Childcare and early years survey of parents 2018, follow-up survey

Research report

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Tom Huskinson, Anna Tench
Ipsos MORI

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Accompanying tables

The tables from which the charts in this report are drawn are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website, [Statistics: childcare and early years](#).

Executive Summary

This Research Report describes the main findings of a follow-up survey, conducted by telephone, with respondents to the 2018 Childcare and early years survey of parents. The survey gathered evidence on a range of issues relevant to children aged 0 to 5, including children's use of apps, barriers to taking part in home learning activities, employers' role in childcare provision, and parents' appetite for switching provider. In total 876 interviews were completed, with a response rate of 30 per cent. The data have been weighted to be representative of families with a child aged 0 to 5.

Key findings

- **Most parents (78%) with a child aged 0 to 2 who was not receiving formal childcare** said they would be likely to put their child in formal childcare, if 15 free hours of childcare were available to them.

- **Most children (81%) aged 0 to 5 had used an app on a smartphone or tablet in the last six months,** and 75 per cent had used an app either associated with, or explicitly focused upon, learning and development in this period.

- **Around one in six (17%) parents had ever used a parenting app**, and four per cent had used a parenting app in the last four weeks. The most commonly used parenting apps were Mumsnet, a parenting group on Facebook, and BabyCentre.

- **Over half (52%) of parents said they played pretend games together or took turns in fun activities with their child every day**, with a further 37 per cent saying they did this several times a week.

- **One-quarter (25%) of parents said they often struggled to fit learning and play activities with their child into their daily routine**, and one in seven (14%) felt that it was the responsibility of schools and childcare providers, rather than parents, to help children aged 5 and under to learn to speak and hold conversations.

- **Most parents said they chatted with their child 'a great deal'** when they were out at the shops (79%), while their child was getting dressed in the morning (68%), and at shower or bath time (66%). Very few parents said they did not chat with their child very much, or at all, in these three scenarios (1%, 5%, and 5% respectively).

- **Most parents (80%) with a child aged 3 or 4 (but not yet at reception) and receiving formal childcare had never considered switching their child's provider.** Among those considering switching, or in the process of switching, the most common reasons were because a sibling was at another provider, or because another provider would help get the child into the parents' preferred school.

Introduction

This research report provides the main findings of a follow-up survey conducted with respondents to the 2018 Childcare and early years survey of parents[1].

The aim of the follow-up survey was to gather evidence to inform a number of childcare and early years policy areas relevant to children aged 0 to 5. Specifically, the survey collected evidence on:

- demand for free hours of childcare among children aged 0 to 2

- the childcare-related experiences of parents with children with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities

- the use of apps on a smartphone or tablet by children and parents

- the early years home learning environment, including the frequency with which home learning activities are conducted, and barriers to taking part in home learning activities experienced by parents

- the role of employers in the childcare market

The follow-up survey was carried out by telephone between 5 June and 16 July 2019, with parents with a child aged between 0 and 5.

During the interview, parents were asked childcare-related questions about their child aged 0 to 5. For families with more than one child aged 0 to 5, questions were asked about one child selected at random.

A total of 876 interviews were completed, with a response rate of 30 per cent. The respondent was a parent or guardian of the sampled child with main or shared responsibility for making childcare decisions, and in most cases (87%) was the child's mother.

The survey was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and managed by Ipsos MORI.

Interpretation of the data

Unweighted bases are presented throughout. This is the actual number of parents that responded to a given question. Survey estimates (percentages, means, and medians)

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-2018

have been weighted to be representative of be representative of families with a child aged 0 to 5.

For results based on between 50 and 99 respondents (unweighted), the base size is shown in a footnote, and these results should be treated with caution. For results based on fewer than 50 respondents (unweighted), because the confidence intervals around these survey estimates are very wide, weighted survey estimates are not reported. Instead, the unweighted number of parents providing the relevant answers options is given, alongside the total number of parents answering the question. These results should be treated as indicative only[2].

Where reported survey results have differed by sub-group, the difference has been tested for significance using the complex samples module in SPSS 24.0, and found to be statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level or above. This means that the chance that the difference is due to sampling error, rather than reflecting a real difference between the sub-groups, is 1 in 20 or less. The complex samples module allows us to take into account sample stratification, clustering, and weighting to correct for non-response bias when conducting significance testing. This means that 'false positive' results to significance tests (in other words interpreting a difference as real when it is not) is far less likely than if the standard formulae were used.

In the tables which accompany this report, in some cases the sum of the bases in the columns do not add up to the total base size. This is because some categories might not be included in the table, either because the corresponding numbers are too small to be of interest, or the categories are otherwise not useful for the purposes of analysis.

Due to rounding, percentage figures may not add up to 100 per cent. This also applies to questions where more than one answer can be given ('multi-coded' questions).

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[2] In the tables that accompany this report, where base sizes fall below 50 figures are shown in squared brackets [], and a caveat is included under the table stating that the results should be interpreted with caution.

Main findings

Childcare and free entitlements

Policy background on Government funded childcare or early education in England[3]

All 3- and 4-year-olds in England can get Government funded childcare or early education. Some 2-year-olds are also eligible, for example if their parent or guardian gets certain benefits[4], or if the 2-year-old is looked after by a local council, has a statement of special education needs or an education, health and care plan, gets Disability Living Allowance, or has left care. The funded childcare or early education must be with an approved childcare provider, and stops when a child starts in reception class (or reaches compulsory school-age, if later).

15 hours of childcare or early education

For families who meet the eligibility criteria, 2-year-old children are entitled to 570 hours a year. It is usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example just under 12 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year.

All 3- and 4-year-olds in England can get 570 hours per year. It is usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example just under 12 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year.

30 hours of childcare or early education for children with working parents

3- and 4-year-olds in England with eligible working parents can get 1,140 hours per year. This is usually taken as 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents can choose to take fewer hours over more weeks, for example 23 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year. Parents can usually get 30 hours of childcare for their child(ren) if they (and their partner, if they have one) are in work, including self-employment, (or getting parental leave or sick leave), and are earning at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage equivalent to 16 hours a week. They must also each earn less than £100,000 per year. From September 2018, foster parents who work outside their fostering role have been eligible to receive the 30 hours of childcare offer for children aged 3 to 4 in their care so long as it is consistent with the child's care plan.

As described in the policy box above, while all 3- and 4-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of childcare per week, this offer is only available to some 2-year-olds (e.g. those whose parent or guardian receives certain benefits) and is not available to any child aged under 2.

The survey sought to gauge whether the extension of the 15 hours offer to children aged 0 to 2 would lead parents to put their child in formal childcare. Parents with a child aged 0 to 2 who was not receiving formal childcare were therefore asked how likely they would

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[3] https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs
[4] https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-benefits

be to put their child in formal childcare outside the home, if 15 hours of childcare was available to them.

The great majority of parents (78%) said they would be likely to put their child in formal childcare, including almost half (46%) who said they would be "very likely" to do so (Figure 1 and Table 1)[5].

