

**Written submissions received for the London Assembly's review into access to
childcare in London Pt (II)**

Evidence Log – Childcare

Number	Organisation	Contact/Title
Sub-001	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	Chrissy Shurlock - <i>Strategic Childcare Development Manager</i>
Sub-002	London Borough of Havering	Sarah Metcalf - <i>Services Manager</i>
Sub-003	London Borough of Bromley	Sharon Bingham - <i>(FIAS) Principle Officer</i>
Sub-004	London Borough of Hounslow	Aaron Hersey - <i>Senior Officer, Family Information Service</i>
Sub-005	Cherry Blossoms Providers	Christine Money Penny - <i>Divisional Director South</i>
Sub-006	London Borough of Merton	Allison Jones - <i>Service Manager, Early Years, Children's Centres and Childcare</i>
Sub-007	Middlesex University	Dr Linda Bell - <i>Principal Lecturer in Research Methods</i>
Sub-008	London Borough of Lambeth	Marcella McHugh - <i>Head of EYFS & Childcare</i>
Sub-009	Daycare Trust	Jill Rutter - <i>Research Manager</i>
Sub-010	London Borough of Kingston	Christine Halstead - <i>Strategic Manager Childcare and Family Support</i>
Sub-011	Gingerbread	Caroline Davey - <i>Director of Policy, Advice and Communications</i>
Sub-012	FiND, Redbridge	Bruce Hausenloy - <i>FiND Manager</i>
Sub-013	Croydon	Laura McRoberts - <i>Families Information and Workforce Development Manager</i>
Sub-014	London Councils	Lai Chong-Siltola - <i>Principal Policy and Project Officer</i>
Sub-015	London Borough of Enfield	Sharon Brimson - <i>Community Access Childcare & Early Years</i>
Sub-016	4Children	Claire McCarthy - <i>Director of Public Affairs</i>
Sub-017	Savethechildren	Rachel Laurence - <i>Development Manager - 4in10</i>
Sub-018	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames	Jane Knight - <i>Business Support Manager</i>
Sub-019	Learning Trust	Alan Woods - <i>Chief Executive</i>
Sub-020	Policy and Communications National Day Nurseries Association	Claire Schofield - <i>Director of Membership</i>
Sub-021	London Borough of Greenwich	Julia Phillips - <i>Head of Integrated Support, Children and Families</i>
Sub-022	London Borough of Ealing	Therese Langford - <i>Promotions Officer</i>
Sub-023	London Borough of Lewisham	John Green - <i>Strategic Leader Foundation Stage</i>
Sub-024	National Childminding Association	Stuart Turner- <i>Director of Professional Standards</i>

October 2011

Submission to the London Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee
Review of access to childcare in the capital for children up to the age of five.

About 4Children

4Children is the national charity all about children and families. We have spearheaded a joined-up, integrated approach to children's services and work with a wide range of partners around the country to ensure children and families have access to the services and support they need in their communities. We run Sure Start Children's Centres as well as family and youth services across Britain. We run 23 full day nurseries, including in the London Boroughs of Newham, Bexley and Greenwich.

We develop, influence and shape national policy on all aspects of the lives of children, young people and families. As the Government's strategic partner for early years and childcare we have a crucial role in co-producing policy with the Department of Education and representing the sector's views and experiences. Our national campaigns, like Give Me Strength, change policy and practice and put the needs of children and families on the political and policy agenda.

During 2009 and 2010 4Children ran The Family Commission, a national inquiry into family life. During the 18 month inquiry we spoke to 10,000 families across Britain about their experiences, needs and aspirations.

Context

Childcare for children under the age of 5 serves two complimentary purposes – to support child development by providing high quality early education during the crucial foundation years; and to provide working parents with safe and nurturing care for their children whilst they are at work or in training.

The EPPE¹ research shows that high quality childcare is good for children and in particular that it is beneficial for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Early education and childcare in London is provided by a patchwork of nurseries, nursery schools, reception classes within infant schools, child minders and nannies operating in the public, private and voluntary sector. Because it is recognized that the childcare 'market', without intervention, fails to provide sufficient accessible and affordable childcare to meet the needs of children and

¹ 'Effective Provision of Pre-school Education', Institute of Education

families, since the late 1990s the Government sought to stimulate and manage the 'market' with both 'supply side' funding eg the free entitlement for 15 hours of childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds and some 'deprived' two year olds; and 'demand side' funding via help for the cost of childcare from tax credits and employer childcare vouchers. In addition, in the Childcare Act 2006, Local Authorities were given a statutory duty to manage their local childcare market to ensure it provided sufficient childcare to meet the needs of families. These interventions have had a significant impact with, for example, the number of childcare providers offering full day care rising by more than 70% between 2001 and 2010².

The Mayor, through the LDA, has previously recognized the importance of childcare to supporting parental employment in London and to tackling child poverty. The Childcare Affordability Programme saw the Mayor working closely with the Borough's to provide subsidized childcare for families that would benefit from it. Whilst the context has changed since this programme was launched in 2005, there remain important 'levers' the Mayor can utilize to help ensure more families in London have access to the childcare they need.

Recent childcare trends

However, after a decade of expansion in childcare the period since the recession of 2008 has seen a real terms reduction in childcare places and the coming period looks set to continue to be a challenging time for childcare providers and parents.

Between 2008 and 2010, demand for nursery places fell by just over 6 per cent, due to the recession. Supply mirrored demand, as the total number of UK nursery places fell by an estimated 6.5 per cent, with an estimated net loss of 1,150 nurseries³. Occupancy also fell, with UK nurseries on average operating with a vacancy rate of 18.25 per cent in March 2011, compared with 17.5 per cent the previous year. However, this is an improvement from vacancy rates in the midst of the recession at the start of 2009 when they were 20.5 per cent⁴.

According to the Laing Buisson industry report, 39 per cent of nursery operators feel optimistic that business conditions will improve in the next 12 months, however, 31 per cent said they expected things to get worse, and just under a quarter of anticipated no change in conditions.

Recent figures⁵ published by the Department for Education show that the proportion of full daycare providers operating at a loss rose by 13 to 19 per cent and from 15 to 20 per cent for sessional providers between 2009 and 2010. 'These,' notes the report 'were the highest loss-making levels seen since the survey began.'

