chats, and other staff specifically delivered visits and Tasters. Depending on the adopted structure of the pilot, the CTP lead officer was either based in the Local Authority or the Children's Information Service.

2.3.1 Engaging parents

Parents were being engaged for the Childcare Taster Pilot via the Jobcentre and via marketing carried out by Childcare Advisers from the LA.

At the Jobcentre, lone parents attending work-focussed interviews with Lone Parent Advisers were informed about the pilot and then asked whether they wished to attend a Childcare Chat. Parents were also engaged via the Employment Zone and Discovery Weeks (see Appendix 2 for more detail about these) organised by the Jobcentre. Jobcentre staff were additionally marketing the pilot by enclosing flyers about the pilot with New Deal interview letters, and displaying information in the Jobcentre offices.

Some Jobcentre staff explained that they had been carrying out group sessions with lone parents at day care centres, in partnership with other organisations to inform them about the range of services available through the Jobcentre Plus office. They had found the group setting had worked well and the lone parents had preferred the event to be held in the community rather than at the Jobcentre Plus office because they had found it less intimidating and much more informal. It was then also possible to have a crèche on site. At these sessions, parents were advised on their benefits by Lone Parent Advisers, who were also able to do better-off calculations with parents to see if it would be financially worth their while to start work. Parents were also able to join NDLP at these sessions. One pilot area reported that they thought the conversion rate to NDLP was higher when lone parents were in these group sessions than in the standard work-focussed interview.

Jobcentre staff also attended joint stakeholder information days at schools where they promoted New Deal and the CTP. Jobcentre staff felt that engaging with parents at schools was more useful than engaging with parents at Jobcentre offices during their LPWFI. They found parents would come and talk to them at information events because they would offer children 'goodies' and the children would drag their parents to the stall. In this forum, they were keen not to put any pressure on parents and merely asked them to take some information. They had a video for parents about New Deal which they could take away and watch.

As previously discussed, 'partners', had not yet started attending mandatory WFIs in a number of Jobcentres participating in the pilots and therefore a smaller number of 'partners' than lone parents had been engaged. It was suggested by Jobcentre staff that it was difficult to talk to 'partners' because they did not come into Jobcentre offices. Jobcentre staff suggested that 'partners' may not want to participate in the pilots, because they were often receiving Incapacity Benefit and were unable to work. The New Deal for Partners programme was also generally said to be less active in the Jobcentre than the New Deal for Lone Parents programme. This was thought to be because there were fewer 'partners' and therefore fewer resources had been allocated to New Deal for Partners. At the time of fieldwork, 'partners' were being reached through information events and through advertising in the Jobcentre offices. Some pilot areas explained that they needed to learn more about this group of parents and hoped to improve their knowledge in the future. They planned to start marketing the

pilots more to this group when the mandatory work-focussed interviews with ‘partners’ started. These were due to start once the Jobcentres had officially become Jobcentre Plus.

Childcare Advisers at the LAs were also marketing the CTP. They sent marketing material to libraries, community centres, surgeries and schools explaining about Chats and Tasters. They attended Discovery Weeks (see Appendix 2), job and information fairs, events at shopping centres and coffee mornings to promote the pilot.

2.3.2 The Childcare Chat

The Childcare Chat was available to all parents, regardless of whether or not they were lone parents. The Chats generally lasted between forty minutes and two hours depending on the needs of the parent. Normally face-to-face discussions took place, although occasionally the Chat might be carried out over the telephone if the parent only had minor queries. These minor queries were often directed to the Children’s Information Service.

Childcare advisers expressed a preference for carrying out the Chats face-to-face because this was perceived to be a more personal service. They believed that expressing understanding and empathy for the parent was essential, which was sometimes difficult to convey on the telephone. It was also thought to be harder for parents with low self-confidence to express themselves on the telephone. Face-to-face conversations also enabled Childcare Advisers to provide parents with written information, which could be explained and questions answered. This interactive element was lost if information were merely sent through the post to the parent, the onus being on the parent to read and understand the material.

Childcare Chats were held in numerous locations, such as Children’s Centres, Children’s Information Service offices and One-Stop Shops²³, depending on which location was most convenient for the parent. Chats were also often held in Jobcentres. This was seen to be beneficial because lone parents could be referred directly to a LA Childcare Adviser after having spoken to their Lone Parent Adviser in the Jobcentre. Conversely, if an appointment had been made for a parent to see a Childcare Adviser on a particular day and the parent failed to turn up, the Childcare Adviser was immediately able to give feedback to the Lone Parent Adviser.

During the Childcare Chat, Childcare Advisers discussed with the parents the differences between different types of childcare providers, such as nurseries and childminders, and discussed the range of childcare available in the area. They sought to understand what kind of childcare the parent was looking for and if any concerns about childcare were preventing them from starting work.

Generally, Childcare Advisers discovered that parents had a clear idea of the kind of childcare they wanted to use before they had their Childcare Chat; they generally wanted to use nurseries rather than childminders because stories in the media had made them worry about how safe childminders were. Parents perceived that nurseries would do more activities with children than childminder. They also perceived that their child would be interacting with other children to a greater extent at a nursery; they did not appreciate that their child could potentially interact with other children whilst looked after by a childminder (depending on the number of children under the childminder’s charge).

²³ The one stop shop is a drop-in service run by the council. People are able to visit one stop shops for face-to-face advice, information, help and access to all the council and community services in their area.

Thus, Childcare Advisers saw that one of the aims of the Childcare Chat was to address parents' concerns by explaining the role of childminders and to reassure them about formal childcare provision:

'...its just to reassure them about childcare, what each provision offers, sort of the hours they do, the charges they costs, so the main purpose [of the Childcare Chat] is to really reassure them about the childcare.'

(Childcare Adviser, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Childcare Advisers tried to allay fears by explaining that all childcare providers were OFSTED registered and that staff were required to be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). The types of questions which parents asked were about the cost of childcare, the hours when it was available and how providers would cope with the individual needs of their child, whether those be dietary concerns, learning difficulties or special needs.

The Childcare Chat was also an opportunity for Childcare Advisers to give parents information and advice about their personal childcare situation. The cost of childcare was often daunting for parents. They often believed they had to pay for all of the childcare. The Adviser explained about tax credits (WTC and CTC) and the fact that they help towards the cost of childcare to reassure them. They were also able to point out other available services, for example, depending on how the parent had been referred to the Chat, the Childcare Adviser could refer the parent to the other stakeholders involved in the pilot such as CIS, Jobcentre and the services they have on offer. An additional aim with lone parents and 'partners' was to inform them about the Taster element of the CTP; Advisers explained how the pilot operated and that it provided for a week of free childcare. The format of the Chat was flexible, but Childcare Advisers often used a form to record information about the parent and ensure they covered the same information with all parents.

2.3.3 The accompanied visit

After having a Childcare Chat, the next element of the CTP was for a parent to have an accompanied visit to a childcare provider. These were generally only offered to lone parents or 'partners', however some pilot areas were offering these to all parents. Parents were allowed an unlimited number of Accompanied Visits. The Accompanied Visit was an opportunity for the parent to visit a particular childcare provider with a Childcare Adviser, or alone if they wished, before committing to a Taster with that provider:

'...the first instance is just to come and see the building – and then the parents can decide [if they wish to do a Taster].'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

Parents were generally given a guided tour of the childcare provider and given information about how the childcare provider operated. Parents were keen to see the provider's facilities and learn how their child would be occupied during the day. Some parents of babies wanted to know where the babies slept, how the nursery coped with sleeping patterns and meals and how they managed the differing feeding patterns of babies. Safety was also a major concern of parents:

'If the child has been home with the parents, or always stayed with the family, usually there's the anxiety: is my child going to be safe here, is he going to be well looked after like he is used to...is he going to be alright?'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

Some childcare providers noticed that parents referred through the Childcare Taster Pilot tended to be very different from parents who had arranged their own visits independently of the pilot. They described non-CTP parents as having a more informed approach than parents referred through the Childcare Taster Pilot. On seeing the childcare provider for the first time, CTP parents were often immediately relieved and impressed by the setting and said they were content to leave their child there. They did not have enough experience of childcare to ask the right questions or fore-see any difficulties:

'...these parents are very much learning. They're just beginning to flourish and learn about childcare itself. We get so very little questions about curriculum or what we're doing with them. They come in and see the environment and say "oh! It's not a one bedroom flat. You've got a garden. When can they come in?" That's what happened with the last parent who came in, she just said "oh my god she's going to love it here". And I said "have you got any questions?".'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

2.3.4 The Childcare Taster

After the Accompanied Visit, the parent was then able to have a Childcare Taster. Generally, Tasters were only available to parents on New Deal for Lone Parents or parents on New Deal for Partners, although in some areas parents in the Employment Zone organised by the Jobcentre were also eligible. Generally, the Childcare Taster allowed a parent up to one week of free childcare (or 10 sessions), although there was an example of one pilot area offering two weeks of free childcare. Childcare providers would be paid by the LA for each session used by parents, however only up to approximately £25 a day.

The original aim of the Childcare Taster was to allow parents to test out different types of childcare provision. It was evident, however, that some pilot areas were choosing to use the week of free childcare for different purposes. There were examples of pilot areas who wanted to encourage parents to try out different types of childcare during their Taster. There were also pilot areas who were using the Childcare Taster to allow a parent to test out a specific childcare provider in order to see if their child would settle with that provider, with the view to that child attending that childcare provider once the parent started work. There were also pilot areas which were using the Childcare Taster to cover the cost of a parent's first week of childcare once they had work organised. This was to help parents with the cost of childcare before they started work and before they had received their tax credit.

The childcare providers explained that there were generally no special activities for children on Tasters. They were required to fit in with the normal life of the nursery or childminder. Some of the childcare providers did however have special programmes to integrate a new child into the childcare setting. The parent would be expected to stay with the child for the first session and then his or her presence would be phased out. Typically, the first session would be very short and then the length of stay would be increased. This regime was thought to be beneficial for both parents and children.

Some childcare providers found parents on the Childcare Taster Pilot did not always appreciate that the Taster had to be built up gradually. They found that some of the parents

had unrealistic expectations, especially if they had not been fully briefed by the Childcare Adviser, and they could be quite demanding:

'The parents, when they came in they were demanding the sessions consecutively...Now, anybody who runs a childcare facility knows that that child has to settle in first. You can't just come in and say here's my child. There's two point five hours. So we had a lot of issues with our first two or three parents, where they assumed that their child was going to walk in and they were going to walk out the door on day one. And I had to basically sell the fact that the settling in period would be that we wouldn't charge them for the sessions, and by the end of the week the child would be here for two full days. So therefore they're not losing out. But it's quite hard, because again it's all about relationship and about them thinking, well, I'm entitled to this. This is my money effectively. And this is the way I want it to be.'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

Building relationships with this group of parents was particularly difficult because it was felt by providers that the parents often had personal issues and were *'quite emotionally withdrawn or upset'*. The childcare providers would try to explain the rationale behind the settling in period. One nursery drew a parallel with starting work:

'...we always sell it to parents in the terms of if you're a part time worker and you're going to your job, you are not going to know what to do on the first day. It's going to be very daunting. So therefore, if somebody says to you I'll hold your hand for the first two or three days, you are going to feel so much more comfortable and not traumatised by Thursday and Friday. And definitely happy in a sense to go in on Monday - and that's the way that we work with children. You always have to look at and sell it from a parent's perspective really.'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

2.4 How the pilots operate together

The third wave pilot areas starting January 2005 were only operating the CTP. In the other pilot areas, there were a range of views regarding how the ESCP and CTP were working together.

There were pilot areas who saw the ESCP and CTP as separate and distinct pilots in their own right. They felt the two pilots had little in common and worked well as separate entities. They also believed the pilots had different client groups, with the ESCP focussing on parents with older children and the CTP focussing on parents with young children. The fact that there were often separate pilot staff who were working on the two different pilots also contributed to the belief that they were separate pilots.

In contrast, there were pilot areas who had branded the two pilots together under one name. They were conscious that both pilots were about childcare acting as a barrier to starting work and saw that the two pilots were working towards the same aim of getting lone parents to start work. There were also pilot areas who believed that the two pilots had complimentary roles. They saw that the CTP was acting to stimulate demand for childcare provision and give

advice to parents about childcare, and the ESCP would develop childcare provision in response to this demand and give support to lone parents on a wider range of barriers to work. In some areas, ESCP Development Officers referred parents to the CTP, and CTP Childcare Advisers referred parents to the ESCP, where appropriate.

2.5 Previous issues experienced by first wave pilots

When the first wave pilot areas were interviewed in June and July 2004 in the initial stage research, a number of issues were raised regarding the operation of the pilots. In successive interviews, pilot staff were asked about these issues. Thus, this section reviews progress upon these identified issues.

2.5.1 Timescales

In June and July 2004, the first wave pilot areas were concerned that the original timescale for the pilot development was unrealistic, because of the length of time needed to recruit and train staff and to establish relationships with schools and other stakeholders.

This view was echoed by the second and third wave pilot areas when they were interviewed, particularly by those whose start-date had been delayed because they had trouble completing their plans, and because there had been a delay in receiving funding from DfES. These pilot areas had believed the original timescale was demanding and were conscious that the delay in funding had resulted in them falling behind in their already *'tight'* timetable. As with the first wave pilot areas, they also explained that it took time to recruit staff. Under the ESCP, the timetable for developing childcare provision was dependent on the school calendar, with schools often preferring to set up provision at the beginning of the school year. Applications for funding to create childcare provision and OFSTED registration were seen to cause potential delays to progress.

A further issue regarding the timescale of the pilots was the fact that it was felt by the pilot areas that there was not sufficient time to see pilot successes. Pilot staff believed that moving lone parents into employment was a long term goal and it was unlikely the majority of parents they were working with would start work during the life of the pilot.

2.5.2 The desire for more guidance

Another issue raised by stakeholders in June-July 2004 was a desire for more discussion with DfES/DWP and more support from them. In particular, there was a desire for clear guidelines regarding the goals of the pilots and definitions of what would be classified as successes of the pilots.