Figure 1: Likelihood of placing children aged 0 to 2 in formal childcare, if 15 hours were available
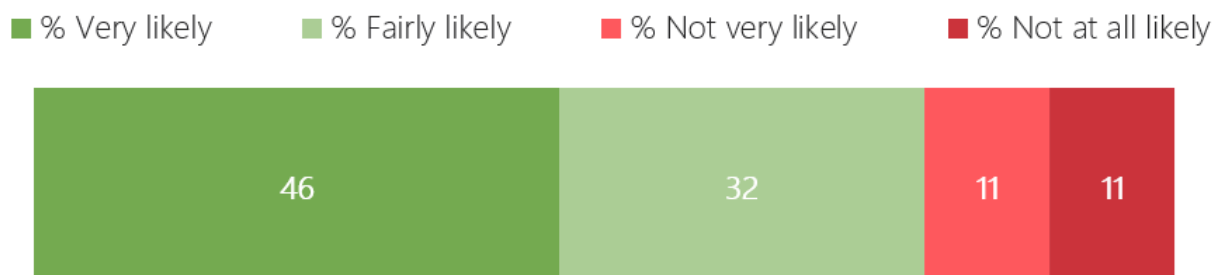
Base: All children aged 0 to 2 who are not receiving formal childcare, and where the parent is not on parental leave (94)

Table 1: Likelihood of placing children aged 0 to 2 in formal childcare, if 15 hours were available

Likelihood	%
Base: All children aged 0 to 2 who are not receiving formal childcare, and where the parent is not on parental leave	*94*
Very likely	46
Fairly likely	32
Not very likely	11
Not at all likely	11

Parents who said they would be likely to put their child in formal childcare were asked why they would like their child to receive formal childcare outside the home. The most commonly provided reasons related to the perceived benefits to the child of formal childcare. Three-quarters (75%) of parents felt that formal childcare outside the home would help their child to get on better with other children and adults, one-quarter (26%) felt that formal childcare would help their child develop and learn, and in a similar vein seven per cent felt that formal childcare would help prepare their child for school (Table 1.8)[6].

Fewer parents cited reasons relating to themselves, or their partner. One in nine (11%) said they would put their child in formal childcare so they could increase the hours they work, and seven percent to give themselves (and/or their partner) "a break".

Parents who said they would be unlikely to put their child in formal childcare, even if 15 hours were available to them, were asked why they would not put their child in formal

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[5] Base size = 94.
[6] Base size = 71.

childcare. Fewer than 50 parents were asked this question, so the unweighted number of parents providing each answer option is provided, instead of the weighted survey estimates. These results should be treated as indicative only (further information about the interpretation of the data can be found in the introduction). Of the 23 parents asked this question, 11 said they would prefer to look after their child at home, and 9 said their child was too young to be in formal childcare (Table 1.9).

Children with SEN or disabilities

Parents whose child was receiving support for a special educational need (SEN), or had a disability which disrupted the child's daily life to at least a small extent, were asked questions about their attitudes to local childcare[7].

Around one-third (35%) of this group of parents said it was easy to find a local provider that could cater for their child's SEN or disability, but a similar proportion (39%) said this was difficult (Table 2.2)[8].

Almost two in five (41%) of this group of parents felt that the hours available at childcare providers that could cater for their child's needs fitted in with their other daily commitments, compared to 27 per cent who did not.

And among the 32 survey respondents in this group of parents whose child was receiving formal childcare, most (n=24) felt that the staff at their child's formal childcare provider(s) were trained in how to deal with their child's needs, compared to 5 parents who felt they were not.

Children's use of apps

A series of questions were asked to understand children's use of apps on smartphones and tablet computers.

Overall use of apps

The majority of children aged 0 to 5 (81%) had looked at or used an app on a smartphone or tablet in the six months prior to the interview (Table 3.1). This proportion

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[7] These questions were asked of parents whose child had a special educational need for which the child received support in the form of either an Education, Health and Care plan, a statement of special educational needs, or SEN support, or who had a long-standing physical or mental impairment, illness, or disability which affected the child's daily life to at least a small extent. Four per cent of children fell into this category.
[8] Base size = 51.

ranged from 63 per cent among children aged 0 to 2, to 91 per cent among children aged 3 to 4, and 91 per cent also among children aged 5.

Parents were asked which types of apps, that were either associated with or explicitly focused upon learning and development, their child had used in the six months prior to the interview. Almost all children (94%) who had used an app in the past six months had used a learning and development app in this period, equivalent to three-quarters (75%) of *all* children aged 0 to 5 (Table 3.3).

Among all children aged 0 to 5, the proportion that had used a learning and development app in the six months prior to the interview ranged from 53 per cent among children aged 0 to 2, to 88 per cent among children aged 3 to 4, and 88 per cent also among children aged 5 (Table 3.3).

Children in lone-parent households were more likely than children in couple households to have used a learning and development app in the past six months (84% vs 73% respectively), and were also more likely to have used any type of app (87% vs 79%).

The most frequently used types of learning and development app were those which involved playing games or trying to solve puzzles (used by 62% of children aged 0 to 5), those involving counting or understanding numbers (61%), and those involving looking at letters, the alphabet, or reading words (60%) (Figure 2 and Table 2).

Apps involving drawing or creating pictures (55%), and apps involving writing or typing in letters or words the next most commonly used.

Figure 2: Types of apps supporting learning and development that children had used in the six months prior to interview

Apps involving...

Apps involving...	Percentage
...playing games or trying to solve puzzles	62
...counting or understanding numbers	61
...looking at letters, the alphabet, or reading words	60
...drawing or creating pictures	55
...writing or typing in letters or words	50
...speaking words out loud	47
...creating tunes, music or sounds	30
Used an app, but none of these	5
Had not used an app	19

Base: All children aged 0 to 5 (875)
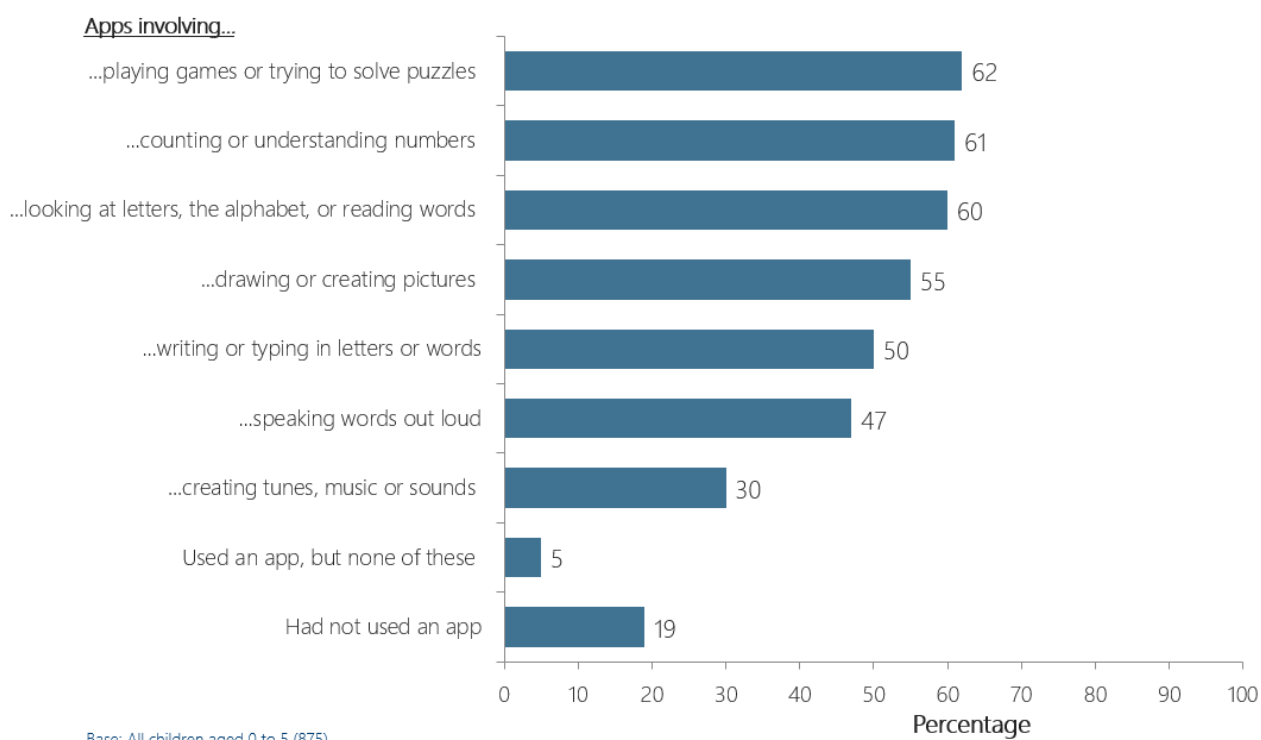
Table 2: Types of apps supporting learning and development that children had used in the six months prior to interview