The tough times being experienced by childcare providers can be attributed to two key factors; firstly, the fall in female employment which is now at its lowest level since the 1980s⁶. The second, is the reduction to the childcare element of Working Tax Credit in April 2011 which reduced the funding for childcare by £270m in 2011/12, rising to £385m per year by 2014/15.

² Social Trends, ONS, 2010 page 28.

³ Laing Buisson, 2010

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Early Years and Childcare Providers Survey, 2010

⁶ Labour Force Survey. www.esds.ac.uk

Daycare Trust's London Childcare Providers Survey 2011 found that parents' inability to afford childcare is now the biggest issue affecting providers' sustainability.

Meanwhile, nursery fees, which the report says have not grown significantly in real terms in the last six years, have increased by 3.5 per cent in the last 12 months against inflation.

The role of the Greater London Authority and the London Mayor

4Children believes that widening access to high quality childcare should be an explicit aim of social policy both for central and local Government including the Mayor of London. The need for economic growth to return demands that parents are able to take up job offers when they are available and key to this is the availability and affordability of appropriate childcare.

In addition, with children from disadvantaged families in London facing a multitude of challenges during their earliest years the opportunities that high quality childcare can provide to learn and develop and ensure that children are 'school ready' is vital. Recent figures on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile published by the Department for Education⁷ have shown the investment in early education and care can raise the level of attainment across the social spectrum and narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their better off class mates.

The geography, cost of living and profound inequality that characterize daily life for families in London mean that there is a vital role for to be played by the Boroughs and London government in promoting and supporting childcare in the Capital. London can be a tough place to bring up children but by taking some relatively small and practical measures it would be possible to make a real difference.

The Mayor and GLA should use all available levers and resources to work with the Boroughs to:

1. Facilitate a vibrant and competitive childcare market capable of delivering quality, choice and affordability;
2. Ensure parents are aware of the full range of childcare options available to them and feel informed as consumers when making childcare choices;
3. Ensure all parents know about the help that is available to help meet childcare costs, especially as we transition to Universal Credit which will be a potentially confusing and disruptive time;
4. Identify and support innovative childcare models which seek to better meet the needs of parents.

⁷ EYFS profile data published Thursday 20th October 2011.

In detail – the consultation questions

What more can be done to ensure Londoners know about the childcare options and financial support available?

Research for 4Children's Family Commission showed that only 29% of families knew where to go for help with childcare⁸. In addition to this, estimates suggest that the take up rate for the childcare element of tax credits is around 25%, with only around 470,000 parents claiming any help for childcare costs, compared to the total of 1.8 million parents eligible for the child tax credit (most claimants who are eligible for CTC are eligible for the childcare element).

These two pieces of evidence alone suggest that there is a real need to improve the information available to families about childcare and the available financial support.

4Children is also concerned that this situation will be exacerbated by reductions in local authority spending which may see a loss of funding for Family Information Services and associated publications, websites and newsletters which – when done well – can be a really important source of information for families.

However, we also acknowledge that not all Family Information Services have been as effective as others. We believe that this is really important that information is provided using methods that families are comfortable and familiar with. That means for example utilising websites where we know parents go for information eg Netmums, Mumsnet, NCT, www.foundationyears.org.uk. But also, taking information out into the community to where parents of young children gather.

4Children believes that all Children's Centres should become hubs for information and services for families when their children are in the foundation years – including about childcare and financial support. Whilst many Centres do this already, our experience is that this is not always the case. There is still more that can be done to bring JobCentre Plus advisers into Centres to help for example with tax credit forms.

Data⁹ shows that the number of Children's Centres providing full time day care has fallen quite substantially. This is a trend that is likely to continue since the statutory duty to provide it was removed for Phase 1 and 2 Centres in April. This will be put even greater onus on Centres and their partners to be a genuine source of up to date information about the full range of childcare support available in the local community.

4Children recognises that in some ways London is different from many other parts of the country in that the significant numbers of families will live and work in different Boroughs and may be looking access childcare in either of those Boroughs or even in a different area altogether. This means that there is a need for many parents to be able to access information about childcare outside their own Borough boundary. We believe there is a role for the Mayor, Boroughs and London Councils to work together to consider whether or not this need is being effectively met. With Borough budgets under pressure there may be considerable added value in the provision of a city wide online hub for this information.

Recommendations:

1. Children's Centres as hubs for information and advice.
2. An effective, up to date, London-wide online childcare information hub.

⁸ Family Commission survey 2. 4Children (2010) Starting a Family Revolution: putting families in charge.

⁹ Early Years and Childcare Providers Survey 2010

How could childcare be made more affordable for Londoners?

4Children is a provider of high quality, early years childcare in London and across Britain. We know from our experience as a provider that it is possible to operate sustainable, high quality childcare services, without significant subsidy from the local authority, at a cost to parents that is below that charged by private providers. We are able to do this through our innovative, social enterprise model, which has been shown to be successful even in deprived communities where local authorities and the private sector has previously considered it impossible to run sustainable childcare.

4Children is extremely concerned that the decision by the Department for Education not to require Phase 1 and 2 Children's Centres to provide full day care any longer is already leading to the withdrawal of childcare facilities from parents as a result of cost cutting by local authorities who in many cases have been substantially subsidising this activity. This loss of childcare risks reducing supply considerably, particularly in deprived areas, which will allow private providers to increase costs and make childcare even less affordable for families.

This is avoidable. As described above, voluntary organisations and social enterprises like 4Children are able to provide high quality childcare on behalf of local authorities at no public subsidy, yet many local authorities are not exploring these alternative options before closing childcare provision.

A second, issue which is pushing up costs for childcare providers which they are then forced to pass on to parents are rising costs. This includes rents and business rates and other professional and training services. These rising costs are often being caused by local authorities raising charges or charging for services that formerly were free eg safeguarding training for early years staff. Whilst we fully acknowledge the need for local authorities to reduce spending, raising costs particularly on charitable or not-for-profit providers who offer an invaluable service to families is short sighted and a false economy in the long run.