This desire for guidance was also raised by the second and third wave pilot areas when they were interviewed. A lack of guidance was identified at the proposal stage, around monitoring (also see monitoring section below) and around the aims of the pilots.

One pilot area explained that they wanted more information from DfES at the bidding stage about the size and scope of the pilots. They developed a proposal for a small-scale project and subsequently found that a larger amount of money was available than they had expected.

The pilot areas explained that they would have preferred clearer direction from the outset of the pilots on what monitoring information they were required to collect in order to give them sufficient time to build this data-collection into the pilot procedures. The pilot areas explained that they had attended a pilot conference at which the subject of monitoring had been discussed by DfES and DWP. Some of the pilot areas complained that the monitoring debate did not give them a clear indication of what information they should collect.

As with the first wave pilot areas, pilot staff from the second and third waves explained that they would also have liked more clarity from the outset about the aims and what the pilots were expected to achieve, including what the indicators of success would be. Instead of offering this guidance, the pilot areas found that the onus was on them to operate the pilots in the way they wished:

'I know...they wanted some flexibility and to allow authorities to deliver their own approaches, but I think there should have been stronger clarity about what the actual aims of the project were: there should have been some minimum expectations of what they expected and there wasn't anything...One of the first things I look at is: I am going to do this, why are we doing it: what are the indicators of success, and how are we going to measure them? They should have given some minimum expectations. I would have liked them to be clear about the...type of monitoring and requirements and outputs that they wanted, because we have had no guidance whatsoever.'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, Second and Third Wave Pilot Area)

'But they aren't actually giving much guidance, what they are more doing is asking us how we are going to be doing things...'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, Second and Third Wave Pilot Area)

It was clear that some pilot areas misunderstood DfES' desire for the second and third Wave pilot areas not to be distracted by examples of practice in the first Wave areas. Some pilot areas had the impression that DfES were reluctant to share examples of good practice amongst the different pilot areas. Whilst some of the pilot areas wondered whether the perceived reluctance of DfES' to share good practice resulted from the fact that they did not want the pilot areas to be straight-jacketed into operating in a particular way, they were concerned that examples of good practice might be lost and that they might repeat mistakes that other pilot areas had made.

In spite of this, there were examples of pilot areas working together. A number of the second and third wave pilot areas explained that they had worked closely with other pilot areas, including some of the pilot areas from the first wave. For example, they had found it useful to be able to borrow job descriptions for pilot staff.

When the first wave pilot areas were revisited and asked about their views, they commented that they did not have a considerable amount of contact with DfES at the "fully operational" stage. However, the need for guidance which they had raised when they were first visited had diminished because all the stakeholders felt they had a clearer understanding of how the pilots were operating. These pilot areas were now preoccupied with the delivery of the pilots according to the interpretation they had adopted at this stage and no longer felt guidance useful.

2.5.3 Monitoring issues

As discussed in the previous section, some pilot areas believed that they had not been given clear information from the outset of the pilots regarding the numerical monitoring data which they were required to collect for DfES on a monthly basis. Once the pilots were underway, they explained they had been sent a couple of versions of a monitoring form, asking them to collect certain information. The fact that they had been sent a couple of versions had led to the pilot areas feeling confused about what monitoring information they were required to collect.

The pilot areas criticised the guidance they had been given regarding the collection of monitoring information. However it was evident that they generally disliked having to collect this information. On a general level, they were concerned that the collection of numerical data did not fully reflect the type and extent of the work they had been doing on the pilots. For example, some pilot areas were conscious of the long-term impacts that the pilots will have on parents and how the pilots will help them move towards employment:

'...if you look at these figures you might think, it's not had a really big impact in supporting Lone Parents into work, when you see the actual...figure. But so many have gone into training with a view to going back to work. So many parents have been, are being, have been supported and are still being supported. So this pilot is going to have an impact at the end of this year and next year. That's when you're going to see figures change.'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

On a more specific level, some pilot areas commented that the monitoring form itself did not require them to record important information about the pilots, for example it did not require them to record the numbers of parents they had spoken to through their outreach work²⁴. From the ESCP point of view, it was felt that the monitoring form was focussing on the creation of childcare places rather than asking the pilot areas to record the amount of support they were giving to parents:

'...sometimes it [the monitoring form] does focus on just creating childcare and there is another side of the pilot we feel that you know the support of the parents, and the parents that we are in contact with, and that takes up quite a lot of our time as well, and sometimes I don't know how well those forms reflect that side of it.'

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

The pilot areas generally found that the most recent version of the monitoring form was adequate and some pilot areas said they found that the most recent version was easier to fill in than previous versions.

One concern with the monitoring form was that it was being interpreted differently by the different pilot areas and thus did not give a clear picture of how the pilots were progressing and made it impossible to compare the pilots. For example, there was the suggestion that Childcare Chats might be defined differently by some of the pilot areas. One CPM from a pilot area believed that the Children's Information Service in her area were in fact offering Childcare Chats over the telephone, in addition to the Childcare Advisers from the Local Authority offering Chats. She was concerned that these Chats were not being recorded on the monitoring form and questioned whether other pilot areas were recording Chats carried out over the telephone.

There were other examples of pilot areas choosing to interpret the monitoring form in their own way. There was evidence that one pilot area was defining ESCP referrals as the number

²⁴ Outreach work was not included on the DFES monitoring form as this component of the ESCP was not originally envisaged.

of parents who the Development Officers had engaged at information events rather than referrals to an extended schools place. Although pilot areas had been instructed to record all the childcare provision which had been created since the ESCP began, one pilot area explained that they were defining new provision as provision created with Sure Start funding, discounting provision created through NOF funding.

Inaccurately recorded information had an impact on their pilot areas' ability to complete the monitoring form and consequently their monitoring figures. For example, data showing the take-up of childcare places was dependent on schools being able to provide this information and being able to identify which parents were lone parents; it was evident that schools were not always collecting this information.

The Jobcentre were using pilot markers on the LMS system to record whether parents were being referred to elements of the pilots. Childcare Partnership Managers did admit that on certain occasions, due to the fact that advisers were often busy and had a number of different initiatives to consider, they might forget to put the marker on the parent's record:

'I think it's the fact that we've got 17 incentives and measures for lone parents, and often at the interview stage, the lone parent advisor often forgets to update the system, to say exactly what they've done in order to promote them.'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

Whilst Jobcentre staff were provided with familiarisation in using LMS pilot markers, some of the Lone Parent Advisers were unaware that there were pilot markers on the LMS system when they were interviewed, and thought that there were only boxes to record discussions which took place with the parent²⁵.

The Local Authority was charged with the responsibility of compiling the monitoring form and submitting it to DfES on a monthly basis. There were examples of CPMs helping Local Authorities with collating monitoring information, however as the Jobcentre had not received any funding for the pilots, some of the CPMs were reluctant to help with this task:

'At some point what we decided was, because there was no additional funding or resources given to Jobcentre Plus that we would then rely on the data and collation from Haringey [LA] - because at some point they would have seen each parent, and they've got the additional resources.'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

The outreach work carried out by Development Officers as part of the ESCP was seen by some of the pilot areas as being a qualitative monitoring exercise. By case-loading parents and working closely with them on a one-to-one basis, it was hoped that by the end of the pilot, they would have a good understanding of the issues facing lone parents who are trying to enter the workforce:

²⁵ JobCentre offices in pilot areas were provided with familiarisation in using LMS pilot markers. In addition, the New Deal plus pilots started a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months after the ESC pilots were launched and there were opportunities for gaining proficiency in using pilot markers for this pilot during that time.

'We set up sort of a...assessment tool kit, which we've designed, which will actually track people...how they feel, what's their self confidence, what's their self esteem, what are the issues that are affecting them at the moment, and then going back after they tried the childcare and they've been through the new deal ... now they've been getting that input, how's it affecting them, and how's it affecting their confidence and ability to actually feel about entering the work place.'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, Second and Third Wave Pilot Area)

2.5.4 Data-sharing issues

Difficulties of sharing data between organisations, such as Jobcentres passing parental details to Local Authorities due to data-protection issues, were also raised when the first wave of pilot areas were interviewed in June and July 2004.

The second and third wave pilot areas had been informed of the data-protection issue by the first wave of pilot areas. As some of these second and third wave pilot areas had not progressed far at the time of being interviewed, they had not all considered the fine detail how they would overcome this issue. Others were aware that a strong referral process between Jobcentres and Local Authorities needed to be in place, and explained that they were hoping to use a referral form which they would ask parents to sign giving consent for their details to be passed to another organisation. They hoped to use the referral sheet used by the first wave of pilot areas as a template. Some other pilots thought they would overcome this referral and data protection issue by situating the Childcare Adviser in the Jobcentre so parents could be immediately referred to them for a Childcare Chat. One area also thought they could circumnavigate the data-protection issue by asking the Lone Parent Advisers to address and send out information packs to parents, therefore parental details would not need to be passed to the Local Authority.

The practicalities of data-sharing amongst the first wave pilot areas had been resolved since summer 2004. These pilot areas were using a referral form which they asked parents to sign to give consent to their contact details being passed to the Local Authority. The Local Authority also had a referral form which enabled them to refer parents to the Jobcentre if they engaged with parents who expressed an interest in New Deal programmes.

Although a data-sharing problem did not exist because parents had given consent for their details to be shared between organisations, pilot staff did not talk freely about clients with staff from other organisations. For example, a Lone Parent Adviser at the Jobcentre felt they could not discuss the personal issues affecting a particular client with a Development Officer at the LA. Potentially, a parent may have spoken to three different stakeholders: an LA Development Officer; an LA Childcare Adviser and a Lone Parent Adviser, all of whom felt they were unable to discuss their clients with each other. The fact that pilot staff thought they were unable to discuss clients with each other created questions about tracking parents through the pilot process. Local Authority pilot staff generally liaised directly with the parents to discover whether they had attended their interview at the Jobcentre, or if they had attended a Taster and kept a record of parent's progress, rather than seeking this information from other pilot staff. There were, however, examples of stakeholders checking with each other whether a client had attended an interview, although stakeholders were unsure whether data-protection allowed this. For example, when Childcare Advisers were based in Jobcentre offices, they would sometimes inform Lone Parent Advisers if a parent had failed to turn up to a Chat or a Taster.

2.5.5 Workloads

The impact of the pilots on staff workloads was also often raised by stakeholders when they were interviewed last year.

Generally, the workloads of the strategic officers from the first wave pilot areas had decreased since when they were interviewed in June and July 2005. This was because all the operational staff were in place and they were the ones who were delivering the pilots. Nonetheless, there were strategic pilot staff, who had taken on the pilot work in addition to their existing work, who said that the pilots had had a substantial impact on their workloads because it represented extra work for them. Operational staff (Development Officers and Childcare Advisers) often had heavy workloads, particularly when new childcare provision was about to be set up or when events were being arranged.

Childcare Partnership Managers from the Jobcentres explained that they were not as involved with pilots as they had been at the outset. As the Jobcentre had not received any funding for the pilot, a number of CPMs from the first wave of pilot areas decided that they could not spend so much time working on the pilot. They consequently reduced their role:

'I initially took it as my responsibility not only to promote it, but also to ensure that there were adequate referrals...there was an understanding that I had to stop doing that; I didn't have any additional resources ... so a decision had to be made. The funding had gone to the Local Authority, so they then have to come back and market it as effectively as they can, with the support from the CPM.'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

Lone Parent Advisers in Jobcentres said they were often very busy. The pilots were yet another initiative which they were required to remember to discuss with their clients.

3 Views and perceived impacts of ESCP and CTP

This chapter discusses the stakeholders' views of the ESCP and CTP (section 3.1-3.2) and stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts which these pilots were having (section 3.3). Section 3.4 explores the factors affecting the pilot impacts.

When asked about their views of the ESCP and CTP, stakeholders were generally very enthusiastic and positive about what the pilots were aiming to achieve. They commented on the fact that the pilots were often an extension of the work they were already carrying out in their area, both on a general and specific level. For example, the aims of the pilots fed into the wider social agenda to reduce child poverty and get parents off benefits, whilst the funding they received for the pilots helped achieve specific targets, such as Sure Start targets to create childcare provision.

3.1 Views of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot

3.1.1 Views of outreach work

As described in chapter two, there were a number of pilot areas who chose to change the focus of the ESCP; they decided to carry out outreach work with parents as well as to develop childcare provision. These pilot areas believed outreach work with parents was an extremely vital element of the pilot.

Firstly, outreach work enabled the areas to work closely with lone parents and explore the barriers preventing them from entering employment. Some pilot areas saw this element of the pilot as a social project, because they envisaged that it would advance their learning in this area. Secondly, the outreach element allowed pilot staff to explore parents' childcare needs and tailor the childcare provision they were developing to the needs of local parents, thus making childcare provision more sustainable in the long term. Pilot staff from the Local Authorities were pleased that they had chosen to incorporate the outreach element into the pilot:

'I don't think that the pilot could have gone any other way because if you are going into a certain area where there is childcare in place but it's not being taken up then to make it a success surely you need to know why. For me there just doesn't seem any point in sort of extended childcare in every school when it's not being taken up so it's about looking at the bigger picture and sort of thinking well what do they need then.'

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Local Authorities were enthusiastic about the outreach element being delivered by Development Officers and were complimentary of the staff they had recruited to these positions. They attributed the progress which had been made with parents to the skills of these officers and the intensive work the officers had carried out with parents. An advantage of the Development Officer role was the fact that it meant there was a designated, independent

person based in the community who had the time to work specifically with lone parents and whom parents could feel comfortable approaching. There was felt to be a need for this role, particularly as other stakeholders did not always have time to work on an individual basis with lone parents. By organising training courses for parents, one Jobcentre staff member commented on the fact that the Local Authority was taking on work which the Jobcentre no longer had resources to do.