Type of app	%
Base: All children aged 0 to 5	*875*
Apps involving playing games or trying to solve puzzles	62
Apps involving counting or understanding numbers	61
Apps involving looking at letters, the alphabet, or reading words	60
Apps involving drawing or creating pictures	55
Apps involving writing or typing in letters or words	50
Apps involving speaking words out loud	47
Apps involving creating tunes, music or sounds	30
Used an app, but none of these	5
Had not used an app	19

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Frequency and duration of use of learning and development apps

Most children (61%) aged 0 to 5 used a learning or development app at least once a week, including almost one in five (18%) who used one at least once a day (Figure 3 and Table 3). On a typical day of use, children tended to use learning or development apps for no more than one hour (86%) (Figure 4 and Table 4).

Figure 3: Frequency of children's use of learning and development apps

■ % Never ■ % Less than once a week ■ % Once a week ■ % Several times a week ■ % At least once a day

25	14	15	28	18
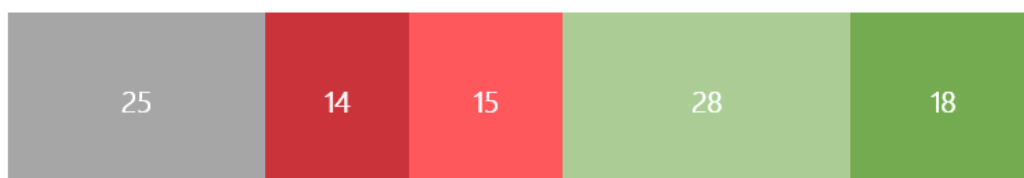
Base: All children aged 0 to 5 (870)

Table 3: Frequency of children's use of learning and development apps

Frequency	%
Base: All children aged 0 to 5	*870*
Never	25
Less than once a week	14
Once a week	15
Several times a week	28
At least once a day	28

Figure 4: Duration of use of learning and development apps, on a typical day of use

■ % Up to 30 minutes ■ % >30 minutes to 1 hour ■ % >1 to 2 hours ■ % >2 to 3 hours ■ % 3 hours or more

51	35	11	2	1

Base: All children who have used a learning or development app on a smartphone or tablet in the last six months (703)

Table 4: Duration of use of learning and development apps, on a typical day of use

Duration	%
Base: All children aged 0 to 5	*703*
Up to 30 minutes	51
More than 30 minutes, up to 1 hour	35
More than 1 hour, less than 2 hours	11
More than 2 hours, less than 3 hours	2
3 hours or more	1

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Among all children aged 0 to 5, the use of learning and development apps was more frequent (at least daily) among:

- older children (19% of children aged 5 and 24% of children aged 3 to 4, compared to 11% of children aged 0 to 2);

- children living in lone-parent households (31%, vs 16% of children living in couple households);

- children living in non-working families (38%, vs 14% of children living in partially-working families, and 15% of children living in working families)[9];

- children living in lower-income families (29% of children living in families earning under £20,000 per year, 20% of children living in families earning between £20,000 and £44,999 per year, and 8% of children living in families earning £45,000 or more per year);

- those living in the most deprived areas of England (29% of those living in the most deprived quintile of areas in England, vs 8% of those living in the least deprived quintile of areas); and

- those from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds (31%, vs 16% of those from White backgrounds)[10].

These differences were reflected in the amount of time children spent using learning and development apps. Among children who had used a learning and development app in the past six months, the following groups were more likely to use these apps for over an hour on a typical day of use:

- older children (15% of children aged 5 and 19% of children aged 3 to 4, compared to 4% of children aged 0 to 2);

- children living in non-working families (26%, vs 16% of children living in partially-working families, and 11% of children living in working families);

- children living in lower- and middle-income families (19% of children living in families earning under £20,000 per year, 19% also among children in families

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[9] Working families include couples both of whom are in work, and working lone parents; partially-working families are couples only one of whom is in work; and non-working families include couples neither of whom are in work, and non-working lone parents.
[10] Analyses by ethnicity are based on the ethnic group of the parent completing the survey.

earning between £20,000 and £44,999 per year, and 6% of children in families earning £45,000 or more per year);

- children living in the most deprived areas of England (25% of children living in the most deprived quintile of areas in England, vs 3% of children living in the least deprived quintile of areas);

- children from BME backgrounds (30%, vs 11% of those from White backgrounds).

Use of apps alone, or together with an adult

Most children used learning and development apps together with an adult (55%), while around three in ten (29%) typically used these apps alone (Figure 5 and Table 5). For the remaining 16 per cent, the child's use of apps varied too much for the parent to describe a typical pattern of usage.

Younger children were far more likely to use learning and development apps together with an adult: three-quarters (75%) of children aged 0 to 2 used learning and development apps together with an adult, compared to around half (52%) of children aged 3 to 4, and around two in five (41%) children aged 5.