There is a further issue that we are aware of, which appears to be largely affecting, breakfast and after school club providers but which may become an issue in the early years sector. With an increasing number of schools becoming free schools or academies some are taking the opportunity to begin charging rent for the use of school property eg the school hall, when in the past no rent would have been charged. In some cases this is a considerable sum which is making provision unsustainable for the future and risks a loss of available services. Where childcare and children's centres exist on school sites, this will need to be monitored as the status of large numbers of schools changes.

Access to financial support

Key to the affordability of childcare for families on middle and low incomes is availing themselves of all potential financial support. We have already highlighted the low take up for the childcare element of tax credits. There are other schemes like Care to Learn – aimed at supporting young parents into training – that are not as well publicised as they could be.

4Children believes there is an absolutely vital role for the Government, Boroughs and the Mayor in doing more to promoting the help that is available and importantly supporting parents to complete the necessary forms, which can be daunting particularly for those with poor English or literacy. Taking this support out into the community – into Children's Centres, community centres, to play groups, churches etc – will ensure that more parents know about the help that is available and apply for it.

The introduction of the new Universal Credit offers both an opportunity and a risk in this area. The opportunity comes from the introduction of support for childcare costs for those working less than 16 hours a week, for the first time. This offers a potential route back into work for many parents and should be seized as an opportunity to open up a dialogue about working with many of London's poor families. The simple message of Universal Credit, that claimants will always be better off in work should also be a helpful one. However, this will also be a time of great change and there is bound to be confusion and glitches along the way. Ensuring that any problems are minimised in the roll out of Universal Credit will be important and the Mayor, Boroughs and London Councils should work proactively with Government to help ensure this transition is as smooth as it can be and that Londoners are well informed and get the help they need.

Role of employers

It is often overlooked just what a stake employers have in the provision of sufficient affordable childcare. As the economic recovery begins and employers look to expand their workforces, they will need to be able to attract sufficient, skilled people to take their businesses forward. Parents of young children are a key part of the labour market, particularly women, who are too often not able to participate in the way they would like to because of a lack of childcare.

Whilst the provision of crèches and workplace nurseries has fallen in recent decades there remains an easy way that employers can help employees meet childcare costs and that is through Employer Supported Childcare Vouchers. These vouchers provide tax exempt support for the cost of childcare and can be done on the basis of 'salary sacrifice' which brings only a minimal cost to employers but whilst still offering support to employees.

Currently on a minority of employers offer childcare vouchers and more could be done to encourage a greater number of London's employers to adopt the scheme.

Recommendations:

1. The Mayor should work with the Boroughs and London Councils to champion the role of the voluntary and not-for-profit sector in providing high quality childcare, with strong encouragement for the Boroughs to consider transferring provision into the hands of the sector if they can no longer run it directly. Also, the Borough's should be encouraged to listen to childcare providers who are struggling with rising costs, which in some cases come as a result of local authority decisions.
2. A more proactive approach to providing information on available financial support for childcare costs and practical help with making applications taken out in the community.
3. The Mayor should champion the need for more employers to offer childcare vouchers – setting a target for the number that he would like to see sign up in the next year. Companies that begin offering vouchers could be highlighted to encourage others to join in.

What more could be done to improve access to suitable childcare, including childcare outside office hours?

Research for 4Children's Family Commission showed that 16% of families want to see childcare available at evenings and weekends¹⁰. Research from the Resolution Foundation¹¹ has highlighted that only a minority of parents work exclusively between 9am and 5pm. In London in

¹⁰ 4Children, 2010

¹¹ Resolution Foundation (2011) Childcare: failing to meet the needs of working parents.

particular, with many parents travelling an hour to and from work, the traditional 8am to 6pm childcare model is failing to meet many families' needs.

The majority of childcare also requires pre-payment and the booking of regular slots, which also does not fit with the way many of us work in the modern economy and are a long way away from the 'pay as you go' flexibility we expect as consumers in other areas of service provision.

These are well recognised problems without a simple solution. Because formal childcare is not routinely available beyond traditional hours, this suppresses demand for that childcare creating a lack of an obvious market for providers to step into. Whilst there are a few innovative models which have been highlighted by the Resolution Foundation and Daycare Trust¹² these are very limited. And flexible availability and 'pay as you go' is a challenge for childcare providers working to statutory staffing ratios, in a relatively low margin business area. 4Children has sought to lead the way in this area and does offer a wider range of sessions, from as little as two hours at a time, for parents using our nurseries.

Recommendations:

1. The Mayor should consider working with a small number of innovative providers and some key employers to explore the opportunities to develop pilot models capable of meeting the needs of London's families.

For further information about anything in this submission please contact 4Children Public Affairs on 020 7522 6929 or email claire.mccarthy@4children.org.uk . One of 4Children's experts would be happy to provide oral evidence to the Committee if that would be helpful.

¹² Daycare Trust (2010) Open All Hours? Flexible childcare in the 24/7 era

Victoria Borwick AM
Chair, Health and Public Services Committee
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

26/10/2011

Dear Ms Borwick,

I am writing in response to your letter of 15th September 2011, calling for responses to the London Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee review of access to childcare in London.

Save the Children works across the UK with children and families living in poverty. Within London, we run a number of varied programmes supporting families, and work closely with Local Authorities in delivering programmes and developing good practice approaches to tackling child poverty in the capital.

We are delighted also to provide the base for the 4in10 project within the Save the Children London programme. 4in10 is a broad network of organisations from across London's voluntary and statutory sectors, tackling child poverty. 4in10 is specifically focussing on childcare in London, as a high priority issue to tackle in relation to the child poverty agenda.

In response to the London Assembly's review on childcare, Save the Children would like to echo and support the information and recommendations put forward in the 4in10 submission.

In addition, we attach a copy of our recent briefing on the findings of our research into childcare costs, carried out jointly with Daycare Trust over summer 2011. We summarised the findings both in a UK-wide and a London-specific briefing. The London briefing contains specific recommendations to the mayor, and we therefore attach it along with our backing for the more tailored 4in10 submission, as our response to the review.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information, and many thanks for carrying out this important review on such a crucial issue for London.

Yours sincerely,

Jessica Nott
London Programme Manager
j.nott@savethechildren.org.uk / 0207 012 6583

Dear Susannah

The Head of Early Years asked me to answer the following three:

What more can be done to ensure that Londoners know about the childcare options and the financial support available?