Schools were also generally very complimentary of the outreach work which Development Officers were delivering. One learning mentor from a primary school praised the way her Development Officer had engaged and motivated parents. She described how the officer had made herself very visible in the school by working at the breakfast club and attending parents' evening and support groups. She had been surprised by this approach because she had expected the officer to be more aggressively focussed on the aim of getting parents to start work.

Whilst the Local Authorities and schools were enthusiastic about the Development Officer role, pilot staff in the Jobcentres were sometimes confused by the work that Development Officers were doing, particularly as it seemed far removed from the ESCP aim to develop childcare provision. This was believed to stem from a lack of communication between LA Development Officers and Jobcentre lone parent advisers and was subsequently addressed by stakeholders. The engagement of JobcentrePlus with the pilots is also discussed in section 3.4.2. Despite this, there was evidence of joint working between JobcentrePlus and the other stakeholders for outreach work, see for example sections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.3. In some areas, stakeholders believed that the number of Development Officers who had been recruited in their area did not make financial sense, particularly as these officers had been struggling to engage with lone parents. Having a large number of Development Officers had also created additional work for the ESCP Co-ordinator, who had the responsibility of managing the officers.

3.1.2 Views of developing childcare

Generally, schools were keen to hear about the pilots and in principle were keen to have childcare provision within their school. As reported in Chapter 2, new provision had been created in some schools and more provision was scheduled to begin in September 2005. For those schools who were less willing to set up childcare, the ESCP had given them '*a foot in the door with schools*' and it was felt that this initial contact would form the basis upon which stakeholders could work with schools in the future.

However, stakeholders reported that although generally schools were keen to hear about the pilots and in principle were keen to have childcare provision within their school, initial engagement with schools had in some cases been difficult. Some schools had been uncooperative and thus the pilot had progressed slower than they had expected. The pilot areas were also conscious that they were yet to engage secondary schools.

There were a number of reasons why it had been difficult to engage some schools. Schools agreed with the aims behind the ESCP. However, schools were often concerned that engaging with the pilot would create additional work for them. They also had practical concerns, such as when they would have time to clean the school premises if the school were being used for breakfast and after-school clubs. In one pilot area, a stakeholder suggested that the Development Officers did not have correct authority to forge links with schools and suggested that this was a reason for the slow progress.

School views of the ESCP depended on the level of support they received from the Local Authority. It was evident that schools had received different degrees of support. There were some schools that had been informed about the pilot and then found that they had no subsequent contact from the pilot staff. Schools did not require day-to-day contact from pilot

staff, but were concerned that the lack of contact would affect their plans to create childcare provision in the future:

“For the actual running of it we don’t need regular contact at all because we are just running the project, but certainly for what is going to happen in the future we would obviously need some sort of contact and some sort of confirmation.”

(Project Development Officer, Primary School, First Wave Pilot Area)

There were examples of schools who had not been fully briefed on the ESCP. Whilst these schools had been nominated by the Local Authority as stakeholders in the pilot, some school representatives were unaware they were involved with the ESCP. Schools that had received funding from another organisation such as NOF (now the Big Lottery Fund) or Sure Start tended to be aware of these organisations rather than the ESCP. There were also schools who explained that they only understood the aims of the ESCP once they had become closely involved with the pilot. They wished they had been given clearer information about the pilot from the outset:

‘I think originally perhaps, at the initial meeting...we could have been left with a package explaining, because I don’t think it was until later on that we understood that the whole pilot was to do with getting mothers back into work. Whether it is just something that’s kind of been developing, I don’t know, but [we would have liked] just the rationale of exactly what it was to begin with’

(Primary School, First Wave Pilot Area)

There were also some comments from schools questioning why there was a disparity in funding allocation between schools; some schools had received less money than other schools and they did not believe this to be a fair allocation of resources.

Those schools who had received support from the Local Authority to set up childcare provision were extremely positive about the ESCP and the support they had received. Without this help they often commented that they would not have been able to set up the childcare provision. Pilot staff were able to offer Local Authorities expertise, advice and an additional person in the form of a Development Officer who was able to help set up the childcare, relieving school staff of this workload:

‘...we’ve had a lot of support...helping us to the pathway to sorting out what money was there, and what we could do, and helping us to work out how much money, you know, salaries you need, and set up costs and things. It was very, very good, because it did help.’

(Head Teacher, Primary School, First Wave Pilot Area)

The take-up of the new childcare provision was perceived by the schools to be good and this contributed to their positive views of the ESCP. There were examples of schools that were able to then completely fill the places in their new after-school club and this response encouraged the creation of additional provision in the form of breakfast clubs and holiday provision. Stakeholders envisaged that childcare created through the schools held many

advantages for parents: they were familiar with the school and did not have to transport their child to a different provider:

'...the parents know exactly what is provided at that school, so they are not having to provide additional transport...it's a safe environment, the parents know where their child is, so from that point of view, it is effective, it's a good selling point.'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

There were a number of concerns raised by schools around the take-up of places. The main issue underlying these concerns connected to the cost of childcare places. Generally schools had to charge parents a minimum fee for the place in order to make the childcare provision sustainable. Parents were often not used to paying the school to look after their child and schools sometimes explained that they had to chase parents for money to cover the cost of the childcare place.

'...they [the parents] all definitely want the place. The only negative feedback is about the cost. But I think they have all been managed to be persuaded otherwise and you know that really it isn't very much per week, when they compare to other child care providers, other nurseries. A local nursery I visited the other day charges £150 for the week.'

(Primary School, First Wave Pilot Area)

3.2 Views of Childcare Taster Pilot

3.2.1 Chats

In terms of numerical progress, pilot staff in the Local Authorities were generally satisfied with the level of take-up of Childcare Chats. The Chats themselves received positive feedback from stakeholders and parents. They were seen to be particularly useful for parents who were job-ready and for whom childcare was a barrier to them starting work. The Childcare Chat was perceived to satisfactorily address parental questions and concerns and boost self-confidence to approach childcare providers on their own and arrange their own childcare. The informality of the Chat was seen to be particularly successful. On an individual basis, some of the pilots explained that there had been some fantastic success stories as a result of parents having Childcare Chats.

Describing how they felt the Chats helped parents find childcare, one stakeholder said:

"It helps them in the fact that they haven't got to go trawling through a list to see, and ring round lots of people, I did the ringing around and found someone with a vacancy and arranged a visit, so it did help them in that way, it sort of cuts out some of the stress I suppose of having the list sent to them, and as I say ringing round, and making lots of visits. So the referral was made today because it is today that I met her, and she had the one to one consultation today, and then I've booked the visit for her for next Tuesday"

(Childcare Adviser, First Wave Pilot Area)

When parents were looking for work the Chats allowed stakeholders to help find childcare quickly for example, this stakeholder had met a parent for a Chat:

“I met her this morning, I got her to fill in this form, and then I asked how old the child is and what is it they want. So because she wants to start work as soon as possible, so what we’ve done is, I flagged up different types of provision and I started ringing around different nurseries to see if they had the vacancies”

(Childcare Adviser, First Wave Pilot Area)

Generally parents were only referred to a Childcare Chat if they were job-ready. However for those parents who were not job-ready, the Chat also had benefits: it acted as a forum for the parent to discuss the range of barriers preventing them from starting work.

3.2.2 Visits and Tasters

Pilot staff in Local Authorities (LA) were positive about the rationale behind carrying out Childcare Chats. The rationale behind carrying out Childcare Tasters, however, was questioned by some LA and CIS staff and some childcare providers. Whilst it was thought to be beneficial for parents to be able to test out different forms of childcare provision, some stakeholders thought that it was not realistic to move a child from one childcare provision to the next and would have a very disruptive effect on the child:

‘I just don’t think you can expect a child or a family to walk into a setting, particularly a setting like ours...and stay there for a week and then go. You can’t expect that of the parent and the children aren’t like that. They’re not a commodity that you can shove in and shunt out again and do that somewhere else. That approach I think goes against all the principles that Early Years work has worked towards.’

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

Some stakeholders also questioned whether it was worthwhile for parents to test out childcare provision if they were not in the position to start work. Stakeholders explained that a parent and child might test out a childcare provider, find that they liked the providers but there might not be any vacancies with that provider by the time the parent found work:

‘The problems that I think about it is, you take a child along for a Taster and the parent thinks, yes I like this after school club, I like this nursery provision and then they go away to find a job...the parent may feel safe and happy with that type of childcare and the child may have settled well in that week. But then...how do you know that that vacancy is still going to be there once the parent has gone to work.’

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

There was positive feedback from stakeholders of accompanied visits and Tasters when they took place. This is described in section 3.3. For example, Tasters, allowing children to test out one provider for one week, had made a real difference to those parents able to visit a childcare provider and gain an understanding of how that provider operated.

The take-up of Visits and Tasters, however, was much lower than the pilot areas had anticipated, with Childcare Chats proving much more popular than the Tasters. Pilot staff thought there were a number of different possible reasons why the Chats were more popular.

One main reason cited by staff for the lack of interest in Tasters was that the Chat was found sufficiently persuasive and informative to answer the parents' questions and concerns and they did not then need to have a Taster. In particular, this was believed to be the case for lone parents who were truly job-ready. For those parents who required more information after having a Chat, the Accompanied Visit was often enough to give them an idea of how certain childcare providers operated:

'...they have their Chat, then they go for a Visit. And usually when they get to the stage of having a visit, then they're looking for going back to work and they take up an offer of a childcare place on the strength of a Visit. They just don't require their Taster.'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

One reason for the low take-up of Tasters, as perceived by stakeholders, was the possibility that parents were not job-ready and did not perceive themselves to be in need of a Taster at this stage. They believed that a Taster would be more useful once they were ready to start work. There were some pilot staff who explained that parents were not always aware of the issues surrounding childcare and did not appreciate that it might take a while to adjust to formal childcare:

'With regard to the Tasters...I always think that it's a shame that there's not been more take up...I don't know if it's been marketed in the wrong way and in different areas...parents don't know about getting up in the morning about getting their child ready to take them out in the morning to drop them off at 8 o'clock in the morning and I think that's something that I mean I always say to parents use your taster to get an idea of that 'cos you don't know how your child's going to settle. You don't know what it's going to be like getting up in the morning and getting your child ready.'

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Other pilot areas, however, had chosen to market the Taster to parents in a different way, for example there were pilot areas that were using the Taster as a way to pay for parents' first week of childcare before returning to work, rather than marketing it as a tool for parents to try different types of childcare. These pilot areas were already reducing the number of parents who potentially could participate in the Taster element of the pilot, because they were only marketing it to parents who were job-ready.

Another reason for the low take-up of Tasters, as perceived by stakeholders, was the possibility that the number of parents who had fears about childcare made up a very small number of people and that the majority of lone parents did not need to experience a Taster to alleviate their childcare concerns:

'I think in my view the Tasters can help a limited amount of people. Because I think the main issue is: are people job ready or not, or if they are afraid of child care...let's say it is good that you have an advisor that can, if necessary go with you, and sort of

have the full blown taster as it were. It is a nice facility to have, useful for some people, but I don't know how mainstream can you get it.'

(CIS Manager, Children's Information Service, First Wave Pilot Area)

One additional suggestion from stakeholders for the lack of take-up was that it could be attributed to parental concerns that they would be required to return to work if they accepted the Taster.

3.2.3.1 Childcare Providers' Views

As previously described, childcare providers were generally willing to take part in the Childcare Taster Pilot because they believed that it would be beneficial to them. Childcare providers hoped that it would raise their profile and help them to fill their vacancies.

The childcare providers were generally positive about the Visits and Tasters which had taken place. They believed there were many benefits to the parent from being able to visit a childcare provider: it allowed them to see the carers who could potentially look after their child and to ask about the qualifications and experience of the staff at the childcare provider. They found that Visits where parents were accompanied by a Childcare Adviser were more beneficial than unaccompanied visits because the parents felt more relaxed and found it easier to ask questions.

The negative aspect of the Tasters from the childcare providers' perspective was the fact that parents they had worked closely with were sometimes not able to take up a permanent childcare place, as they did not have a job, and could not afford childcare. They thought that it was disappointing for the parent and unsettling for the child:

'I wish there was a way the care could continue whether the parent goes back to work or not. It doesn't seem fair to be, like taking it out on the children, because there is a lot of benefit for the children to be here, in terms of development.'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

'All the hard work goes in the first week, which is considerable. And then if that parent cannot afford to keep that child in the nursery, what is the point? What is the aim of this taster?'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

Some pilot staff commented that childcare providers preferred parents who were participating in Visits and Tasters to be job-ready because these parents were more likely to take-up a place once they had experienced their Visit or Taster, thus it was more beneficial for them to spend time with these parents.

3.2.3.2 Payment Issues

Childcare providers also had negative comments about the payment system for the Tasters. There were childcare providers who had experienced delays in payment for the Tasters they had provided, which led them to believe that the system of payment at the Local Authorities was badly organised. Childminders in particular were affected by the delays in payment because they had fewer children and were relying on the income:

“I made up an invoice and sent it in to [name] and she in turn sent it to...the finance department and I had to wait 3 or 4 weeks because she said she sent it to them and they said they cannot find it and they have to investigate...So that put me off a bit and I thought well if I’m working and I haven’t got any income coming in at the time...”

(Childminder, First Wave Pilot Area)

Some childcare providers had also experienced payment problems from parents who had participated in the CTP and subsequently taken up a permanent place with that childcare provider. There were examples of parents who had failed to pay their childcare fees. There were also examples of providers who were accepting a lower rate from a parent who had participated in the pilot. This was consequently having a detrimental impact on the providers’ finances:

‘...it was supposed to be forty pounds per day but she was saying that it is quite expensive and it is a lot to take out of her wages, so I said okay I will hold back and do my thirty pounds per day. Then she came and said that she cannot afford that and she is going to cut the days down to three days a week.’