Figure 5: Whether children use learning and development apps alone, or together with an adult
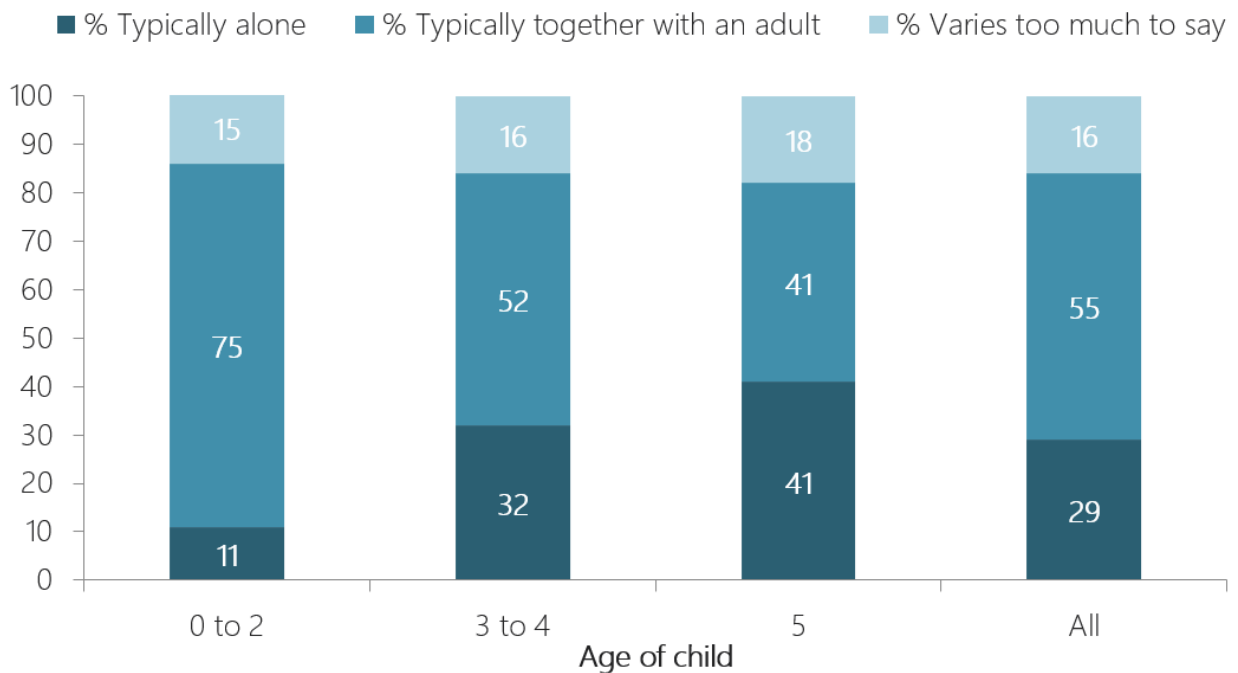
Base: All children who have used a learning or development app on a smartphone or tablet in the last six months (703); 0 to 2 (110); 3 to 4 (382); 5 (211).

Table 5: Whether children use learning and development apps alone, or together with an adult

	Age of child			
	0 to 2	3 to 4	5	All
Child's use of learning and development apps	%	%	%	%
Base: All children who have used a learning or development app on a smartphone or tablet in the last six months	*110*	*382*	*211*	*703*
Typically alone	11	32	41	29
Typically together with an adult	75	52	41	55
Varies too much to say	15	16	18	16

Parental payment on apps

Most parents (77%) whose child had used a learning or development app in the last six months had never made a payment for such an app, while one in five (19%) had paid to download a learning and development app, and 10 per cent had made an in-app purchase in a learning and development app (Table 3.6).

Parents with older children were more likely to have spent money on a learning and development app for their child (31% of parents with a child aged 5 who had used a learning and development app, 28% of parents with a child aged 3 to 4, and 9% of parents with a child aged 2).

Parents in higher income households were more likely to have made a payment on a learning and development app, whether via purchasing an app, or making an in-app purchase (29% among those earning £45,000 or more, falling to 14% among those earning below £20,000).

Parents' use of apps

Parents were asked whether they had ever used a 'parenting app', which was defined as "any app designed to help parents look after or nurture their children, or which allows parents to communicate with other parents for advice or support".

Most parents (83%) said they had never used a parenting app (Table 3.7). One in seven (14%) parents reported using a parenting app once a week or less frequently, with just three per cent of parents reporting using a parenting app several times a week or daily.

Parents in couple families were more likely to have used a parenting app than those in lone-parent families (19% vs 11% respectively), and parents living in higher-income families were more likely to have used one than those in lower-income families (21% among those earning £45,000 or more, falling to 11% among those earning below £20,000).

Among parents who had ever used a parenting app, over three-quarters (77%) had used a parenting app in the four weeks prior to the interview (Figure 6 and Table 6). Rebasing this proportion across *all* parents finds that four per cent of all parents with a child aged 0 to 5 used a parenting app in the last four weeks.

Among parents who had ever used a parenting app, the most frequently used parenting apps in the four weeks prior to the interview were Mumsnet (14%), BabyCentre (9%), a parenting group via the Facebook app (9%), Mush (6%), and Netmums (5%).

Figure 6: Parenting apps used by parents in the four weeks prior to interview[11]

Base: All parents that have ever used a parenting app (146)

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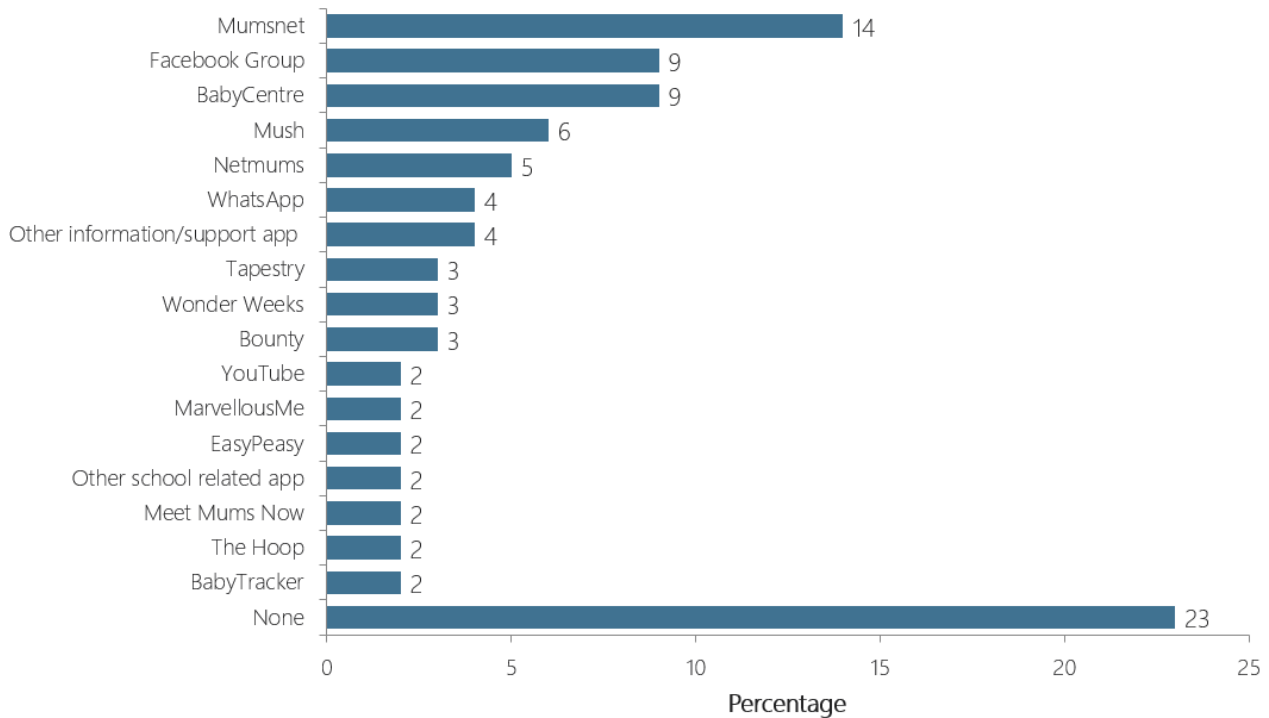
[11] Only apps mentioned by two per cent of parents or more are included in the figure

Table 6: Parenting apps used by parents in the four weeks prior to interview[11]

Apps	%
Base: All parents that have ever used a parenting app	*146*
Mumsnet	14
Facebook Group	9
BabyCentre	9
Mush	6
Netmums	5
WhatsApp	4
Other information/support app	4
Tapestry	3
Wonder Weeks	3
Bounty	3
YouTube	2
MarvellousMe	2
EasyPeasy	2
Other school related app	2
Meet Mums Now	2
The Hoop	2
BabyTracker	2
None	23

The home learning environment

In July 2019, the Department for Education launched the *Hungry Little Minds* campaign[12]. This campaign seeks to support and encourage parents to chat, read, and play with their children before school age.