Perhaps a pan London campaign? I know that the GLA used to produce a London wide newspaper about once a quarter but I think that stopped some while ago. If the information could be tied in to the publication of a research report – X% of people etc etc – you could probably get a short slot about it on something like the One show. Also, maybe a flier could be included with the letter that parents get to tell them which reception place their children have got? Otherwise its just a question of plugging away at local level as now.

How could childcare be made more affordable to Londoners?

By:

- raising the threshold where childcare tax credit stopped for Londoners, particularly for children under five. In our borough, childcare costs far more than the Government's level/ definition of "affordable", typically £300 plus per week for a child aged 3 -5.
- subsidising childcare costs, similar to the childcare affordability programme (cap)
- raising the amount for childcare vouchers that parents can claim as tax and NI free - £100 per week would be more realistic
- raising the amount that the government gives councils for the 3 and 4 year old places so that the amount is enough to cover the actual cost of 15 hours per week childcare (or alternative giving a voucher to parents like they used to do, so that parents could choose how to use it)

What more could be done to improve access to suitable childcare , including childcare outside office hours?

This is really two questions. The first part about suitable childcare, ties in with the first question. Parents must know what is suitable – how to judge good quality childcare etc etc

Childcare outside office hours ties in with the second question – most providers would need to charge more for unsocial hours, which would make the childcare even more unaffordable. One way round it would be if parents received a higher tax credit if they had to use childcare outside of the standard Monday – Friday 8am – 6pm.

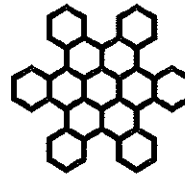
Please get back to me if you want to discuss any of these ideas further.

Jane

Jane Knight
Business Support Manager
Early Years and Childcare, Education, Children's and Cultural Services,
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

First Floor, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BZ

Tel: 020 8831 6268
Website: www.richmond.gov.uk



Our ref:

27 October 2011

Victoria Borwick AM
Chair, Health and Public Services Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Ms Borwick

Re: Review into access to childcare in London

Thank you for your letter of 15th September regarding the above, and please see below our response to the issues identified regarding information about, and access to, childcare provision for the under fives.

- **What more can be done to ensure Londoners know about the childcare options and financial support available?**
Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide information on childcare to the public in a variety of formats and at a variety of venues, it is important that this continues to be the approach adopted. The Family Information Service in Hackney takes the lead in this area and has initiated improvements in communication such as regular road shows and stalls to sign up Hackney residents to receive regular information updates via e-mails or text. They also use Facebook as a cost effective way of extending their reach to local residents. Working in partnership with agencies who work closely with vulnerable and hard to reach families, e.g. health visitors, children's centres, BME community groups and disability services, is essential to ensure that those who may not have access to the internet etc are kept informed of childcare options. The Day Care Trust is the lead national body for Family Information Services and will therefore have an overview of how the statutory duty is being delivered.
- **Are you aware of any best practice from local authorities in providing information and advice to parents and carers about their children?**
See above, In the 7 weeks since the FIS Facebook page was launched it has had 9.738 views, and following the roadshows and stalls the FIS has received permission to contact over 600 parents by e-mail.
- **How could childcare be made more affordable for Londoners?**
Affordability affects low income and larger families in particular who spend a higher percentage of their incomes on childcare. Some of this cost is offset by free entitlement funding for the 2-4 year old age group.
This Borough also provides additional support with access to affordable childcare through Children's Centres and a subsidised childcare programme for the PVI sector. The Hackney Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Of 2011/12 found that that perceptions of affordability were strongly correlated with subsidy (*including free entitlement but predominantly tax*



credits). There is therefore a need to ensure that subsidised childcare is benefiting those who need it the most.

The CAP pilot which ran from 2005-8 had a high level of take up by parents and carers on low incomes in this Borough who were looking for work, just starting work or studying in order to improve their employment prospects. Further projects of this kind rather than the pilot projects which succeeded it would help to address the affordability and flexibility issues for low income families.

There are particular concerns regarding the funding for parents and carers wishing to study in order to return to work as funding for childcare through Job Centre Plus is being reduced and targeted more narrowly.

- **What more could be done to improve access to suitable childcare, including childcare outside office hours?**

The Hackney CSA identified the lack of provision outside core hours, only 1% of the total childcare places are available before 7.30am and 5% after 6.00pm. There are clearly gaps in opening times and flexibility which will be explored to assess if there is sufficient demand to justify the development of services to fill these gaps. There are concerns from providers that increased opening times may result in a movement of hours rather than a requirement for additional care. There might therefore be an increase in the costs of provision without a similar increase in revenue. Investment in improving the quality of childminding services is an important factor in the provision of more flexible childcare; more parents are becoming aware of childminders and confident in using them. It should be noted that there are providers who respond to the requirement for extended hours provision but these tend to be workplace providers, or nurseries sponsored by corporate bodies to provide places for their employees.

- **Could you outline what your authority offers in terms of nursery provision in maintained state schools for three and four year olds and whether this is changing or has recently changed?**

The implementation of the Single Funding Formula in April 11 has led to an increase in the number of part time places in nursery classes and the linking of funding to children attending the school from the term after their third birthday. The impact of this and the single intake into reception classes, which was introduced in September of this year, is yet to be fully assessed. Early indications are that it is having an effect upon 3 and 4 year old occupancy levels in the PVI sector, particularly in playgroups offering sessional care.

Kind regards

Alan Wood
Chief Executive



National Day Nurseries Association submission to the London Assembly Health & Public Services Committee Review of Childcare

NDNA is pleased to contribute to this review by the London Assembly. We are participating in consultation meetings and would be happy to contribute further if committee members would find that useful for their inquiries.

Affordability and access to childcare remain an important issue nationwide, particularly in large cities like London. Progress was made over the last decade with an increase in the volume of provision, improvements in the quality of registered childcare and broader funding streams, including childcare tax credits, employer-supported childcare vouchers and Free Nursery Education (FNE). But retrenchment in public finances, rising unemployment, wage stagnation, and inflationary pressure on household finances are testing those advances.