(Childminder, First Wave Pilot Area)

3.3 Impacts of pilots as perceived by stakeholders

Stakeholders believed that the pilots were having a number of different positive impacts. The pilot areas explained that the impacts which had been made were qualitative impacts, rather than the quantitative successes which the pilots were originally designed to achieve. The impacts were often by-products of the original aims of the pilots:

‘It is a lot of money we have had and if people raise that question [of value for money] I would say on a quantitative basis that might be valid. On a qualitative basis I think it’s changed the way we are starting to develop childcare and provide a better infrastructure for parents. So I feel qualitatively we have got a lot out of it.’

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

The ESCP outreach work was directing parents to information and providing them with one-to-one support to help address personal barriers, which parents felt were preventing them from entering employment:

‘I would say the support that’s being given to parents, as I say especially by the Development Officers, I think that’s been quite a big help for the parents, just having someone to almost hold their hand.’

(Childcare Adviser, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Pilot areas reported parents were very positive about this support and it had made positive impacts in their lives. For example the pilot areas reported that there were parents who said they would not have started a training course if they had not received support from pilot staff. This kind of support was helping to move parents towards employment, although the pilot areas stressed that generally lone parents would not return to work immediately. It was

believed that employment was a long term goal and it could take two or three years to address parents' barriers and prepare them for work:

'...we are helping parents move along [but] It is quite a long continuum isn't it from... not working to working. A lot of steps involved in that.'

(ESCP Co-coordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

The success and impact of the outreach work from the pilot areas' point of view did not lie in the number of parents who had returned to work during the life of the pilot. Whilst there had been parents who had returned to work, stakeholders did not believe that the pilots had contributed to large numbers of parents returning to work. They believed that the success of outreach work was twofold: firstly, it lay in the number of parents contacted and supported and secondly, this work had developed and enhanced their understanding of lone parents' work barriers and how best to address these barriers. The support they offered parents and the progress they had made preparing parents for work were felt to be the kinds of successes which were difficult to measure and record quantitatively.

'I feel we've contacted and supported many Lone Parents and although it may be low figures in returning to work that we're showing I feel that it has given them a stepping stone to start into a career for the future.'

(ESCP Co-coordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

The outreach work had highlighted to the pilot areas that childcare was not the main barrier facing lone parents. There were a number of other barriers which needed to be addressed before parents experienced childcare barriers. This is discussed in section 3.4.

The ESCP outreach work also helped Local Authorities to understand the local childcare needs of parents and tailor their childcare provision to the needs of the local community. Pilot staff felt better able to design childcare provision which was more responsive to parents' needs, thus making the provision more sustainable.

The main aim of the ESCP, as defined by DfES and DWP, was to develop childcare provision within schools and there was some success in this area. There were examples of extra childcare provision being created in schools in the form of before-school and after-school childcare clubs. Schools reported that the existence of these clubs had a positive impact on parents and children at the schools. For example, there were parents who had been able to return to work or training as a result of taking up an Extended Schools Childcare place. In some pilot areas, schools had benefited from having pilot staff as a designated resource, who were able to help them with planning and developing childcare provision.

ESCP had also enabled the Local Authorities to develop links with schools and build closer relationships with schools. It had raised the extended schools agenda within schools and the Local Authorities believed that this would enable them to work more closely with schools in the future. By working with the parents in the schools through outreach work, the pilots were also changing the ethos and culture of the school from within.

The main activity of the CTP was connected to the Childcare Chats. Local Authorities believed that the Chats were helping to address parental knowledge and understanding of childcare and break down some of the concerns they had about childcare. Childcare advisers were able to inform lone parents about the differences between nurseries and childminders and allay their fears about the safety of these provisions. As discussed in the previous section,

the Childcare Taster was not as often utilised as the Chats, with fewer parents participating in this element of the pilot. This low participation level had led pilots to consider that a Taster which allowed parents to test out different types of childcare was not needed by the majority of parents, and that the support offered by pilot staff was more important for parents:

'...what people need really is like one to one support, and holding information and sort of encouragement where necessarily, and...they don't need that much, the full Taster but they need all the other things that the pilot does... So let's say the Chat is the mechanism that allows you to do away with the full blown Tasters as it were.'

(CIS Manager, Children's Information Service, First Wave Pilot Area)

According to stakeholders, there was evidence, however, that where accompanied visits and Childcare Tasters had been carried out, it had made a real difference to those parents to be able to visit a childcare provider and gain an understanding of how that provider operated. Generally, however, parents had Tasters with one childcare provider and did not test out different providers. Accordingly, the usefulness of trying out different providers was not tested fully. The act of visiting a provider did often seem to allay the fears of parents who in some cases had never used formal childcare:

'...it enabled them to actually see childcare and what is around, what is obtainable and eliminate any sort of fear they have and any misgivings they may have had.'

(Nursery, First Wave Pilot Area)

'Obviously with hand on heart none of us can say that every one of our provisions are of the highest quality. But that we haven't come across any parent not wanting to leave the child in provision. Every visit that they've had they felt comfortable with and then chose to use that service or type of service if there's not a vacancy in the one they visited.'

(ESCP Co-ordinator, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

Another benefit of the CTP, as perceived by stakeholders, was that it was helping to market childcare providers and utilise surplus childcare places. As a result of contacting childcare providers, the Children's Information Service was able to gain a clearer understanding of the type and level of childcare vacancies in their area, and update their vacancy information. Some pilot areas used funding from the pilot to employ a Vacancy Officer, who was responsible for setting up a database detailing the childcare vacancies in the area.

There were a number of joint influences that the ESCP and CTP were having in the pilot areas. Through marketing and information events to raise awareness of the pilots and engage parents, the pilots had raised awareness of the organisations who were involved, in particular the pilots had raised awareness of the Children's Information Service. The pilots were also raising awareness of a number of initiatives: New Deal for Lone Parents and Working Tax Credit/Childcare Tax Credit.

Greater partnership working between the Local Authority, Children's Information Service and Jobcentre (Plus) was also a success of the pilots (some areas had Jobcentre Plus, others still had Jobcentre). It was thought useful to have Local Authority staff and Jobcentre staff jointly

attending information events for parents because this gave parents better access to a range of different information in one location:

'...part of the project was to give parents better access to information about different services and that's what we've done and you can't force parents to take up the information or go back to work if it's not what they want but if they want to do it then yes so and if it's sort of on your door step it makes it a lot easier. And a lot of parents say 'oh I didn't know where to go' they haven't got a clue of where to start to look for childcare and or where to start to talk about the benefits.'

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

'...it's not the Local Authority and the social security, is it one, it is Extended Childcare. It's Try childcare pilot if you like. So they're like one employee. They're working together for the benefit of the Lone Parent.'

(Development Officer, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

The relationship between the various staff had often enabled problems to be resolved. There were examples of Development Officers working with lone parent advisers to help a parent who was unable to cover the cost of childcare, by liaising with childcare providers to waive the cost of the deposit for a childcare provider.

As well as creating closer links between the stakeholders working on the pilots, the ESCP and CTP had resulted in the pilot areas linking with other organisations and services, such as training providers. Links with other pilot areas had also been made in order to share examples of best practice, and it was believed that these links would continue once the pilots had finished.

3.4 Factors affecting impacts

It was evident that there were a number of factors which were affecting the extent of the coverage of the pilots.

3.4.1 Timescale

The timescale of the pilots was believed by all pilot areas to be a factor. The timescale allowed was felt to be insufficient to meet the aims of the pilots. In particular, some of the first and second wave pilot areas had experienced trouble in completing their plans, leading to delays in funding from DfES) and were concerned that they would not have time to implement their pilots fully, and so pilots would have a reduced influence in their area. In addition to the timescale of the pilots being insufficient, stakeholders believed that the pilot effects would not be felt immediately; they would occur a few years in the future when the lone parents they were supporting returned to work.

3.4.2 Jobcentre Plus referrals

The degree to which Jobcentre Plus was engaging with the pilots was also a factor, because this affected the level of referrals which were being made to the pilots. Generally, the lone parent advisers were aware of the pilots, although there was some lack of awareness and understanding of the ESCP. Lone parent advisers did not fully understand the outreach element of the ESCP because they had understood that the aim of this pilot was to develop childcare provision. When Jobcentre offices did not fully understand the ESCP, they found it

a struggle to market it. In order to raise the profile of the pilots in Jobcentre offices, Local Authority staff had given presentations to Jobcentre staff in Jobcentres. Buddy systems, work-shadowing and joint training events were implemented to enable officers from the Local Authorities and advisers from the Jobcentre to better understand each others' roles.

There were factors which were affecting the Jobcentre's ability to engage with the pilots. Whilst they were positive about the aims of the pilot, the Jobcentre had not received any specific funding for their work in relation to these pilots and this affected the amount of resources they were able to spend on the pilots. For example, it was not always possible, or cost-effective for lone parent advisers to attend joint stakeholder information events:

'There has been a lot of good work...conducted by [name] LA... but at some of the events...only a handful of parents turn up, so if you think in terms of how many a lone parent advisor is actually seeing in a jobcentre, for us to use the resources and send 2 or 3 people out there, when it may mean there are only seeing 2 or 3 people overall...'

(CPM, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

The lack of specific funding also affected the amount of time that Childcare Partnership Managers could spend working on the pilots. Lone parent advisers generally had heavy workloads and were working in an environment where a number of different pilots and initiatives were being carried out. Consequently, the ESCP and CTP were not seen to be priorities for Jobcentre staff.

'...they have so many initiatives, this one really means a lot to us, but we have so many initiatives, so many guest speakers, unless its something you hear quite often, although everyone in the office should have an awareness, I'm not saying that everyone has got that immediately to the front of their mind. The NDLP advisers would certainly be very aware that the initiative is there.'

(CPM, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

In addition to this, Jobcentre offices in some of the pilot areas were in the process of becoming Jobcentre Plus when they were interviewed, and for staff this was time-consuming and disruptive.

The low levels of referral from the Jobcentre were perceived to be affecting the success of the pilots. One pilot area explained that they had expected that their main customer base would come from Jobcentre referrals, however they had found they were in fact referring more parents to the Jobcentre to discuss New Deal programmes. Generally, Jobcentres were making more referrals to the CTP than the ESCP. Jobcentres in some pilot areas were not making any referrals to the ESCP. In order to try and increase Jobcentre referrals, the Local Authority placed information about the pilots in Jobcentres and a number of pilot areas were holding Childcare Chats in the Jobcentre.

There were a number of issues connected to the referral process. As discussed, the number of 'partners' who were being referred to the pilots was low. Jobcentre staff explained that they were not doing mandatory WFI with this group of parents and therefore 'partners' did not generally come into the Jobcentre. Jobcentre staff said they would concentrate on this group of parents in the future when they had become Jobcentre Plus offices and had New Deal for Partner Advisers.

Jobcentres also raised an issue regarding lone parents. Lone parents with children aged twelve or above had to have quarterly mandatory LPWFI, whereas lone parents with children below the age of twelve were not required to come into the Jobcentre for a WFI as often. The focus of the pilots, however, appeared to be around childcare for younger children and therefore the clients the Jobcentre staff saw via QWFI were not the right clients to participate in the pilots.

Other issues around referrals were connected to the way Jobcentre staff chose to refer parents. Lone parent advisers were generally guided by what the parent said in their WFI and the barriers which the parent identified as preventing them from returning to work. The adviser would then look at the range of initiatives available and suggest what might be appropriate for the parent. When pilots and initiatives were not mandatory, then it was often the case that advisers did not pursue everything with everybody; they only pursued the perceived relevant initiatives with parents. Thus if childcare was not raised as an issue, then the pilots were not discussed with parents:

'As part of New Deal Plus, the advisers have been given some new interview techniques, which is actually, instead of someone sitting in front of them and they rattle off 17 different initiatives that we've got running in the district, if you're just sitting there and particularly if you're not sure that you want to be there in the first place, you can lose a person by saying we've got this, and this. The new way of interviewing is saying, if you did feel you'd like to go back to work, what would stop you? So then you tackle the barriers, referring to the initiatives associated with barriers'

(CPM, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

Some advisers said they had very few clients who were thinking of going back to work but were apprehensive about childcare, and for this reason they had not referred many parents to the pilots. Lone parent advisers also explained that they were only referring job-ready parents to the pilots and therefore if their clients were not job-ready, then there were not making many referrals to the pilots.

3.4.3 Motivation and Job-readiness of Parents

Stakeholders from all the involved organisations reported that the parents they were engaging had a number of different barriers which were preventing them from starting work, and this affected the success of the pilots. The pilots, as originally conceived, aimed to address childcare barriers and whilst parents often had childcare barriers, the parents were not at the stage where they needed their childcare barriers to be addressed. This reduced parents' willingness and ability to engage with the pilots. According to stakeholders, parents did not perceive they were ready for a Taster because they believed this was something which they needed to have when they were ready to start work, and it was not yet necessary for them to take up an Extended Schools Childcare place.

In particular, stakeholders reported their belief that lone parents were not job-ready and this barrier was preventing them from starting employment. Through carrying out outreach work with lone parents, LAs discovered that lone parents often lacked confidence and self-esteem and were not motivated to start work. In some cases, they had spent a number of years looking after their children at home, or had been brought up in a home with unemployed parents themselves, and therefore a culture of not-working had been established. Lone parents also often lacked training. All these factors contributed to them being fearful about starting work.

According to stakeholders, financial concerns also prevented lone parents from starting work. Lone parents feared coming off their benefits and starting work because they did not know whether they would be better off. In order to make it worthwhile for them to come off their benefits and earn enough money to cover the cost of childcare, lone parents often needed to take higher paying jobs, but they did not always have the skills or the confidence to get higher-paying jobs.

'...with lone parents it is not just about the childcare: they have to think about the rent, all the utilities and all that, and by the time they add it up they know that they have to earn say roughly say £350 pounds a week – and there is hardly any jobs paying £350 a week so for lone parents it is really difficult for them to go back out to work...they need a job that pays enough so they can be comfortable instead of worse off, even with the Tax credit.'

(Childminder, First Wave Pilot Area)

Stakeholders said that there were also a number of other personal issues occurring in lone parents' lives which were preventing them from starting work. Lone parents were sometimes dealing with their own, or children's health issues. Domestic violence, housing issues and child exclusion from school all acted as barriers to preventing parents from starting work.