The survey sought to gather evidence to inform this campaign by measuring the extent to which children engage in home learning and play activities, and the extent to which parents experience barriers to engaging in these activities.

Frequency of home learning and play activities

Parents were asked how often their child took part in a range of home learning and play activities with someone at home.

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[12] https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/

Looking at books or reading was the most frequently conducted of the activities asked about. Almost four in five (78%) parents reported that someone at home looks at books or reads with their child at least once a day (Figure 7 and Table 7).

The next most frequently conducted activities were learning songs, poems or nursery rhymes (with 64% of parents reporting that someone at home does these activities at least once a day with their child) and playing pretend games together or taking turns in fun activities with the interviewed parent specifically (with 52% of parents reporting that they do this at least once a day with their child).

Figure 7: Frequency with which children engage in home learning activities with someone at home
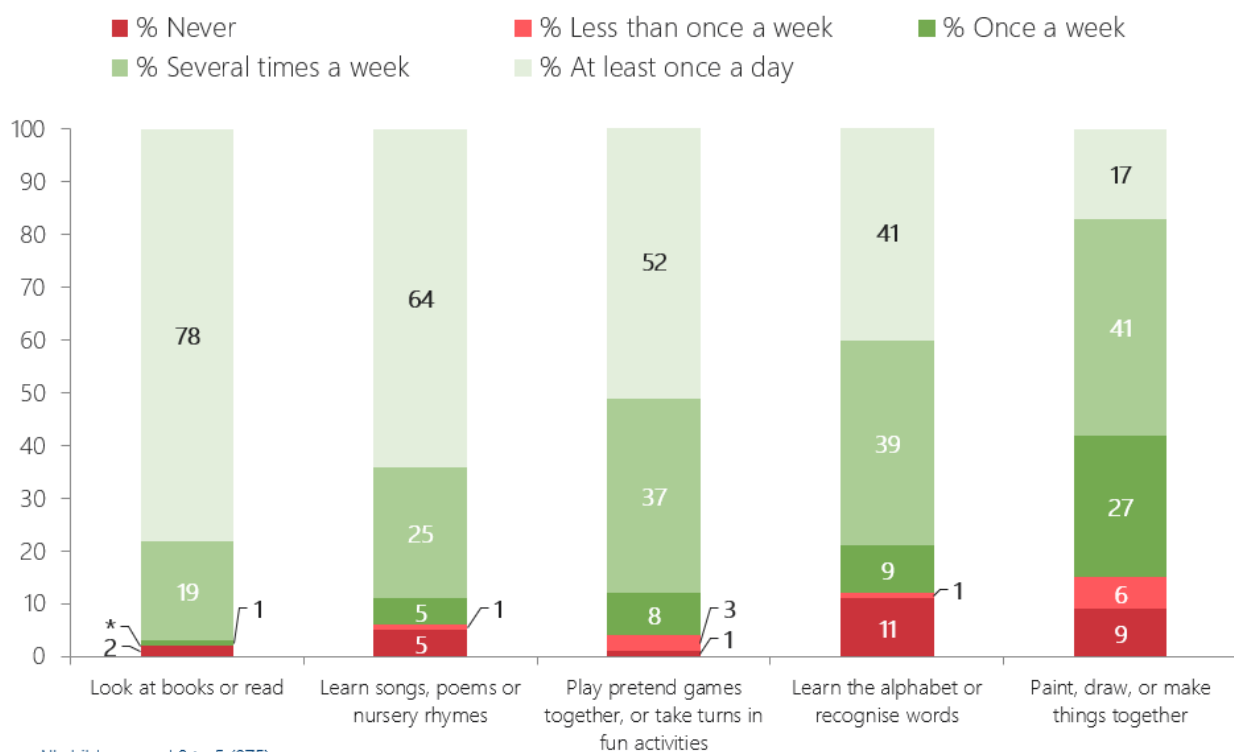
Base: All children aged 0 to 5 (875)

Table 7: Frequency with which children engage in home learning activities with someone at home

Home learning activities	Frequency					
	% Never	% Less than once a week	% Once a week	% Several times a week	% At least once a day	Un-weighted base
Base: All children aged 0 to 5						
Look at books or read	2	*	1	19	78	875
Learn songs, poems or nursery rhymes	5	1	5	25	64	875
Play pretend games together, or take turns in fun activities	1	3	8	37	52	875
Learn the alphabet or recognise words	11	1	9	39	41	875
Paint, draw, or make things together	9	6	27	41	17	875

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The frequency with which children took part in home learning activities showed a number of differences by demographic factors.

By age, older children looked at the alphabet or recognised words with someone at home more frequently than younger children (with 53% of children aged 5 doing this at least once a day, compared to 43% of children aged 3 to 4, and 31% of children aged 0 to 2) (Table 4.3). One-quarter (25%) of children aged 0 to 2 never looked at the alphabet or recognised words with someone at home. This proportion fell to three per cent among children aged 3 to 4, and to two per cent among children aged 5.

Younger children sang songs or nursery rhymes, or said poems with someone at home, more frequently than older children (with 79% of children aged 0 to 2 doing this at least once a day, compared to 63% of children aged 3 to 4, and 37% of children aged 5) (Table 4.4). Younger children also played pretend games or took turns in fun activities with the interviewed parent more frequently than older children (with 65% of children aged 2 doing this at least once a day, compared to 50% of children aged 3 to 4, and 34% of children aged 5) (Table 4.6).

By sex, girls sang songs or nursery rhymes, or said poems with someone at home, more frequently than boys (with 68% of girls doing this at least once a day, compared to 59% of boys) (HLPoem).

By income, children in higher-income families looked at books or read with someone at home more frequently than children in lower-income families (with 92% of children in families earning £45,000 or more per year doing this at least once a day, compared to 77% of children in families earning between £20,000 and £44,999 per year, and 64% of children in families earning under £20,000 per year) (Table 4.2).

This trend was reversed with respect to singing songs or nursery rhymes, or saying poems with someone at home, with children in lower-income families doing this more frequently than children in higher-income families (73% of children in families earning under £20,000 per year did this at least once a day, compared to 63% of children in families earning between £20,000 and £44,999 per year, and 57% of children in families earning £45,000 or more per year) (Table 4.4).

By ethnicity, children from White backgrounds, compared to children from BME backgrounds, more frequently: looked at books or read with someone at home (82% vs 63% respectively doing this at least once per day); sang songs or nursery rhymes, or said poems with someone at home (67% vs 49% respectively); and played pretend games or took turns in fun activities with the interviewed parent (55% vs 38% respectively) (Table 4.2, Table 4.4, and Table 4.6).

Extent to which parents chat with their child

The survey measured the extent to which parents chat with their child in three separate circumstances: when parents are out with their child at the shops; when parents are together with their child when their child is getting dressed in the morning; and when parents are together with their child at shower or bath time.

To ensure the questions were relevant to children across the entire 0 to 5 age range, parents were told to interpret "chat" as including everything from repeating or responding to their child's words, sounds or gestures, to talking with their child about their interests, feelings, or the things around them.