NDNA feels we can best contribute to the inquiry by describing the factors that impact on the fees of nurseries, around 85% of which are private or voluntary run organisations. If policymakers and the sector work together to address some of these cost pressures it would help cushion the impact of childcare costs for the many families who currently find their finances stretched. Major new subsidies seem unlikely in the current fiscal climate. But if steps are taken to moderate cost pressure on providers, childcare costs should begin to decrease as a proportion of household budget and, when the economy begins to grow again, the situation will improve further.

Key factors to consider, and potential solutions or best practice to contain them, include:

1. Small business regulation and rising costs on private and voluntary nurseries. For example, substantial increases in business rates and VAT add to nurseries' cost base. Meanwhile voluntary sector providers in particular report instances of increases in their rent charges by some London Boroughs. Measures to reduce such cost pressures would help moderate fees. However, Laing & Buisson, leading analysts of public service markets, calculate that, while fees have increased year-on-year in cash amounts, in real terms over the last 10 years they have decreased 3%.

Families are feeling pressure as household budgets are squeezed by stagnant incomes, reduced family benefits and rising living costs – particularly in energy and food – and childcare costs are a particularly large monthly outgoing for many. Energy, food and rent costs also affect nurseries and, in turn, may add further fee inflation.

2. Resolving the longstanding problem of local authority payments to providers for the 15-hours Free Nursery Education for three and four-year-olds often failing to cover costs that nurseries incur in delivering early education in those hours.

Private and voluntary nurseries provide 55% of Free Nursery Education provision, and potentially more in London as demographic pressures grow. But for several years now, and despite the introduction of the Early Years Single Funding Formula, many are not getting paid at a rate that covers their costs. We also know that the rates different types of providers receive on FNE vary significantly, with little clarity about why that is the case.

In order to meet their overheads, many have little alternative but to recover these losses through increases to fees in hours outside FNE. They are of course prohibited from asking parents to top up FNE hours or refusing children on the basis that their parents only wish to take FNE at the nursery and no additional hours. It should also be noted that according to

Department for Education statistics around one in three nursery businesses only break even and a fifth are making a loss. In the main, providers are increasing their fees simply to cover costs, not to make significant returns, although as commercial operations they are within their rights to aim for a profit or surplus.

It is important that policymakers address this problem by taking the opportunity to make FNE funding fairer, more consistent and transparent as government reforms the Dedicated Schools Grant. It seems not to be a question of more money. Rather, it appears a case of apportioning existing funding more evenly and consistently across the early years sector in order to prevent providers making losses on FNE and, therefore, removing a source of fee inflation for childcare outside FNE hours. This will make for greater sustainability of provision, too, and ensure all parents retain a choice about where their child takes FNE. It will also boost the sector's confidence that 15 hours free for around 120,000 two-year-olds can be properly funded and not intensify the problem.

3. London's Childcare Affordability Programme offered a model to help working parents, and those who needed to train in order to get back into sustained employment, with the capital's childcare costs. We accept that London government shifted its focus onto youth services and education, and that remains a key political issue given this summer's disturbances. But there is a case for policymakers to redress the balance and examine how a new regional supplement could support London's parents with childcare. The City's support for increasing the tax exemption on childcare vouchers would also help, as the rate has not kept pace with inflation.
4. Decreasing public funding for quality improvement programmes and early years workforce development. Continuous quality improvement in childcare and early years is absolutely right. However, staff costs already take up a major proportion of the average nursery's revenues. Reduction in local authority and central government training support for childcare providers, whilst retaining ambitious quality improvement targets, will fuel the amount of training costs which must be recovered through fees.
5. Out of office hours care remains a challenge, even in a 24-hour city like London. Generally, private and voluntary nurseries have longer opening hours and more flexible provision than local authority settings anyway. But longer opening hours for childcare settings, with potentially fewer children at times of the day when fewer parents are in employment, do carry costs. Policymakers need to work with providers to find solutions to funding these situations.
6. Information for parents. Parents must be aware of their childcare options and the financial support available for the cost of childcare. Awareness also helps parents make an informed choice of quality childcare, reduces the risk of unregulated care being used and maximises use of Free Nursery Education provision, particularly important for hard to reach groups. Policymakers, local authorities, providers and representative bodies should work together to promote information and access.

The challenge is to make childcare affordable without compromising quality. Childcare and early learning produce multiple outcomes for children, families and the economy. Policymakers have recently taken steps to extend access to those outcomes. As such, NDNA welcomes the decision both to remove the 16-hour qualification rule on the childcare element of the Universal Credit and £300m funding for that change.

We anticipate that further public funding is unlikely given public spending constraint, but hope the ideas set out above are adopted so that the need for providers to increase fees can be assuaged. This is important not just to help families to access childcare now, but also to ensure strong, accessible early years provision is available to parents (particularly women) when the economy begins to pick up and prompts a revival in the job market.

About National Day Nurseries Association

NDNA is a national charity representing children's day nurseries across the UK, giving them information, training and support, so they can provide the best possible care to young children. NDNA is the voice of the day nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of over 600,000 children and their families. NDNA works with local and national government to develop an environment in which quality early years education and care can flourish. For more information please visit our website at: www.ndna.org.uk.

Contact:

Claire Schofield
Director of Membership, Policy & Communications

E: claire.schofield@ndna.org.uk
T: 01484 40 70 62

3 November 2011

London Assembly review into access to childcare in London – 2011 Response from Greenwich Council Children’s Services

The London Assembly’s Health and Public Services Committee is reviewing access to childcare in the capital for children up to the age of five. The review is focused on what can be done to tackle the main barriers parents face in finding the right childcare, namely:

- *a lack of information and advice on childcare options and financial support,*
- *the high costs of childcare, and*
- *problems accessing suitable provision, particularly out of office hours.*

What more can be done to ensure Londoners know about the childcare options and financial support available?

A London-wide, centrally funded advertising campaign promoting childcare information via local authorities.

Are you aware of any best practice from local authorities in providing information and advice to parents and carers about childcare?