Some of the pilot areas had a high number of lone parents of different ethnicities. Amongst this group of lone parents, there were parents who did not speak English as their first language and were in need of language training. According to stakeholders, the cultural expectations of some ethnic communities also acted as barriers, for example in some communities women were expected not to work outside the home.

Stakeholders believed that childcare did exist as a barrier, but generally only became a true barrier when parents were about to start work. In fact, lone parents often seemed to leave their childcare arrangements to the last minute:

'We have lots of conversations with parents who say they have now got the jobs and all of a sudden they realise they need childcare, it is almost as though the important part of going back to work is getting the job, but then they think what am I going to do with the children, that sort of thing, then they run into problems because they don't know where to get the childcare from...childcare doesn't seem to be a high priority in getting a person back to work until they have got the job, and then it is a high priority and always an emergency.'

(Development Officer, Primary School, First Wave Pilot Area)

3.4.3.1 Limited availability of childcare

In some areas, stakeholders perceived that the availability of childcare was a barrier for lone parents, and that the childcare which was available did not always match lone parents' needs. The pilot areas reported that parents could not always find convenient childcare which matched their working hours. There was often said to be a lack of baby places and a lack of childcare for shift workers. One of the perceived successes of the ESCP was that it was trying to create childcare which was responsive to parents' needs.

3.4.3.2 Reluctance and fear

As perceived by stakeholders, whilst availability was limited, lone parents were sometimes reluctant to accept certain kinds of childcare provider and finding a childcare place was a matter of whether they were willing to be flexible. Parents often stated a preference for nursery places rather than childminder places because they wanted their child to be in an environment with a number of other children. There were also instances where parents wanted their child to be looked after by a carer of their own ethnicity:

'She is mixed race and I just felt the mum made a beeline for me when we went to the Drop In...I just felt she thought it would be better if she went with someone who is maybe closer culture wise to her.'

(Childminder, First Wave Pilot Area)

Stakeholders reported that, in their view, fear about formal childcare generally resulted from a lack of understanding of formal childcare. Stories in the media had led parents to be concerned about childminders. In particular, parents were concerned about the safety of childminders and whether a childminder would be provide enough diversions for their child.

3.4.3.3 Affordability

Stakeholders reported that affordability of childcare was clearly a barrier preventing parents from starting work. As reported, lone parents needed to be better off once they started work in order for it to be worthwhile for them to start work. Consequently, they needed to get better paid jobs in order to be able to afford the cost of childcare. Lone parents were not always aware that they were eligible to receive Childcare Tax Credits to cover the cost of approved childcare. Tax credits could cover up to seventy percent of the cost of childcare (eighty percent from April 2006), although this was not always sufficient for some parents. The cost of full-time nursery care was particularly expensive and could be between £500 and £1000, thus making these childcare providers inaccessible for low income families.

According to stakeholders, the upfront costs of childcare were a particular problem. Lone parents were generally required to fund the first few weeks of childcare because tax credits took at least two weeks to be processed and paid. The Jobcentre had a discretionary fund which they sometimes used to cover the cost of a parent's childcare during this period. In addition to the delay in receiving tax credit, nurseries often asked parents to pay an upfront deposit:

'...one of the barriers of child care is the cost, because they often have to pay, within a Nursery, Nurseries often ask them for a months deposit plus a month in advance, so for parents starting out, she doesn't have that money to pay 2 months up front, so that's one of the biggest barriers.'

(Childcare Adviser, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

There were examples where pilot staff had intervened and tried to get the childcare provider to waive the deposit. In light of the upfront costs of childcare, some pilot areas were using the Childcare Taster as the first week of childcare.

According to stakeholders, overpayment and underpayment of tax credits also had significant effects on parents. If parents found themselves without the money to pay for childcare they had to give up their jobs in order to look after their children:

'the negative publicity, there is always somebody in a room who got overpaid and then had to give it back, and that has knocked what is potentially a huge benefit.'

(Pilot Manager, Local Authority, First Wave Pilot Area)

4 Stakeholder suggestions for ESCP and CTP

This chapter describes the improvements to the ESCP and CTP which were suggested by stakeholders (section 4.1), before finally exploring the pilot areas' plans for the future (section 4.2).

4.1 Improvements

4.1.1 Communication

Stakeholders suggested a number of improvements to the pilots. There was a request from the second and third wave pilot areas for communications from DfES and DWP to be clearer. These pilot areas also requested that good practice be shared between the different pilot areas at early stages of the pilot development:

'...also probably better understanding and sharing of good practices for each district...it is almost like you can't share that information, so real sharing, good and bad.'

(CPM, Jobcentre, Second or Third Wave Pilot Area)

The DfES also encouraged sharing good practice, and there were early operational workshops, but these were restricted to the areas within the 2nd or 3rd wave, limiting the experiences that could be drawn upon. The DfES did provide a good practice workshop in May 2005, attended by all areas in all three waves, and the Scottish and Welsh participating areas, however this facilitation may have been at a later stage than the pilots found useful. Behind this requirement for more communication and the sharing of good practice was a concern whether or not the progress they were making was in line with DfES and DWP expectations. The pilot areas were keen for more explanation from the Departments about what they expected the pilots to achieve.

The first wave pilot areas also wanted reassurance regarding the work they had been doing and the rationale behind the approach they had decided to take because they were conscious that some of their work had moved away from the original aims of the pilots. They were concerned that DfES were interested in numerical success and would not recognise the development achievements which had occurred as a result of these pilots. The stakeholders wanted appreciation that the successes of the pilots might be qualitative, developmental achievements rather than numerical successes. They explained that it was important to recognise that childcare was not the only barrier facing lone parents and that support must be given to parents to over-come their other barriers before addressing their childcare barriers. In particular, pilot areas felt lone parents needed to increase their confidence and change their mindset regarding employment and they needed basic skills' training to enable them to obtain a job. An overall approach was felt by the pilot areas to be needed to get lone parents back to work.

4.1.2 Longer term outcome

Stakeholders wanted the success of the pilots to be measured over a longer term. For example, they reported that the lone parents they were presently working with would start work in a number of years time and the pilots were helping to prepare these parents for employment.

4.1.3 Childcare Costs

One suggestion for improving the pilots was for money to be used by the Local Authorities to pay directly for childcare, because the cost of childcare was a barrier for parents. Some pilot areas suggested that the funding for the ESCP could be used to subsidise places in before- and after-school clubs. Some other areas, however, believed that extended schools places ought to be self-sustaining in order for them to survive and they also believed that parents ought to get used to the idea of paying for childcare.

4.1.4 Increase Taster take-up

There were some suggestions to increase the take-up of Tasters offered under the CTP. It was often said that lone parents were unaware of the need to think about childcare before they had organised their employment. There was therefore the suggestion that the importance of thinking about childcare in advance of getting a job could be stressed to parents and the Taster could be marketed as a tool for exploring what it would be like for a parent to leave their child in formal childcare, particularly as some lone parents had never used formal childcare.

However, in spite of re-marketing the purpose of the Taster, the idea of leaving a child for an afternoon with various different providers remained an uncomfortable idea for childcare providers and pilot staff. Childcare providers explained that they had a settling-in programme for their new parents and children, which allowed parents to gradually leave their child for longer periods of time with the childcare provider. The Taster went against the idea of this settling-in programme. Stakeholders also reported that parents did not appear to need to test out different types of childcare in the form of a full-scale Taster. Often the Childcare Chat and accompanied visit was enough to give them an idea of different types of provision and to allay their fears. Research with parents should provide more information about this aspect.

4.1.4.1 Tasters and childcare costs

Another suggestion to increase the take-up of Tasters and tackle the cost barrier facing lone parents was to use Tasters as the first week of childcare for parents who had started work. Some pilot areas had already done this and wanted the DfES to give them permission to use the Taster in this way. This was thought to be particularly useful because the up-front costs of childcare were particularly problematic for lone parents, in particular because (according to the pilot areas) Tax Credits took a few weeks to be processed and paid.

4.1.5 Changes to Taster design

There were some other suggestions regarding the CTP. One was for the length of the Taster to be extended, particularly if lone parents were expected to try out different types of childcare provider. It was also thought to be particularly important for parents visiting providers to be accompanied by a pilot staff member because accompanied visits were much more successful than when unaccompanied. There were also childcare providers in some pilot areas who wanted a more formal referral system, from the LA to the childcare provider, to be in operation, and for feedback to be gathered by the LA from parents who had attended Visits and Tasters as this was currently not being done.

4.1.5.1 Jobcentre support

One criticism of the pilots by stakeholders was that the Jobcentre had not received any funding for their involvement in the pilots. This had affected their ability to engage with the pilots. Consequently, it was suggested that more support and funding be given to Jobcentre staff:

'...we should have had [funded] people within Jobcentre Plus working alongside [pilot area name] Local Authority, so that we could really share the work element, and they could support the parents with the childcare side...'

(Childcare Partnership Manager, Jobcentre, First Wave Pilot Area)

4.1.5.2 Operational changes

Other suggested improvements to the pilots were operational improvements. Pilot areas had ideas of how to improve their marketing of the pilots, for example they hoped to raise awareness of the pilots in the Jobcentre offices by pilot staff spending days in the Jobcentres. One pilot area explained that they were going to use mini Discovery Weeks to promote the Tasters and hopefully increase the use of Tasters by parents.

4.1.5.3 Longer Pilot Period

One large-scale improvement suggested by the pilot areas was that the pilots would benefit from a longer timescale. Some of the second and third wave pilot areas were particularly keen to have a longer timescale and were conscious that they needed to get the key partners involved in the pilots as soon as possible in order to move forward.

4.2 The Future of ESCP and CTP provision

Unsurprisingly, the pilot areas expressed a desire for funding to continue and explained that future work was dependent on continued funding.²⁶ They were generally waiting for direction from DfES and did not have any concrete plans for the future. Some staff on short term contracts were already reviewing their next employment move.

There were certain elements of the pilots which the areas hoped would continue, because they deemed them to be successful. They wanted outreach work with parents to continue, in particular the one-to-one support offered to parents and the basic skills' training. Childcare Chats were also thought to be useful for parents and the pilot areas hoped that the information and support provided to parents in these Chats could continue to be offered to them in some format.

It was also hoped that the partnership working between the different organisations could continue as well as the joint information events. The pilot areas were conscious that the pilots were funding a number of staff members and that once the pilots then stopped the funding for this resource would also stop. They were, however, very keen to keep these staff and the expertise they had developed.

There were concrete elements of the pilots which would certainly continue after the funding had stopped, for example the Extended Schools Childcare places and the CIS vacancy databases which had been created as a result of the pilots.

If the pilot areas did not receive any additional funding, they imagined that some of the work carried out under the pilots could continue in Children's Centres. They said they would look at the services they were providing through Early Years and see what they could offer through Children's Centres. Jobcentres already had plans for NDLP advisers to work from Children's Centres and it was thought that childcare information and the LA parental support role could also be delivered through Children's Centres in conjunction with the Jobcentre.

Extended Schools work would continue because the pilot areas had Sure Start targets to create a certain number of Extended Schools Childcare places and had received a grant to carry out

²⁶ It should be noted that the stakeholders understood that funding from DfES would cease at the end of the pilots; they were expressing their wish that it could continue..

this work. Creating Extended Schools' places was also part of the wider Extended Schools agenda.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Positive progress

The second and third wave pilot areas were in the very early stages of development when they were interviewed. They were in the process of recruiting staff and engaging childcare providers and schools. The first wave pilot areas had progressed much further. They were delivering Chats, Accompanied Visits and Tasters under the CTP and they were carrying out outreach work and creating childcare provision under the ESCP.

5.2 Flexibility and divergence from the pilot design

The ESCP in the first wave pilot areas had developed in a different way than they had originally been planned to operate, although DfES and DWP had intended that the pilots would be flexibly managed by the LAs, strategically and operationally in ways which would best reflect local needs and circumstances. In this case, flexibility was applied not only to how the pilot services were implemented, but also to what the pilot services consisted of. In practice, this extent of flexibility means that the design does not clearly determine the pilot operations.

The original aim of the ESCP had been to develop childcare within or linked to schools in response to the fact that available and accessible childcare was seen to be a barrier to lone parents going back to work. Against this aim, two elements to the ESCP developed in some pilot areas: outreach work with lone parents and the development of childcare places.

The LAs' rationale behind carrying out outreach work was twofold. Firstly, where vacancies existed it was deemed necessary to create demand for childcare places before they were developed. By carrying out consultations with lone parents, stakeholders believed that lone parents faced a number of barriers which were preventing them from returning to work. It was believed to be important to help parents to address these barriers and prepare them for employment, thus stimulating demand for extra childcare provision. Secondly, stakeholders did not want to turn parents away because they were not job-ready; they wanted to offer them one-to-one support to help them become job-ready.

In some pilot areas, the CTP was also operating in a different way. The original aim of the Childcare Taster was that it would be offered to lone parents and partners to allow them to test out different types of childcare provider. In some areas, it was not used in this way. Some pilot areas were using the Taster to allow a parent to test out one specific childcare provider with a view to them using that provider in the future. There was also one pilot area using the Taster to cover the cost of a parent's first week of childcare with a specific childcare provider once they had started work. Thus, the hypothesis of testing out different childcare providers was not always being tested out by some pilot areas.

5.3 Learning from the first wave pilots

The first wave pilot areas believed the pilots had advanced their operational knowledge. The pilots had highlighted to stakeholders that they perceived childcare was not the most immediate barrier facing the core group of lone parents whom they were working with. Stakeholders felt a range of other barriers existed for these parents, preventing them from starting work, in particular stakeholders believed that these parents were not job-ready and they also had financial concerns about starting work. Stakeholders explained that they felt

these barriers needed to be addressed before parents' childcare barriers, otherwise parents would not start work.

In order to address parents' barriers, stakeholders reported that parents needed in-depth, one-to-one support. In particular it was said to be important to increase parents' personal confidence. It was also believed to be necessary to change lone parents' mindset regarding work because some of these parents had never worked. Basic skills training was also thought to be an important element in enabling this group of parents to start work.