Most parents said they chatted with their child 'a great deal' when they were out at the shops (79%), while their child was getting dressed in the morning (68%), and at shower or bath time (66%) (Figure 8 and Table 8). Very few parents reported that they did not chat with their child very much, or at all, in these three circumstances (1%, 5%, and 5% respectively).

Figure 8: Extent to which parents chat with their child
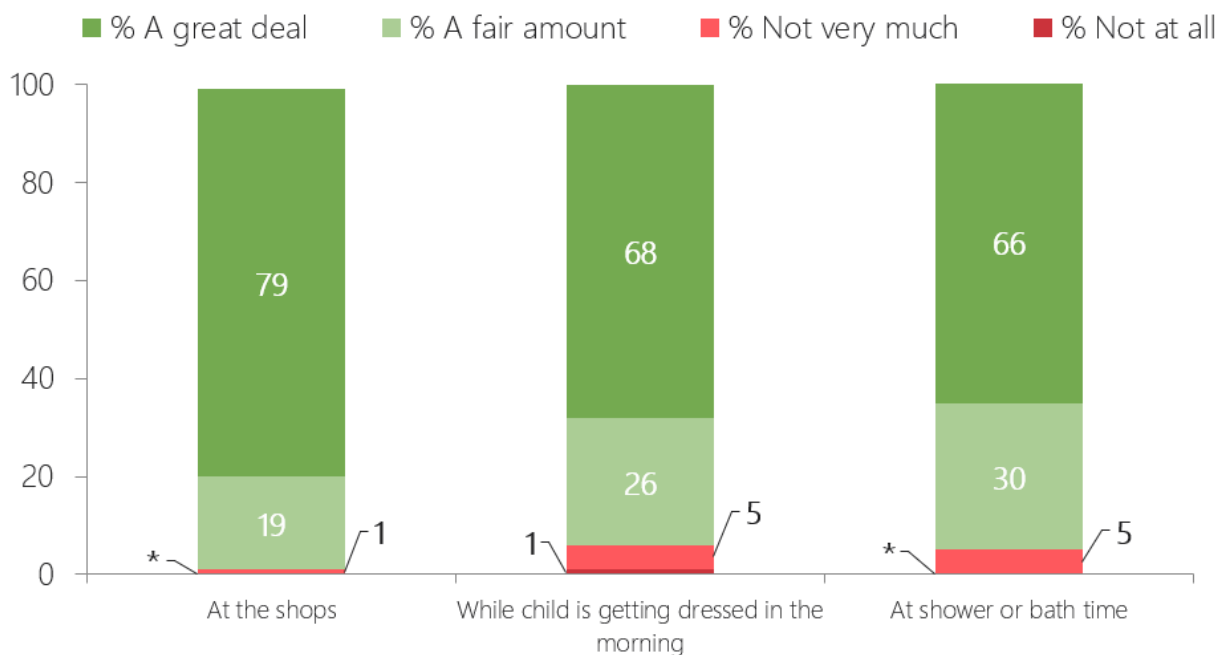
Base: All parents with a child aged 0 to 5: At the shops (869); While child is getting dressed in the morning (849); At shower or bath time (862)

Table 8: Extent to which parents chat with their child

Location	Extent				
	% A great deal	% A fair amount	% Not very much	% Not at all	Unweighted base
Base: All parents with a child aged 0 to 5					
At the shops	79	19	1	*	*869*
While the child is getting dressed in the morning	68	26	5	1	*849*

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At shower or bath time	66	30	5	*	*862*

There was relatively little variation by demographic characteristics in the extent to which parents chatted with their child in these three scenarios.

By age, parents were less likely to chat with older children when the child was getting dressed in the morning (12% of parents with a child aged 5 said they did not chat with their child very much, or at all, when their child was getting dressed in the morning, falling to 6% of parents with a child aged 3 to 4, and 1% of parents with a child aged 0 to 2) (Table 4.9). This pattern was reflected with respect to chatting at shower or bath time (8% of parents with a child aged 5 said they did not chat with their child very much, or at all, at shower or bath time, compared to 5% of parents with a child aged 3 to 4, and 2% of parents with a child aged 0 to 2) (Table 4.10).

By ethnicity, parents from BME backgrounds were less likely than those from White backgrounds to chat with their child when out at the shops (4% of parents from BME backgrounds said they did not chat with their child very much, or at all, when out at the shops with their child, compared to just 1% of parents from White backgrounds). This pattern was reflected with respect to chatting at shower or bath time (10% of parents from BME backgrounds said they did not chat with their child very much, or at all, at shower or bath time, compared to 4% of parents from White backgrounds) (Table 4.10).

Barriers to taking part in home learning activities

Research has identified a number of barriers that families can experience in supporting children's early language and literacy development[13]. These barriers include capability barriers (for instance, a lack of awareness of the sorts of activities parents can do with their children, or a perceived lack of skills required to help children develop), opportunity barriers (for instance, a lack of time), and motivational barriers (for instance, a fear of embarrassment when engaging in home learning activities, or a belief that the responsibility for children's development lies primarily with childcare providers and schools, rather than with the family).

The survey asked a series of questions to understand the extent to which parents experience these barriers.

The primary barrier facing parents in carrying out learning and play activities with their child was an opportunity barrier. One-quarter (25%) of parents said they often struggled to fit learning and play activities with their child into their daily routine (Figure 9 and Table 9). This barrier was more acute in larger households, experienced by just over one-third

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[13] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-home-learning-environment

(35%) of parents with three or more children, compared to 16 per cent of those with only one child (Table 4.13). Parents were also more likely to struggle to fit learning and play activities with older (vs younger) children into their daily routine. Among parents with a child aged 5, one-third (34%) said they struggled to fit learning and play activities with their child into their daily routine. This proportion fell to 21 per cent among parents with a child aged 0 to 2.

Figure 9: Barriers to taking part in home learning activities
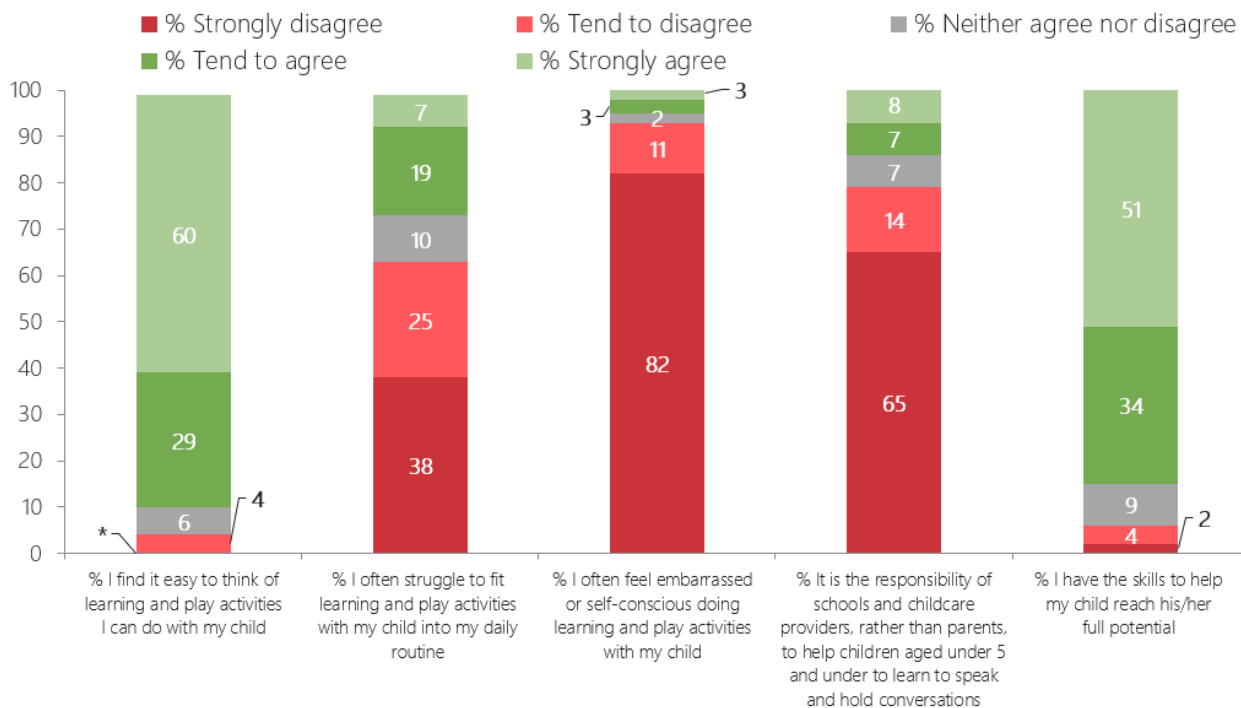
Base: All children aged 0 to 5 (870; 868; 864; 867; 867 for each statement respectively)