The Greenwich Families Information Service provides a dedicated telephone helpline, information on the Council website and written information materials, and:

- contacts families registered with Children’s Centres (but who have not accessed services for a period of time) to provide information and advice about Children’s Centre services, childcare, services and activities for children and young people;
- provides high level childcare brokerage support to parents/carers who are less confident to access formal childcare (childcare brokerage also available linked to two year old early learning programme, for young parents (plus help to access Care to Learn funding) and to families with children with additional needs;
- coordinates the borough’s Disabled Children and Young People’s Register and contacts families on the register who have indicated they would like one-to-one information support. Where information support covers childcare, FIS links families into brokerage support (as above);
- published childcare case studies of disabled children using different types of childcare to encourage other families to access formal childcare;
- works closely with the Council’s Welfare Rights service to promote benefits and support available to school aged children including working tax credit for childcare out of school hours;
- works closely with other agencies to link training and employment opportunities with childcare options and any available financial assistance to meet the costs of childcare.

The Childcare Development Team supports the development of new childcare provision and the sustainability and quality of existing provision. In Greenwich we have always prioritised work with childminders and offer an established training and quality development programme with strong links to networks and Children's Centres.

Childminders can provide support and childcare outside the usual office hours, including collecting by car and dropping off. We also have a small number of childminders who provide overnight care, and have been used to offer respite to parents facing hospital treatment, or emergency support at the weekends. The slowly expanding pool of home carers will add to the flexibility of childcare available.

We provide a referral service for vulnerable families. The referral service by its nature is bespoke, offering a full brokerage service to parents, matching their childcare needs to the range of options available to them. We work closely with our local IRAS team, DAAT, children with disability team, and other agencies to support individual childcare needs. This service offers one to one support with matching of childcare to the childcare provider so children can be supported to stay within the family unit as well as monitor vulnerable children. Parents will then be able to access training opportunities as well as various strategy meetings

We support vulnerable children and families on the 2 year programme to access childcare that will be suitable for their individual needs. This can include support for parents to access training, take up volunteering or employment opportunities.

We have an increasing number of childminders who are accredited and able to offer the free entitlement for three and four year olds. This has been especially useful for some of the referred children who benefit from an extended stay in a family home before their progression to nursery.

How could childcare be made more affordable for Londoners?

The only equitable solution would be for central government to provide a regional allowance for WTC that would recognise the specific factors that impact on London. We found the LDA CAP scheme useful to enable costs of quality provision to be more affordable but this involves administration at a local level which will become more difficult to cover within LAs.

- *What more could be done to improve access to suitable childcare, including childcare outside office hours?*
 - Encouragement of childminders and home childcarers to register and care for children over night and weekends as well as support parents who work shifts; and
 - Encourage access to after school clubs and extended school provision.

- *What should local authorities' role be in improving access to childcare outside office hours?*
 - Support the development of the home child carer scheme for disabled children to access, as well as other parents who may need the service;
 - Support parents to access good quality registered childminders. Some childminders are registered for over night care and some work weekends as well as cover parents shift patterns. We provide a service to support vulnerable families to access good quality childcare out of hours; and
 - Support the registration of further childminders and home childcarers to improve childcare outside of office hours.

Could you outline what your local authority offers in terms of nursery provision in maintained state schools for three and four year olds, and whether this is changing or has recently changed?

The free entitlement is available in 85% of our maintained primary schools (54 out of 64), 4 maintained nursery schools, one special school and through the Portage Service,. This has been the position since the free entitlement was introduced. The 4 nursery schools and 7 primary schools are integrated with Children's Centres which provide access to other childcare services for younger children.

Greenwich was a pathfinder for the changes in flexibility of provision and funding for the free entitlement. A few of the primary schools and all the nursery schools are now offering parents a more flexible option for their free entitlement which can be particularly helpful in providing childcare for part time employment.

We used the development of the Single Funding Formula to change the methodology for the allocation of hours over and above the free entitlement. Schools in the more disadvantaged areas of the borough receive additional funding to allocate to parents to support their access to/retention in training and employment. Funding is retained centrally to support more vulnerable children and families with additional hours over and above the free entitlement.

We are currently working with schools to finalise guidance on charging parents for additional hours over and above the free entitlement where schools have sufficient surplus capacity. This will be introduced following the change in legislation proposed in the Education Bill and will offer some parents a positive childcare arrangement.



Children and Families

Cllr Victoria Borwick AM
Chair, Health and Public Services Committee
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Early Years
Ealing Council
2nd Floor SE
Perceval House
14-16 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2HL

Tel: 020 8825 9751

Email: tlangford@ealing.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Borwick

Review into access to childcare for Londoners

The Family Information Service in Ealing received this request for input two days before the deadline. We asked for an extension as very much wanted to contribute to this review.

This response is from Polly Bradley, FIS Manager, Christopher Roberts, Management Information Officer, Amanda Hancock, Business and Finance Officer and Therese Langford, Promotions Officer (Communications) for Early Years, Childcare and Play.

Q: What more can be done to ensure Londoners know about the childcare options and financial support available?

1. FISs are a statutory requirement. A clear commitment for LA's to maintain FIS services.
2. Make the delivery of childcare information (childcare providers and paying for childcare) statutory for local authorities with a specific request to ensure all LA websites have from the home page direct access to information that enables return to work. **Families should be able to go online, easily find a childcare provider in their area, easily understand what payment support is available to them.** At present, information delivery in the childcare act specifies the FIS, but FISs do not have control over council websites and cannot decide home page priorities.
3. **Childcare search pages on directgov were getting 40,000 hits a day.** This function has now been disabled. There is now no central database of childcare provision. You could reinstate the central database or commission a **custom built database for online searching which is rolled out locally** so that one design cost is incurred centrally that all LA's can benefit from.
4. Do not reinvent the wheel at local level in terms of delivery of information on paying for childcare – **engage an organisation such as Daycare Trust** for a data feed into each council's *paying for childcare* page. This will ensure all local information is up-to-date. LA's can then add to this local childcare support programmes.
5. **Issue each LA with a template for a printed 'Financial Support for Families'** booklet. A huge proportion of families we want to reach are NOT computer savvy

and rely on printed information. The template would arrive with national schemes already detailed well. At local level all we would do is populate additional pages with local funding schemes and get it printed.

6. Once the key government offer is decided in terms of financial support for childcare – there should be a **national campaign** given the same coverage as something like the ‘self-assessment’ deadline which hit TV ads, transport ads and cash machine displays. Funding schemes are not given this level of ‘national’ coverage.

Q: How could childcare be made more affordable for Londoners?