Stakeholders did not believe that lone parents did not have childcare barriers, however. They thought that the availability of childcare was a barrier for lone parents in some areas, and the childcare which was available did not always match lone parents' needs. For example, some lone parents could not find convenient childcare which matched their working hours. Stakeholders explained that some lone parents were reluctant to accept certain kinds of childcare provider even when there were vacancies in these providers, for example they stated a preference for nurseries rather than childminders.

According to stakeholders, affordability was a major barrier preventing parents from starting work. Whilst lone parents were eligible for tax credits, the amount they were awarded was not always sufficient for some parents. For example, the cost of full-time nursery care was particularly expensive. LAs reported that there were also some lone parents who were not aware that they were eligible to receive this financial help. Stakeholders explained that the up-front costs of childcare were a particular problem because parents were required to cover the cost of childcare while they were waiting for their tax credits to be processed, which could take two weeks. Some nurseries also asked parents to pay a month's deposit, which lone parents were often unable to afford.

5.4 Take-up of Childcare Tasters

The number of parents using Childcare Tasters was not as high as those receiving Childcare Chats and Accompanied Visits. There were a number of suggestions from pilot areas about why this was the case. The main reason stakeholders suggested for this disparity was that they believed the Chat was sufficient to inform parents about the different types of childcare and allay any of their fears about childcare and they did not in fact need to try out different types of childcare providers. Another reported reason was that they found lone parents did not generally think about childcare until they had found a job and if they were not job-ready, then they were not yet at the stage where they believed they needed to have a Childcare Taster.

The principle behind the Childcare Taster was also an unattractive concept to some stakeholders. They found the idea of a child being moved from one provider to another trying out different providers went against their philosophies of having settling-in periods. Therefore it was thought to be more appropriate for a parent to have a Taster in one specific provider with the view to that parent using that provider in the long-term.

5.5 Stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts of the first wave pilots

The additional services in the first wave pilot areas were having an influence, although the stakeholders stressed these were qualitative and centred on the advancement of their knowledge. They also believed that the main effects of the pilots would be felt in the long-term. According to stakeholders, the pilots were believed to be responsible for the following successes:

- The ESCP outreach work was directing parents to information and providing them with one-to-one support to address their personal barriers to starting work. This was moving parents nearer to employment, although it was believed that employment was a long-term goal and large numbers of lone parents would not start work during the life of the pilot;

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- The ESCP outreach work had developed and enhanced the pilot areas' understanding of lone parents' work barriers and how best to address these barriers. In particular, in LAs' views, it had highlighted that childcare was not always the most immediate barrier for lone parents;
 - The ESCP outreach work was helping Local Authorities to understand the local childcare needs of parents and helping them tailor their childcare provision to the needs of the local community;
 - There were examples of extra childcare provision being created in before- and after-school care clubs under the ESCP;
 - The Childcare Chats were helping to address parents' knowledge and understanding of childcare;
 - Where Visits and Tasters had taken place, they had helped to allay parents' concerns about childcare;
 - Greater partnership working between the Local Authority, Children's Information Service and Jobcentre Plus was said to be a success of the pilot.

The timescale allowed for the pilots, the degree to which the Jobcentre was able to engage with the pilots in light of the fact that they had not been given any funding, and the referral process from Jobcentre to the pilots were all factors affecting the extent of change introduced by the pilots.

5.6 Improvements

The pilot areas felt they required reassurance that the progress they had made was in line with DfES' expectations. They were conscious that they had not made numerical successes and the progress that the pilots were having was qualitative. They wanted DfES to appreciate that the reality of lone parents' situations meant that they perceived they had to re-design some elements of the pilots, for example introduce their "outreach" work.

There were some suggestions regarding re-marketing the Tasters in order to try and improve the take-up of Tasters. One suggestion was to make parents aware of the need to test out childcare before they start work, something which parents often did not consider before starting work. The other suggestion was to use the Tasters as the first week of childcare for parents who had started work, because this would help them with the cost of childcare. Stakeholders suggested that the option to test out different types of childcare was not actually needed by many parents.

Other improvements were for Jobcentre Plus to receive funding for the pilot so they could spend more resources on the pilots and for the pilots to have a longer timescale.

5.7 The future

The first wave pilot areas did not have concrete plans for the future of the pilots and were waiting for direction from DfES. There was a desire for funding to continue. The approaching end of the pilots was foreseen to potentially undo some of the progress so far, and staff would need to move to new positions.

Stakeholders were keen for certain elements of the pilot to continue. The outreach work with parents, the Childcare Chats and the partnership working were all seen to be successes of the pilots. Stakeholders were also keen not to lose the expertise of the staff they had recruited.

The pilot areas were considering how they could deliver elements of the pilots through the Children's Centre, particularly as NDLP advisers were planning to work from the Children's Centres. It was thought that the Extended Schools Childcare work would continue because the pilot areas had Sure Start targets to create a certain amount of childcare places.

5.8 Next steps

At the time of writing this report the pilots and the evaluation research were continuing.

As shown in the table at 1.6, two more stages of research with the stakeholders were scheduled to take place in November/December 2005 and February/March 2006. These stages will explore the progress of the pilots, and the lessons which have been learned from them.

The final phase of the research will be with parents. Local Authorities will provide details of parents who have taken part in the pilots, and who have given permission for their details to be passed on to BMRB. The Department for Work and Pensions will provide a sample of parents who were eligible for the pilots, and who, according to Jobcentre Plus records had been offered the opportunity to participate in them, but had declined.

Initially a telephone 'sift' will be conducted with both participating and non-participating parents to confirm demographic and participation/non-participation details. Data from the 'sift' will be used as a sampling frame from which quotas will be set for various characteristics, for example, type of participation in the pilots and age of children.

Interviews will be carried out with participant parents to gain their views of the pilots, and the impacts the pilots have had for parents in terms of their views of childcare and extending their work hours or returning to work. Non-participating parents will also be asked about their views on childcare and attitudes to work, as well as what might have made the pilots more attractive for them.

The final report, which will incorporate the stages of research discussed herein, as well as the final two phases of the stakeholder and parent research will be published early in 2007.

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Appendix 1 Detail of method

Design

In the interviews with the second and third wave pilot areas in February-March 2005, 2 or 3 telephone interviews were carried out in each area with a member of staff at the Jobcentre, the Local Authority and the Children's Information Service. Interviews lasted approximately an hour. Respondents were recruited from a list of contact names provided by DfES.

In the interviews with the first wave pilot areas in June-July 2005, between 12 and 14 interviews were carried out in each area with stakeholders from the Jobcentre, the LA, the Children's Information Service, schools and childcare providers.

The individuals interviewed depended on the arrangements in place in the LA. However, there was considerable consistency across the areas regarding the types of job roles held by interviewees. The range of job titles of those stakeholders interviewed is provided below.

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus	Childcare Partnership Manager
	District manager
	Team Leader
	NDLP and NDP Advisor
	NDP and NDLP manager
Employment Zone	Lone parent Adviser

Local Authority

Local Authority	Strategic officer
	Lead officer
	Deputy Project Manager
	Manager of extended schools pilot
	Out of School childcare manager
	Extended childcare project co-ordinator
	Childcare adviser
	Ofsted link officer and lead on childcare taster
	Development Officer
	Development Officer

Children's Information Service

CIS	CIS Manager
	Marketing and CIS Manager
	Children's information link manager

Schools and Childcare providers

Secondary School	Head Teacher
	Deputy Head Teacher
	Co-ordinator of extended schools service
Primary School	Head Teacher
	Learning Mentor
	Project Development Officer
Childcare provider	Area Manager
After School Club	No title
Day Nursery	No title
Childminder	No title

Topic coverage

This topic guide is an example of the guide used to interview staff from the Local Authority in the first wave pilot areas in June-July 2005. Three different guides were designed for this stage of the research: one for the Local Authority; one for the Jobcentre and one for Schools and Childcare Providers. This topic guide is a development of the guide used to interview the staff from the second and third wave pilot areas in February-March 2005.

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CHILDCARE PILOTS – STAKEHOLDERS, 1ST WAVE, FULL SWING LOCAL AUTHORITY AND CIS TOPIC GUIDE

Aims:

- To assess the progress made by the pilots
- To explore the impacts of the pilots
- To re-visit the issues raised by stakeholders when interviewed in June/July 2004
- To assess pilot managers' / practitioners', schools' and childcare providers' perceptions of take-up of the pilots by parents, and whether the pilots are changing parents' attitudes to work and getting back to work
- To identify lessons which can be learned from these pilots
- To discuss the pilot areas' plans for the future

Notes for moderators:

- Please distinguish feedback about the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot (ESCT) and Childcare Taster Pilots (CTP) – even where the topic guide does not specifically mention both.
- Please be aware of the issues which were raised by stakeholders in the first stage of interviews and probe on these issues where it is relevant.
- Please use this guide flexibly. Sections highlighted as being 'important' for certain stakeholders are only guidelines. They may also be relevant for other stakeholders depending on how the pilots are structured in the area.

1. INTRODUCTION

- About BMRB
- Re-iterate that the interview is voluntary and they can choose to stop the interview at anytime
- Aims of the research – commissioned by DfES
- Stage of the research – revisiting stakeholders who were interviewed in
June/July 2004
- Length of interview – 1 hour
- Introduce tape/digital recorder
- Confidentiality of research – BMRB will report in a way which ensures the areas cannot be identified and the respondent's name will not be mentioned in the report

2. BACKGROUND

- If the same respondent is being interviewed, briefly explore whether their role has changed/ developed
- If interviewing a new respondent, explore their own background and work (briefly)
 - How they would describe their role in their organisation
 - What does their work involve on a general level
- Briefly, summarise their own involvement in each pilot

- How would they describe the aims of each pilot
 - Aims of DWP/DfES at a national level
 - Specific aims of Local Authority area
 - What do they hope it will achieve in their area
 - How do the aims national and local aims compare

3. STRUCTURE OF PILOTS

N.B. Important section for Strategic Officer in Local Authority

Briefly, explain the structure of the pilots in the area when respondent/respondent's predecessor was interviewed in June/July 2004

- **Positions created e.g. Development Officers, childcare advisers**
- **Number of staff recruited**
- **Targets e.g. to create a certain number of places through Extended Schools Childcare Pilot**
- **Progress on pilots – uptake of childcare tasters and chats**

- Explore whether the description is an accurate reflection of the pilots in June/July 2004 (if respondent is able to answer this question)
- How does this description compare with the structure of the pilots today
- Since the last interview, what has happened in relation to each pilot so far in terms of:
 - Staff
 - Recruitment and retention of staff
 - Creating new roles
 - Utilising existing staff
 - Involving other organisations:
 - Local Authority
 - Jobcentre Plus (who is involved)
 - Children's Information Service
 - Schools (what kind and how many are involved)
 - Childcare providers (what kind and how many are involved)
 - Other e.g. Inland Revenue, Healthcare centres or services, Ofsted
 - Linking with other initiatives or pilots
 - Strategy
 - Explore whether they are targeting particular parents
 - Parents with children of a certain age
 - Lone parents
 - Partnered parents
 - Whether they are creating extra places or managing existing ones through the ESCP
 - Whether they are focussing their ESCP in primary schools
 - Explore what work are they doing with secondary schools

- Explore whether there have been any changes to:
 - Strategy
 - Setting targets

-
- Use of funding

4. WORKING WITH PARENTS

- How are they engaging parents to take part in the CT Pilot
 - Through marketing and events
 - Through work focussed interviews at JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
 - Via Childcare Chats
 - Through schools
- How are they engaging parents to take part in the ESCP Pilot
- How are they specifically engaging lone parents and partnered parents (**probe for both separately**)
 - Do they target particular lone parents with information about the pilots e.g. only those who are job ready or those with younger children, only those on Income Support, or on NDLP
 - Do they target particular partnered parents with information about the pilots e.g. partners of claimants of specific benefits
- Which are most common entry routes for parents E.g. most through JC+, outreach events etc.
- How are they describing the pilots to parents
 - What explanations/strategies have worked particularly well in getting parents to engage with the pilots
 - Explore whether particular explanations/strategies work well with different types of parents
 - Lone parents
 - Partnered parents
 - Parents of children with special educational needs
 - Carers
- Explore examples of good practice when working with parents
- Have there been any difficulties engaging with parents
 - What difficulties and how have these been overcome
- Explore whether they find certain elements of the pilots easier to market than others
 - Is this affecting the marketing they do of the pilots to parents

N.B. Important for CIS officers

- Explore how they are marketing the pilots to parents (if not already covered)
- Explore what kind of literature they have produced about the pilots
 - Where is this literature distributed
 - How does it describe the pilots
 - What descriptions work well in getting parents to engage with pilots
- Explore what kind of marketing events they have been doing
 - Official launch
 - Open days in schools
 - How effective have these events been

N.B. Important for Childcare advisers/brokers who deliver Chats and Tasters and Officer in charge of CTP

- Explore how they are using Childcare Chats
 - Who is eligible for a Chat
 - What is the purpose of the Chat
 - How do they define a Childcare Chat
 - How long does it last
 - Where is it delivered e.g. Jobcentre, Children's Centre
 - Do they offer Childcare Chats over the telephone

-
- What information do they give parents
 - Do they refer parents to health services
 - What questions do parents have
 - How do they introduce Tasters to parents
 - How do they access whether a Taster is needed
 - Explore how they are using Accompanied visits (if these are carried out)
 - Who is eligible for an Accompanied visit
 - What is the purpose of the Accompanied visits
 - Explore how they are using Childcare Tasters
 - Who is eligible for a Taster
 - What is the purpose of the Taster
 - To try out as many different types of Childcare as possible
 - To try out a particular Childcare Provider with a view to using that Childcare Provider
 - How do they allocate a parent to a Taster session
 - Is this using information from the CIS
 - Has this information been up-to-date
 - How many Tasters are parents able to have
 - What reactions do parents and children have during a Taster
 - If the purpose of the Taster is to try out different types of childcare, how do children react to trying out a number of different types of Childcare in a short space of time
 - Explore what impact the pilots are having on their marketing activity