Table 9: Barriers to taking part in home learning activities

| Barriers | Agreement | | | | | Un-weighted base |
	% Strongly agree	% Tend to agree	% Neither agree nor disagree	% Tend to disagree	% Strongly disagree	
Base: All parents with a child aged 0 to 5						
I find it easy to think of learning and play activities I can do with my child	60	29	6	4	*	*870*
I often struggle to fit learning and play activities with my child into my daily routine	7	19	10	25	38	*868*
I often feel embarrassed or self-conscious doing learning and play activities with my child	3	3	2	11	82	*864*
It is the responsibility of schools and childcare providers, rather than parents, to help children aged 5 and	8	7	7	14	65	*867*

25

under to learn to speak and hold conversations						
I have the skills to help my child reach his/her full potential	51	34	9	4	2	*867*

With respect to motivational barriers, one in seven (14%) parents felt that it was the responsibility of schools and childcare providers, rather than parents, to help children aged 5 and under to learn to speak and hold conversations (Table 4.15). This belief was more common among parents in lower-income families (23% of parents in families earning under £20,000 per year, compared to 16% of parents in families earning between £20,000 and £44,999 per year, and just 6% of parents in families earning £45,000 or more per year). Relatedly, this belief was also more common among parents living in more deprived areas of the country (27% of parents living in the most deprived quintile of areas in England, falling to just 2% of parents living in the least deprived quintile). This belief was also more common among parents from a BME background (28%) than from a White background (11%).

In terms of further motivational barriers, very few parents (5%) said they often felt embarrassed or self-conscious doing learning and play activities with their child (HLBarEmbar). Parents from BME backgrounds were more likely than those from White backgrounds to say they often felt embarrassed or self-conscious (11% vs 4% respectively).

With respect to capability barriers, very few parents (6%) felt they lacked the skills required to help their child reach his or her full potential. Parents were more likely to feel that they lacked the requisite skills if their child was male (9%) rather than female (3%), a pattern which might be attributable to the mismatch between the sex of the child and the sex of the interviewed parent (87% of interviews were conducted with the child's mother).

In terms of further capability barriers, five per cent of parents said they found it difficult to think of learning and play activities to do with their child. Parents in lower-income families were more likely to find this difficult (8% among those earning under £20,000, 5% among those earning between £20,000 and £44,999 per year, and 2% among those earning £45,000 or more per year).

Further analyses found a relationship between parents' reported experiences of barriers to carrying out learning and play activities with their child, and the frequency with which their child ultimately engaged in home learning activities. For instance:

- among parents who said they often struggled to fit learning and play activities into their daily routine, their child was less likely to: look at books or read with someone at home on a daily basis (67%, vs 87% among children whose parent did not struggle to fit activities into their daily routine); look at the alphabet or recognise words with someone at home on a daily basis (30% vs 44%); sing songs or nursery rhymes, or say poems with someone at home on a daily basis (57% vs

66%); paint, draw, or make things together with someone at home on a daily basis (8% vs 20%); and play pretend games or take turns in fun activities with the interviewed parent on a daily basis (41% vs 56%).

- among parents who felt that it was the responsibility of schools and childcare providers, rather than parents, to help children aged 5 and under to learn to speak and hold conversations, their child was less likely to: look at books or read with someone at home on a daily basis (68%, vs 80% among children whose parent did not place this responsibility with schools and childcare providers); look at the alphabet or recognise words with someone at home on a daily basis (31% vs 42%); paint, draw, or make things together with someone at home on a daily basis (10% vs 18%); and play pretend games or take turns in fun activities with the interviewed parent on a daily basis (41% vs 54%).

Statutory adult to child ratios

Parents whose child was aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, were asked if they were aware that at formal childcare providers for pre-school children, there are laws that set out the maximum number of children there can be per member of staff.

Most parents (83%) said they were aware that such laws existed (Table 7.1). Awareness was higher among families with higher annual incomes (94% among those earning £45,000 or more per year, falling to 68% among those earning under £20,000 per year). Reflecting this pattern, awareness was higher among working families (91%), and lower among partially-working families (77%) and non-working families (62%)[14].

The role of employers in providing formal childcare

Parents with a child aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, and receiving formal childcare, were asked a series of questions to explore the role of employers in the childcare market.

Parents took an average of 10 minutes to travel to their child's main formal provider from home, and the great majority of parents (87%) found the trip easy, with only two per cent finding it difficult (Table 5.1 and Table 5.2).

Parents were asked whether their child's main formal provider was located closer to their home, or closer to their or their partner's place of work. Due to a routing error in the questionnaire, this question was only asked of parents in couple families in which both

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[14] Base size for non-working families = 73.

parents were working, rather than (as intended) parents in couple families in which one or both parents were working, and working lone parents. For most parents in dual-working couple families, their child's main formal provider was closer to their home than to their work (80%), while for 14 per cent, the provider was closer to their (or their partner's) place of work (Table 5.3). For very few parents (under half a percent) was their child's main formal provider located at their (or their partner's) place of work.

Parents in dual-working couple families whose main formal provider was closer to home than to work were asked if they would prefer their child to be looked after at their (or their partner's) place of work, if such provision were available, and was convenient, reliable, and affordable. Most parents (63%) were opposed to this proposition, with around one in seven (15%) in favour (Figure 10 and Table 10).

Figure 10: Parental preference for formal childcare at their place of work
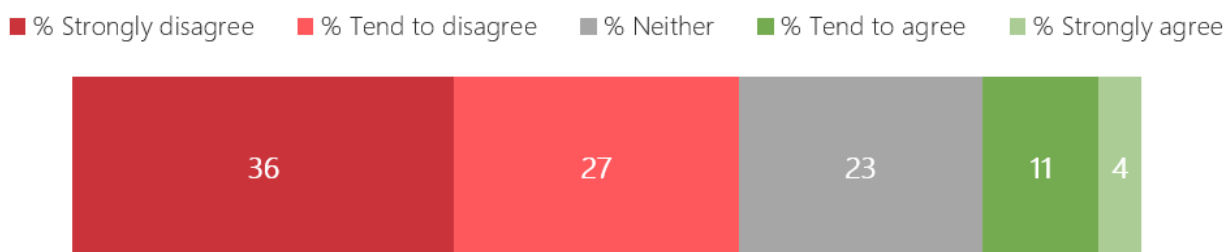
Base: All children aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, and receiving formal childcare (193)

Table 10: Parental preference for formal childcare at their place of work

Parental preference	%
Base: All children aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, and receiving formal childcare	*193*
Strongly agree	4
Tend to agree	11
Neither agree nor disagree	23
Tend to disagree	27
Strongly disagree	36

Switching childcare provider

Parents with a child aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, and receiving formal childcare, were asked questions to understand their attitudes towards switching their child's main formal provider, prior to the child's entry to reception.