1. Childcare funding schemes for low-income families such as two-year-old funding should be extended to allow payments to be made to families (who qualify for support) for transport costs. Here in Ealing we found following telephone research and feedback from community groups that a significant barrier to the take-up of formal childcare is becoming less due to culture (for example in Southall) and more due to ‘not being able to pay the bus fare’. Parents with a child attending school and another going to nursery – face daily bus fares of around £8. This is completely unaffordable. So even if the childcare is being funded – they can’t actually get to it.
2. Childcare affordability programmes that subsidised childcare providers have worked well in Ealing. To date these programmes have been extremely bureaucratic requiring much administration and support – a new simplified model is desirable. In addition to supporting parents to access work, subsidies to childcare providers make their businesses more sustainable, and helps maintain a range of childcare provision in the community.

In future schemes, a crucial adjustment would need to be reviewing how the income thresholds work to prevent people losing out on financial support because they miss the threshold by a few pounds or because a minor change in circumstance or income means they go from getting a reasonable level of support to getting nothing.

Schemes such as tax credits, which subsidise childcare through the parents, can end up raising demand for childcare, which then raises childcare fees. Subsidising providers directly means they can offer cheaper places to everyone.

3. Higher rate of childcare costs in London need to be reflected in subsidies and any childcare affordability schemes.
4. People returning to work following unemployment should get a sufficient package of support for childcare costs to ensure their employment makes economic sense (not just for a couple of months but until their children reach nursery school age).
5. Incentives in the form of lower business rates or some form of tax-relief for childcare providers who run ‘out of school’ and into the evening childcare that allows parents to work their hours. This would give them a higher income without penalising the

Children and Families

parents. To get this, they must charge a set hourly rate that's the same throughout the whole day.

6. Make it easier for parents to use the childcare voucher scheme as not all employers offer them. Perhaps if people could buy them directly from voucher companies (like the gift-aid scheme), as long as they are UK taxpayers paying enough tax. Childcare vouchers cannot be used in any other way, which would reduce fraud or misuse of the childcare element of tax credits. We know of providers who lose potential income because a tax credit payment has been used to meet other financial obligations and not to pay for childcare.
7. Make childcare vouchers compulsory for all employers or employers with a revenue above a set amount (so that small businesses who cannot afford to run the scheme do not suffer).

Q: What more could be done to improve access to suitable childcare, including childcare outside office hours?

1. Make work-place nurseries financially more attractive to employers.
2. **Boost childminding:** support 'childminding' as a career with training and a London-wide recruitment drive. Lift the profile of childminders who are still underused. A 'feedback scoring' system attached to childcare databases will give parents more confidence in individual childminders and eliminate some of the issues that arise such as finding out someone smokes or has pets late in the day.
3. Employment in the childcare industry needs to be more attractive with pathways for training and career progression outlined and supported. In turn, this will create a more highly trained workforce, generating confidence in childcare workers, which may lead to increased take up of formal childcare.
4. Incentives for employers to introduce more flexible working patterns and job sharing.
5. Partnerships should be championed between day nurseries and a network of childminders to offer extended hours to greater numbers of children in a more structured way.

We hope this response is useful and can contribute to the review. If you have any questions, please get in touch with me in the first instance so I may direct your enquiry to the relevant contributor or other contact here in Early Years.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

Therese Langford
Promotions Officer
tlangford@ealing.gov.uk



John Green
Children and Young People

3rd Floor Laurence House
1 Catford Road
London SE6 4RU

direct line 020 8314 6590
fax 020 314 3151
John.Green@lewisham.gov.uk

1st November 2011
Our ref: F9826

Ms V. Borwick, AM
Chair, Health and Public Services Committee
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Dear Ms Borwick,

Re: Review into access to childcare in London

Thank you for your letter addressed to Frankie Sulke regarding the review into access to childcare in London, to which Frankie has asked me to respond on her behalf.

I have responded to your questions in the order you raised them.

What more could be done to ensure Londoners know about the childcare options and financial support?

Lewisham's Family Information Service is a useful source of information about childcare locally. It may be that more advertising by central government would be helpful to explain how parents can access the 3 and 4 year old Free Entitlement, and the proposals for the 2 year old offer. The current methods of Health Visitors, Jobcentre plus and Children's Centres disseminating information is very good but there is a risk of not reaching all parents.

Are you aware of any best practice from local authorities in providing information and advice to parents and carers about childcare?

We feel our Family Information Service is an example of good practice. Some authorities have used a brokerage system, but this can be costly as it is reliant on significant numbers of staff, and may be more appropriate to use with targeted groups.

How could childcare be made more affordable for Londoners?

The cost of rents and rates in London for childcare providers is very high and therefore this is reflected in the charges that are requested from parents accessing their services. We would like to see a subsidy from central government to reduce the rental cost for childcare providers, with the proviso that there is a price per place that the nursery cannot go above. This rate should coincide with the rate used for Working Family Tax Credits - childcare

element. Changes to the 16 hour threshold before being eligible to claim the childcare element might also assist parents with childcare costs.

Another scheme that is successful is 'Care to Learn'. This enables young parents to return to education by assisting them with childcare. A similar scheme could help parents more widely return to work or to vocational study with the intention of getting back to work. This could mirror the Childcare Affordability Programme which was a time limited support to help parents to get back work ready.

What more could be done to improve access to childcare, including childcare outside office hours?

If there are organisations whose staff require out of hours childcare such as hospitals or supermarkets then there should be a positive drive to inform the Human Resources department in these organisations that services are available. The Family Information Service and Children's Centre staff could be the link with employers in the locality to ensure that they are kept up to date with details of childcare provision in the respective locality.

What should local authority's role be in improving access to childcare outside office hours?


The LA' strategic role is to ensure there is sufficient child care places available and of a suitable range. This strategic role should encourage the market to respond to demand including the provision of out of hours childcare.

Could you outline what your local authority offers in terms of nursery provision in the maintained state schools for three and four year olds and whether this is changing or has recently changed?

The nursery classes in schools offer 15 hours per week of Free Entitlement. In general this offer is made either for five mornings or five afternoons. Some schools can offer full time and have participated in charging for additional hours and together with breakfast and after school clubs are able to offer a wrap-around service.