5. WORKING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- How would they describe their relationship with other stakeholders
 - Other colleagues at Local Authority
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - Children's Information Service
 - Schools
 - Childcare providers
 - Ofsted
- What attitude do they think each stakeholder has to the two pilots
- Explore their views of the nature of the local infrastructure
 - What impact does this have on local expansion in childcare/re-organisation of childcare
- Explore their views of the level of support and engagement from key local stakeholders

N.B. Development Officers generally deal with schools and Childcare advisers/brokers generally work with childcare providers

- Explore what kind of schools and childcare providers they are engaging with
- How are they engaging schools and childcare providers
- How are they describing the pilots to schools and childcare providers
 - What explanations/strategies have worked particularly well in getting them to engage with the pilots
 - Explore whether particular explanations/strategies work well with different types of school or provider
 - Primary Schools
 - Secondary Schools
 - Different types of Childcare Provider

- Explore examples of good practice when working with schools and childcare providers
- Have there been any difficulties engaging with schools and childcare providers
 - What difficulties and how have these been overcome
 - Have there been difficulties with particular schools or childcare providers
- Explore the impact on the pilots of registering childcare with Ofsted
 - Has this had an impact on the timetable
- Explore whether schools and childcare providers have recruited staff as a result of the pilot
 - What impact has this had on the pilots
 - Explore whether there have been any retention issues and what effect this has had on the pilots
- For CTP, how easy is it to arrange visits and tasters with providers

N.B. Important for Development Officers and Officer in charge of Extended Schools

- How are Development Officers working with schools
 - Are they based within schools in the area
 - What help and guidance have they been offering schools
- Explore how they are delivering the aims of the ESCP
 - Are they trying to create childcare or manage existing childcare
 - If creating new places, how are they going about creating places
 - Are they focussing on creating particular types of childcare e.g. breakfast clubs, after school clubs
 - Are they focussing on creating childcare for children of a particular age
 - If managing existing childcare, what does this involve
 - Are they focussing on particular types of childcare e.g. breakfast clubs, after school clubs
 - Are they focussing on childcare for children of a particular age
 - Are they mapping needs and gaps in the provision of childcare
 - Are they looking at how existing vacancies can be managed more effectively
 - Are they planning for the number of childcare places that will be needed and when and where they will be required
- Explore whether they have found particular types of childcare easier to organise

N.B. Relevant for CIS Officer and other personnel who record information

- Explore how information about the schools and childcare providers is stored
 - Is information stored in more than one place e.g. at the CIS, with the LA
- Explore how they go about keeping the information up-to-date
- Explore how information about schools and providers is shared between the CIS and LA
 - How effective is this system

6. PREVIOUS ISSUES

Briefly, explain that the research in June/July 2004 raised the following issues:

- **It was felt that the original timescale for the pilot development was not realistic, because of the length of time needed to recruit and train staff and to establish relationships with schools and other stakeholders**
- **There was a desire for more discussion with DfES/DWP and more support from them**
 - **In particular, there was a desire for clear guidelines regarding the goals of the pilots and definitions of what would be classified as successes of the pilots**
- **Difficulties of sharing data between organisations due to data-protection issues**
- **The impact of the pilots on staff workloads was also often raised**
- Explore their views of the following issues at this stage in the pilot:
 - Timescale of the pilots

- The desire for more guidance from DfES/DWP/National Tier JC+
 - What are their views of the guidance/ongoing help
 - Explore whether they would like any other guidance or ongoing help from DWP/DfES/National Tier JC+
- Data-sharing issues
- Workloads
 - Explore whether they have the capacity to carry out the aims of the pilot

Briefly, explain that the respondent/respondent's predecessor raised some issues when they were interviewed in June/July 2004. These issues were:

- **Issue specific to area (prior to interview, researcher to list pilot specific issues)**

7. PROGRESS OF PILOTS

- Explore how the pilots have progressed

For Childcare Taster Pilot

- How many people have taken up:
 - Childcare Chats
 - Accompanied visits (if recording this information)
 - Childcare Tasters
 - How many lone parents
 - How many partnered parents
- What are the typical ages of children participating in the pilot

For Extended School Childcare Pilot

- Whether they have created extra childcare places
 - How many
 - In what kind of childcare providers or schools
- Whether they have managed existing childcare places
 - In what kind of childcare providers or schools
- How many people have taken up childcare places created/managed through the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot
 - Who has taken up places
 - Explore whether the take-up of ESC places has been by parents other than the target groups
- Explore their views of the monitoring process using the form provided by DfES
 - Are they able to provide the information which is asked
 - Explore any difficulties they have with providing the information
- What is the process to refer parents
 - Probe Chats and Tasters
 - How is a referral recorded
 - How do they keep track of the referral's progress
 - What liaison is there with the LA to identify take-up and outcomes
 - Explore how well these processes are working
 - Have they experienced any difficulties with the referral process and how have these been overcome
 - Is there a referral form for exchange of information between JC+ and LA
 - Is there a reciprocal arrangement between JC+ and LA for exchange of information
 - How effective is this system
 - Have they encountered any problems and how have they been solved
- Are they able to track parents through the process from engaging with part of the pilot to finally entering into work

-
- Explore respondents' views of the take-up of:
 - Chats
 - Accompanied Visits
 - Tasters
 - Childcare Places
 - How do the figures compare with their targets/expectations
 - How does the take-up compare between different groups of parents
 - Lone Parents
 - Partnered Parents
 - Explore the reasons for the level of take-up
 - Factors contributing to take-up
 - Factors hindering take-up
 - For non-take-up of Tasters:**
 - Whether it is a question of eligibility
 - Whether a Chat and Accompanied visit are adequate and the Taster is not needed
 - Whether parents are not turning up to Tasters
 - Whether there are issues regarding the provision of Tasters
 - Whether LA is choosing to focus on Chats and Accompanied visits rather than Tasters

8. VIEWS OF THE PILOTS

- Explore their own views of the pilots
- Explore whether they have been collecting feedback from:
 - Parents
 - Schools
 - Childcare Providers
- Is it informal feedback or in the form of an questionnaire/evaluation
- Explore what feedback schools have given regarding the ESCP
- Explore what feedback parents have given about the CTP
 - What were their views of Chats, Accompanied visits and Tasters
 - Do parents react differently to pilots, depending on the age of their children
- Do the LA think that local childcare (both existing places, and any new places created through the ESCP) is affordable for lone parents and other parents
 - Have they had any response so far from parents on this issue
 - How much is the cost of the childcare

9. IMPACTS

- What effect are the pilots having in their area
- What effect are they having on the employment of parents
- Explore what happened to parents after their Chat, Taster or taking up the childcare place
 - Whether the pilots changed parents' attitudes to work and getting back to work
 - Whether any parents have gone back to work as a result of the pilots
 - How many lone parents
 - How many partnered parents
 - Whether parents have taken up training opportunities
- If parents have started work, explore what elements of the pilot have contributed to this
- If parents have not started work, explore the reasons why they have not
 - Explore their views of whether accessible jobs are available for lone parents and partners in the local area
- Explore other impacts of the pilots
 - Relationships between organisations

-
- Workloads
 - What factors have contributed to the success of the pilots
 - What factors have hindered the success of the pilots
 - How have they overcome these factors

10. BARRIERS TO CHILDCARE

N.B. Please differentiate between lone parents and partners

- Explore what parents understand by the term ‘**childcare**’
 - Does it mean a certain type of childcare
 - Does it refer to children of a particular age
- Explore what parents think of formal and informal childcare
- Explore parents’ attitudes of childcare for older children
- Explore what parents think of looking after their children at home
 - Explore the attitude of the partner to their partner (claimant) looking after the children (if able to answer this question)
- Explore their views of the local childcare
 - What range of childcare is available
 - Explore the responsiveness of childcare to local needs (e.g. covering shift work)
- What is their view of how important access to childcare is as a barrier to lone parents and partners with children entering employment
 - How effective do they think these pilots will be in addressing this barrier
- What is their view of how important cost of childcare is as a barrier to lone parents and partners with children entering employment
 - What are parents views of affordability
- Explore whether different barriers exist for different types of parents
 - Lone parents
 - Partnered parents
 - Parents with children under 5
 - Parents with children aged 6-10
 - Parents with children aged 11+
- What other barriers are likely to remain for parents
 - How could these be tackled
- Explore whether the pilots are working to address any other barriers e.g. confidence building
 - Which stakeholders are responsible for addressing these barriers

11. LESSONS FOR NEW PILOTS

- What are the main strengths of the pilots
- What are the main weaknesses of the pilots
- What are the key issues that new pilots need to consider
- What lessons could new pilots take from their experience so far
- Is there anything that new pilots could do differently

-
- Is there anything that the DfES/DWP could do differently to increase the success of the pilots

12. THE FUTURE

- Explore their plans for the future of the pilots
 - Explore their views of the sustainability of the pilot
- Explore whether their plans are dependent on receiving more funding
- What will they do if they do not receive any more funding
- Will they adopt any aspects of the pilots in their future work

13. OTHER COMMENTS

THANKS AND CLOSE

Appendix 2 Detail of LA and Jobcentre pilot initiatives

Table A1 Timing of pilot initiatives

	CTP	ESCP	QWFI	WSP²⁷	IWC
1 April 2004-31 March 2006	Bradford, Haringey Lewisham	Bradford, Haringey Lewisham		Bradford SE London	Bradford SE London N London
October 2004-31 March 2006	Greenwich Leicester Leicestershire Sandwell	Greenwich Leicester Leicestershire Sandwell	Bradford, Haringey Lewisham Greenwich Leicester Leicestershire Sandwell		
October 2004-October 2006				Cardiff & Vale & Dudley & Sandwell & Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Lancashire W Leicestershire Leeds Staffordshire W London	Cardiff & Vale & Dudley & Sandwell Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Lancashire W Leicestershire Leeds Staffordshire C London W London
January 2006-31 March 2006	Birmingham Leeds Liverpool Rochdale				
April 2005-October 2006					Rest of London, excluding NE London (City and E London; S London; Brent, Harrow and Hillingdon; Lambeth, Southwark and

²⁷ WSP and IWC will be payable from date of implementation.

					Wandsworth)
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Table A2 Eligible groups for pilot initiatives

	CTP	ESCP	QWFI	WSP	IWC
LA/Jobcentre Plus	LA areas	LA areas	LA areas	Jobcentre Plus areas	Jobcentre Plus areas
Client group	Lone Parents and Partners on eligible New Deals (for Tasters)	All local families. Lone Parents are targeted but not singled out	Lone Parents aged 18-60 years, with youngest child aged 12 years+	Lone Parents eligible for NDLP	Lone Parents eligible for NDLP
New Deal	On NDLP or NDP (for Tasters) and eligibility for NDLP or NDP (for Chats)			On NDLP	On NDLP ²⁸
Benefit			On IS for 52+ consecutive weeks	On IS or JSA or combination as Lone Parent or Partner for 52+ consecutive weeks	On IS or JSA or combination as Lone Parent or Partner for 52+ consecutive weeks
Age of child		Children aged 5-14 years	Youngest child aged 12-15 years ²⁹		
Hours of work				Prepared to work 16+ hours per week	In work of 16+ hours per week

Tables A1 and A2 describe the pilots as they were planned in 2004. Originally there were 2 year pilots of IWC, WSP, QWFI & ESC/CT in 8 Jobcentre Plus districts from April to October 2004. Since then, changes occurred so that 5 pilot areas became NDLP+ (April

²⁸ This condition only applied until April 2005 (it was removed across all pilots once the additional London pilots have been introduced).

²⁹ QWFI was introduced nationally in October 2005 for Lone Parents with youngest child aged 14+.

2005), IWC was extended (April & October 2005) and its duration was extended. Hence, since 2005 there were 4 policy packages across the areas:

- NDLP+ (Leicestershire; Bradford; SE London; N London; Dudley and Sandwell)
- IWC & WSP (W London; Cardiff; Edinburgh; Lancashire West)
- IWC only (Staffordshire; Leeds; most of London; Surrey & Sussex; Essex; Kent; Berks, Bucks & Ox; Beds & Herts; Hants & IoW)
- ESC and QWFI (Grampian & Tayside; Forth Valley; SE Wales).

Appendix 3 Background³⁰

Children's Information Service

The Children's Information Service is part of the Government's National Childcare Strategy. Children's Information Services (CIS) have been developed throughout the country through Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships. One of the Partnership aims is to ensure that good quality, affordable, accessible childcare is available to those requiring it. Children's Information Services play a key role in this by helping to bridge the gap between parents, providers and up to date childcare information.

The CIS provides a single point of contact where information can be accessed easily, quickly and at no charge to the user. Using a computerised database, the CIS is able to provide free information to individuals seeking up to date details of places for children with local childminders, nurseries, playgroups, nursery schools and out of school childcare. It also holds information on other children's services including play facilities, leisure activities, health services, youth projects and national and local support groups. The CIS aims to help enquirers choose services by offering guidance on what to look for when selecting childcare, in addition, being able to offer further help or guidance about wider childcare issues.

The CIS aims to provide good quality, impartial information and guidance on childcare, early education and other children's services within an LA. The CIS holds information on registered provision available e.g. day nurseries, out of school clubs, pre-school playgroups and childminders, as well as unregistered provision such as parent and toddler groups, along with a variety of general information such as Working Tax Credit and funding for three and four year olds. As well as providing support and guidance to parents and carers, the CIS is on hand to offer advice to people wishing to work in the childcare sector, childcare providers, employers and other professionals. The CIS provides wide ranging information and advice on local childcare and early years education facilities and a wide range of additional material and advice on all of the following:- nurseries, pre-schools, crèches, childminders, parent and toddler groups, after school care and play schemes, how to get help with childcare costs, how to choose childcare, childcare training and job vacancies, registering as a new childminder, registering and setting up a new childcare facility, OFSTED registration and inspection, support for businesses setting up family friendly policies, funding for those undertaking childcare training courses.