Likelihood of considering switching provider

The great majority of parents (80%) had never considered switching their child's main formal provider (Table 6.2). One in seven parents (14%) were either in the process of

switching provider or were considering switching provider, and a further six per cent had previously considered switching provider.

Parents in higher-income families were more likely to have considered switching provider at some point (29% among those earning £45,000 or more, falling to seven per cent among those earning below £20,000)[15]. By family status, couple parents were more likely than lone-parents to have considered switching provider at some point (21% vs 10% respectively)[16].

Reasons for considering a switch of provider

Among parents considering switching provider, or in the process of switching provider, the most common reasons behind this related to the benefits conferred by a new provider, rather than to concerns with their current provider.

Around one in five (22%) parents said it was because another child (or children) in the family attended another provider, and a similar proportion (19%) said it was because another provider would be better for getting their child into the parent's preferred school (19%) (Table 6.3)[17]. A further eight per cent said they had found another provider with a better free hours offer or with otherwise preferable entitlements, and seven per cent said they had found another provider that they, or their child, preferred.

For some parents the decision to switch provider was due to concerns with their current provider. One in nine (11%) parents said it was because their current provider was too expensive, eight per cent because their current provider did not fit in with the family's working hours, and seven per cent because they were unhappy with the quality of childcare from their current provider.

Helpful information when considering a switch of provider

Parents who were considering moving their child to another provider, or who were in the process of moving their child to another provider, were asked what sort of information is helpful to know when considering such a move.

Parents were most likely to mention information about the quality of other childcare providers (53%), which other providers were available locally (38%), which other providers were cheaper or better value (30%), the experiences of other parents (20%),

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[15] Base size for families earning under £20,000 = 74.
[16] Base size for lone-parents = 65.
[17] Base size = 51.

information about when free hours can be used at other providers (18%), and child-related advice such as how to settle their child at another provider (18%) (Table 6.7)[18].

Reasons for not ultimately switching provider

Parents who had previously considered switching their child's provider, but who had not ultimately done so, were asked why they had not moved their child to a new provider.

Of the 20 parents asked this question, eight said it was because a change of provider would be too disruptive for their child, seven said it was because their child liked the current provider, four said it would have been too much trouble or hassle to change provider, and four said that the issues they experienced with their provider went away or improved (Table 6.4).

Reasons why parents had not considered a switch of provider

The four in five parents who said they had never considered switching their child's main formal provider were asked why they had never considered moving their child to a new provider.

The most common reason, cited by two in three (66%), was that they were happy with the quality of care at their child's current provider (Figure 11 and Table 11). Almost one-third (32%) said they had not considered switching provider because their child liked the current provider, and more than one-quarter (27%) said it was because the current provider was easy or convenient to get to.

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[18] Base size = 51.

Figure 11: Reasons why parents have never considered switching their child's main formal provider

Reason	Percentage
Happy with the quality of care given by current provider	66
Child likes current provider	32
Current provider is easy to get to/convenient location	27
No reason to move	14
Current provider is the best	13
Child has made friends with other children at current provider	12
Sibling(s) are/were at provider	9
Current provider offers childcare at flexible/convenient hours	6
Have made friends /connections with other parents at provider	4
Would be too much hassle/trouble to change provider	4
Provider is attached to a school child will attend	3
A change of provider would unsettle child	2
Other providers are full/no places available	2
Provider caters for child's SEN/disability	2
Child has only recently started at provider	2
No other providers in the area	1
Have just never thought about it	1

Percentage

Base: Children aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, receiving formal childcare, whose parents have never considered moving the child to another formal childcare provider before the child starts at reception (356)

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Table 11: Reasons why parents have never considered switching their child's main formal provider

Reasons	%
Base: Children aged 3, or aged 4 and not at reception, receiving formal childcare, whose parents have never considered moving the child to another formal childcare provider before the child starts at reception	*356*
Happy with the quality of care given by current provider	66
Child likes current provider	32
Current provider is easy to get to/convenient location	27
No reason to move	14
Current provider is the best	13
Child has made friends with other children at current provider	12
Sibling(s) are/were at provider	9
Current provider offers childcare at flexible/convenient hours	6
Have made friends /connections with other parents at provider	4
Would be too much hassle/trouble to change provider	4
Provider is attached to a school child will attend	3
A change of provider would unsettle child	2
Other providers are full/no places available	2
Provider caters for child's SEN/disability	2
Child has only recently started at provider	2
No other providers in the area	1
Have just never thought about it	1

Technical information

Sampling

The sample for the follow-up survey was drawn from the most recent Childcare and early years survey of parents, which took place in 2018 (main 2018 CEYSP)[19]. The main 2018 CEYSP interviewed a representative sample of parents of children aged 0 to 14 living in England. Interviews were carried out face-to-face, in the home, between January and August 2018. A total of 5,922 interviews were achieved.

Parents with a child (or children) who would be aged 0 to 5 on 16 July 2019 (the final day of the follow-up survey fieldwork period) were eligible to be invited to take part in the follow-up telephone survey.

A total of 3,474 parents had a child (or children) who would be aged 0 to 5 throughout the follow-up fieldwork period, and of these, 2,926 (84%) consented to take part in further research and provided a valid telephone number on which to be contacted. These parents were issued to field.

Fieldwork and response

Fieldwork took place between 5 June and 16 July 2019.

From the sample of 2,926 parents issued to field, a total of 876 telephone interviews were achieved for the follow-up survey. This represents a response rate of 30 per cent. The respondent was a parent or guardian of the sampled child with main or shared responsibility for making childcare decisions, and in most cases (87%) was the child's mother.

Interviews lasted an average of 13 minutes and 19 seconds.

Questionnaire

Parents were asked childcare-related questions about their child aged 0 to 5. For families with more than one child aged 0 to 5 (including any children aged 0 born since their main 2018 CEYSP interview), questions were asked about one child selected at random.

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[19] For more information on the aims, methodology, findings of the 2018 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents see: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-2018

The questionnaire covered the following topic areas:

- Household structure and demographics

- Current use of formal childcare

- Awareness of, and application for, free hours of childcare

- Current take-up of the 15 and 30 hours of childcare offers

- Childcare-related experiences of parents with children with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities

- The use of apps by children and parents

- The early years home learning environment, including the frequency with which home learning activities are conducted, barriers to taking part in home learning activities experienced by parents, and the extent to which parents chat with their children in a variety of circumstances

- The role of employers in the childcare market

Weighting

The data have been weighted to be representative of families with a child aged 0 to 5 via a non-response model. This model used region, the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the number of children in the household, the ages of children in the household, and annual household income as variables.

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

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at: jonathon.blackburn@education.gov.uk or www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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