Sure Start

The Sure Start, Extended Schools and Families Group is an integral part of the Government's newly formed Children, Young People and Families Directorate in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Sure Start Group works with Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Jobcentre Plus, local communities and voluntary and private sector organisations. It aims to ensure delivery of free, part-time, early education for all three and four year olds, a wide range of affordable, quality childcare and after school activities in every area (including after school activities in every area (reflecting National Childcare Strategy

³⁰ The details of the programmes described in this section were correct at the time of writing.

commitments made in 1998),, and integrated early learning, health and family support programmes in disadvantaged areas where they are most needed. It works with parents to build aspirations for employment and for their children's development.

The policies and the work of the Sure Start Group apply in England only. Responsibility for early education and childcare in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rests with the devolved administrations.

To help increase childcare quality, Sure Start works with Ofsted to inspect and approve early education and childcare, and also recruit and train people to work with children. To help make childcare more affordable, help is given to working parents with their childcare costs through the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. Assistance is provided to parents find available childcare through the local CIS, and a national information service for parents. In addition, there is the goal to link employment advice at Children's Centres to information on childcare.

The Government published a Ten Year Childcare Strategy in December 2004 setting out its plans to build on its major expansion of early years and childcare provision since 1997, and create a sustainable framework for high quality services for children and families.

Major commitments in the Strategy include the delivery of universal affordable childcare for 3 to 14 year olds, and a Sure Start Children's Centre for every community. A Childcare Bill was published in November 2005 to give statutory force to key elements of the Strategy.

Employment Zones

In April 2000, Employment Zones were introduced in areas of Great Britain with consistently high levels of long term unemployment, to help long term unemployed jobseekers find sustainable employment. Now operating in 13 areas, Employment Zones provide a mandatory programme for eligible Jobseekers and has been extended to offer help on a voluntary basis to lone parents.

In the six larger Employment Zones, two or three providers operate the programme on a Multiple Provider basis, with eligible jobseekers randomly allocated to a specific provider by Jobcentre Plus. The remaining seven Employment Zone areas are operated on a Single Provider basis with only one provider operating in each area. Contracts have been awarded to run Employment Zones until 2009.

For more information about Employment Zone processes and eligibility, see:

<http://www.employmentzones.gov.uk>.

Discovery Weeks

Work Works –published in April 2003, contained a range of recommendations aimed at employers and government departments. One proposal was to introduce Discovery Weeks for lone parents within the five metropolitan areas of London, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow. The first Discovery Weeks were held in Islington, November 2003 and were supported by Jobcentre Plus and a number of local employers. Discovery Weeks linked to Mentoring were introduced within the metropolitan areas listed from June 2004.

Discovery Weeks are held over five days, away from the Jobcentre Plus office, with sessions lasting five hours a day to fit around school hours. Free childcare is available for parents with younger children. The emphasis is on realising potential and having fun, as well as learning about opportunities for the future. The range of activities are designed to improve confidence, social skills and help lone parents to explore alternative lifestyles, interests and career paths they might want to follow.

As part of the New Deal Plus for Lone Parents Pilot, two-day Discovery Week events, rather than five-day events, are being tested in Dudley & Sandwell, Leicestershire and Bradford.

Description of WTC and CTC

The Working Families Tax Credit was superseded by two tax credits, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, from April 2003.

Child Tax Credit is for people who are responsible for at least one child or qualifying young person. Child Tax Credit is paid direct to the person who is mainly responsible for caring for the child or children in couples, and lone parents receive the payment.

Working Tax Credit is for people who are employed or self-employed (either on their own or in a partnership), who usually work 16 hours or more a week, are paid for that work, and expect to work for at least 4 weeks and who are aged 16 or over and responsible for at least one child, or aged 16 or over and disabled or aged 25 or over and usually work at least 30 hours a week. Working Tax Credit is paid to the person who is working 16 hours or more a week. Couples, if both are working 16 hours or more a week, must choose which one will receive it. You cannot receive Working Tax Credit if you are not working.

As part of Working Tax Credit you may qualify for help towards the costs of childcare. If you receive the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, this will always be paid direct to the person who is mainly responsible for caring for the child or children, alongside payments of Child Tax Credit.

The amount of tax credits received depend on the claimants' annual income. There is a single claim form covering both Child and Working Tax Credits, and entitlement is calculated jointly. Families without children can only receive WTC. Out-of-work families with children can only receive CTC. The maximum award (before tapering) of in-work families with children includes both WTC and CTC. The tapering is deemed to reduce WTC first.

Awards run to the end of the tax year. An annual award is calculated by summing the various elements to which the family is entitled and reducing the resulting maximum award if the family's annual income (see Table A3.4) exceeds the first income threshold. The reduction is 37 per cent of the excess over the threshold. Awards of CTC are not, however, reduced below the level of the family element unless the annual income exceeds the second threshold of £50,000. Once the income exceeds the second threshold the award is further reduced by £1 for every £15 of income over the threshold.

New Deal for Lone Parents

New Deal for Lone Parents was launched in eight areas as a prototype in July and August 1997, introduced nationally for new and repeat claimants in April 1998, and extended to all existing lone parents on Income Support in October 1998. It was, and continues to be, a voluntary programme, and all lone parents on IS whose youngest child was under 16 are eligible to join. There is no need to wait for an invitation: by contacting a lone parent Personal Adviser, an eligible person can join at any time. An interview with a Personal Adviser is a key delivery mechanism for NDLP. The personal adviser develops a package of advice and support. An individually tailored package of advice and support designed to facilitate a move into employment, can include:

- providing job search support to customers who are job ready
- helping lone parents to identify their skills and develop confidence
- identifying and providing access to education and training opportunities
- improving awareness of benefits
- providing practical support and information on finding childcare
- providing 'better off' calculations and assisting with benefit claims
- liaising with employers and other agencies offering in-work support.

Although all lone parents on IS with a youngest child aged less than 16 are eligible, NDLP was initially targeted on those whose youngest child was at least 5 years 3 months. After May 2000, targeting was extended to include lone parents on IS whose youngest child was at least 3 years old. From November 2001, NDLP eligibility was extended to lone parents not working and lone parents working less than 16 hours a week³¹.

Lone Parent Work Focused Interviews

Lone Parent Work Focused Interviews (LPWFI) for lone parents claiming Income Support (IS) were introduced nationally on 30th April 2001. The system provides a work-focused interview with a Personal Adviser that was compulsory for eligible lone parents. It is also designed to encourage participation in New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), which remained voluntary.

The system of mandatory LPWFI was extended to groups of lone parents over time. Interviews were rolled out gradually depending on the age of the youngest child. For new/repeat claimants, these were:

- April 2001: those whose youngest child is 5 years and three months to 15 years
- April 2002: those whose youngest child is 3 years or above
- April 2003: all new and repeat claimants.

For existing claimants, the groups were:

- From April 2001: those with youngest child aged 13-15 years and nine months
- From April 2002: those with youngest child aged 9-12
- From April 2003: those with youngest child aged 5-8
- From April 2004: those with youngest child aged 0-5 years and three months, so that all IS lone parent claimants were eligible.

³¹ More detailed information on NDLP can be found on the New Deal website www.newdeal.gov.uk and in Evans et al. (2002) and Evans et al. (2003).

Review Meetings

In addition to the extension to coverage, review meetings were started as a follow-up for those eligible for LPWFI. After the first LPWFI, if the customer remained claiming, then a review meeting would take place. The introduction of review meetings was staggered.

- Annual reviews started in May 2002 for those eligible new/repeat claimants who had entered the LPWFI system between April 2001- April 2002. Annual reviews also started at this time for the existing claimants who became eligible on 30th April 2001.
- Reviews at six months started in October 2002 for all eligible new/repeat claimants who had entered the LPWFI system after April 2002, and then subsequent annual reviews followed these.

Hence, new/repeat claimants of IS who remain on benefit are required to attend a review meeting after 6 months, and then again 6 months after that and annually thereafter.

Lone parent Work Focused Interviews are essentially an appointed meeting with a Personal Adviser. The Personal Adviser can use the meeting to provide awareness about the opportunities and the support available to lone parents.

The stated aim of the mandatory LPWFI is to facilitate a movement into paid employment by encouraging the lone parent to seek work and supporting the job search process, and/or encourage them to take up training opportunities aimed at improving their chances of moving into paid employment. In particular, LPWFI has the additional objective of encouraging participation in NDLP. Although participation in the LPWFI is compulsory, it is not compulsory for lone parents to seek work or join NDLP. Eventually via LPWFI, all lone parents making a claim for, or receiving, Income Support will be given information about NDLP and an opportunity to participate.

Table A3.1 CTC and WTC elements and thresholds

Annual rate (£), except where specified	2003-04	2004-05
Child Tax Credit		
Family element	545	545
Family element, baby addition ¹	545	545
Child element ²	1,445	1,625
Disabled child additional element ³	2,155	2,215
Severely disabled child additional element ⁴	865	890
Working Tax Credit		
Basic element	1,525	1,570
Couples and lone parent element	1,500	1,545
30 hour element ⁵	620	640
Disabled worker element	2,040	2,100
Severely disabled adult element	865	890
50+ return to work payment ⁶		
16 but less than 30 hours per week	1,045	1,075
at least 30 hours per week	1,565	1,610
Childcare element		
Maximum eligible costs allowed (£ per week)		
Eligible costs incurred for 1 child	135	135
Eligible costs incurred for 2+ children	200	200
<i>Percentage of eligible costs covered</i>	<i>70%</i>	<i>70%</i>
Common features		
First income threshold ⁷	5,060	5,060
<i>First withdrawal rate</i>	<i>37%</i>	<i>37%</i>
Second income threshold ⁸	50,000	50,000
<i>Second withdrawal rate</i>	<i>1 in 15</i>	<i>1 in 15</i>
First income threshold for those entitled to Child Tax Credit only ⁹	13,230	13,480
Income increase disregard	2,500	2,500
Minimum award payable	26	26

1 Payable to families for any period during which they have one or more children aged under 1.

2 Payable for each child up to 31 August after their 16th birthday, and for each young person for any period in which they are aged under 19 and in full-time non-advanced education, or under 18 and in their first 20 weeks of registration with the Careers service or Connexions.

3 Payable in addition to the child element for each disabled child.

4 Payable in addition to the disabled child element for each severely disabled child.

5 Payable for any period during which normal hours worked (for a couple, summed over the two partners) is at least 30 per week.

6 Payable for each qualifying adult for the first 12 months following a return to work after 5 April 2003.

7 Income is net of pension contributions, and excludes Child Benefit, Housing benefit, Council tax benefit, maintenance and the first £300 of family income other than from work or benefits. The award is reduced by the excess of income over the first threshold, multiplied by the first withdrawal rate.

8 For those entitled to the Child Tax Credit, the award is reduced only down to the family element, plus the baby addition where relevant, less the excess of income over the second threshold multiplied by the second withdrawal rate.

9 Those also receiving Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit are passported to maximum CTC with no tapering.

Source: Child and Working Tax Credits Quarterly Statistics April 2004, Appendix B: CTC and WTC elements and thresholds
<http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/cwtc-quarterly-stats.htm>

Children's Centres

There are significant benefits in offering children from 0-5 and their families, particularly the poorest families, health, family support, childcare and early education in an integrated way. Children are healthier and achieve better outcomes in terms of social and educational development and in the long term communities should see a reduction in poverty and crime rates as the effects of integrated and tailored services have an impact.

Children's Centres are places where children from 0-4 years old and their families can receive seamless, holistic, integrated services and information, and where they can access help from multi-disciplinary teams of professionals. Local Authorities have strategic responsibility for the delivery of Children's Centres and are planning the location and development of centres to meet targets set by the Government, in consultation with parents and other key partners.

In phase 1 of the Children's Centre programme (2004-06), Children's Centres are being developed to serve families living in the 20% most disadvantaged wards (based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2000). Many build on existing Sure Start Local Programmes, Early Excellence Centres, Neighbourhood Nurseries, maintained nursery schools, primary schools and other local 'early years' provision including voluntary and private settings.

In phase 2 (2006-08) Local Authorities are planning to ensure that all poor children under five and their families who live in the 30% most disadvantaged areas (as defined by ODPM Super Output Areas) will have access to Children's Centre services. From 2006 Children's Centres will also be developed to serve some families outside the most disadvantaged areas, bringing the total number of centres to 2,500 by March 2008. Planning guidance for phase 2 was issued to Local Authorities in July 2005 and practice guidance (to be published on 30 November) will provide further detail on what should be happening with children and families in the centres. The longer term objective is to have 3,500 Children's Centres, one in every community by 2010.

To be a Children's Centres in the 30% most disadvantaged areas, the centre must offer the following services:

- good quality early learning combined with full day care provision for children (minimum 10 hours a day, 5 days a week, 48 weeks a year);
- good quality teacher input to lead the development of learning within the centre (minimum 0.5);
- child and family health services, including ante-natal services;
- parental outreach;
- family support services;
- a base for a childminder network;
- support for children and parents with special needs; and
- effective links with Jobcentre Plus to support parents/carers who wish to consider training or employment.

In the remaining 70% (less disadvantaged) areas, Local Authorities will have flexibility in which services they provide to meet local need, although all Children's Centres will have to provide a minimum range of services:

- the offer of appropriate support and outreach services to parents/carers and children who have been identified as in need of them
- information and advice to parents/carers on a range of subjects, including: local childcare, looking after babies and young children, local early years provision (childcare and early learning) education services for 3 & 4 year olds
- support to childminders

-
- drop-in sessions and other activities for children and carers at the centre
 - links to Jobcentre Plus services

In all areas, parents/carers will have access to antenatal care and support and on the birth of their child will receive visits from a midwife and health visitor. Although not all Children's Centres in more affluent areas will provide full day care and early learning (because there is sufficient provision already to satisfy demand) they must provide drop in facilities, for example a crèche or a parent toddler group.

See <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/>

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