I hope this is helpful but please come back to me if you have any other queries.

Yours sincerely



John Green

Strategic Leader Foundation Stage

John.green@lewisham.gov.uk

A submission by the National Childminding Association to the London Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee (GLA) review into access to childcare in London

1. Introduction
2. Summary
3. Childminders in the capital
4. Cost of childcare in the capital
5. Accessing suitable childcare, including childcare outside office hours
6. Information on childcare options
7. Quality
8. Projects overview

1. Introduction

NCMA (the National Childminding Association) is a professional membership association. Since 1977 we have worked with registered childminders and nannies, as well as other individuals and organisations such as local and national government, to ensure families in every community in England and Wales have access to high quality home-based childcare, play, learning and family support. NCMA supports registered childminders and nannies in raising the quality of their practice and ensures key stakeholders are aware of, and integrate, registered childminders and nannies into national and local childcare strategies.

Registered childminders look after one or more children under the age of 8 for more than a total of two hours a day. They do this in a domestic setting (normally their own home) for payment. Registered childminders are inspected by Ofsted in England, or the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales (CSSIW), to ensure they provide a safe and stimulating environment for the children that they care for. Registered childminders are usually self-employed and run their own business.¹

NCMA's vision is for all our members to provide the highest standards of care and learning for children, which can play a key role in improving children's life chances. We are at the forefront of supporting our members to do so through a range of mechanisms. New projects include the development of Professional Standards for our members and new models of local peer support. There is considerable interest across the early years sector in the Professional Standards development and a number of local authorities in London are pilots in the peer support project. NCMA would be delighted to keep the Committee abreast of developments in these projects.

NCMA welcome the opportunity to contribute to the London Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee (GLA) review. NCMA's input reflects the main composition of our membership and concentrates upon these questions with childminders and childminding in mind, using NCMA data as well as data available about the wider childminder population to evidence our response.

Childcare in the capital is a significant issue, both financial and social. The London childcare market is currently worth an estimated £1 billion, and represents 18% of childcare spending in England.² In addition, bearing in mind that London and the South East accounts for 40% of England's GDP, its childcare industry is crucial in enabling parents and carers to undertake the jobs, which generate this revenue.³ Further, childcare plays an integral role in alleviating worklessness which exacerbates social problems such as child poverty.⁴ However, London's maternal employment rates are the lowest in the country at 53%. For the rest of the UK this rate stands at 65%.⁵ In addition only 55% of children in London receive formal childcare compared with the national figure of 63%.⁶

¹ http://www.ncma.org.uk/childminders/become_a_childminder/what_childminders_do.aspx

² LDA (2011). *Childcare Market: Labour Market Research Series 5*, London: LDA, p. i.

³ UKCES (2010). *Skills for Jobs: Today and Tomorrow*, London: UKCES.

⁴ London Child Poverty Commission (2007). *Tackling Worklessness and Child Poverty in London*, London: GLA.

⁵ GLA Economics (2010). *Women in London's Economy Update*, London: GLA.

⁶ NatCen/DfE (2009). *Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents*, London: DfE.

2. Summary

Registered childminders in the capital meet families' needs through the provision of childcare and early education. Their work is already helping to address the challenges considered by this review.

NCMA believes that home based childcare should continue to remain at the heart of future childcare strategies to ensure families can access childcare that meets their personal needs. Childminders in the capital provide care outside typical working hours, with many providing care overnight. Childminders work with social services to provide support for families going through difficult times and their willingness to provide flexible care, such as overnight, weekend or school holiday care, means they may be more viable as a single childcare option. The consistent and personalised approach in the home setting means that registered childminders can be considered well placed to support parents who may have a particular requirement such as a disabled child or be themselves teenage parents or lone parents. Despite the higher fees charged in London, childminders in the capital are no more likely to make a high turnover than in other areas of the country.

This paper highlights the importance of continued investment by local authorities in quality improvement childminding networks, and supporting the development of new models of local peer support. Childminding networks, through their full-time paid co-ordinator role, provide the link between social services or children centres and local childminders on the network. Networks facilitate childcare for parents including flexible placement lengths, wraparound care, atypical and unusual hours, joining up placements in childcare, and school and specialist services for disabled children and their families. They can ensure there is suitable care for the children of teenage parents so they can return to school or training; provide respite care and family support to families "in need", such as those with complex family needs or during times of crisis; and provide community childminding for families with particular needs. Considering registered childminders, through childminding networks, to deliver additional services can be more cost effective than other interventions. Research shows that work of the Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network (BCCN) saved the social services team £269,000 over a two-year period, and also led to additional savings in health.

NCMA would also encourage the review to highlight the importance of supporting practitioners to access continuous professional development opportunities. Evidence shows that the more qualified and supported the practitioner, the better the quality of childcare and early learning experience. NCMA registered childminder members holding a Level 3 or above qualification were significantly more likely to be graded outstanding at their Ofsted inspection than those with a lower level qualification. It is important that childminders, given their low level of income, are given the financial support to access training and continuous professional development opportunities, including through an appropriately applied Early Years Single Funding Formula. All potential avenues for professional development, including apprenticeships, should be available to practitioners.

3. Childminders in the capital

At 30 September 2011, Ofsted quarterly figures showed that there were 10,144 registered childminders providing 43,513 childminder places in London, representing around 22% of the total supply of London childcare. This is a rise of 1505 childminder places and 161 childminders in six months.⁷

Childminder places in London grew significantly between 2003 – 2010. This growth was stronger than any other region in the country and despite the recession, and a country-wide drop in childminder places by 4.2%, London childminder places only fell by 0.1% between April 2009 and April 2010.⁸

In terms of childcare density there are 17.5% less childminder places per capita (each child under 5) in London than the national average. The observation that London has fewer childminder places per child does not in itself prove that there is a shortage of childminders in the capital. However, figures from the Early Years Providers survey 2010 show that the vacancy rate for childminders in the capital is lower (at 19%) than the national average of childminder vacancies (at 25%) demonstrating that there may be more demand for childminding in the capital than other parts of the country.⁹

4. Cost of childcare in the capital

According to NCMA's annual membership survey in 2011, childminders in Greater London charge, on average, £5.02 per child per hour. This compares with £4.10 in the South East and £3.85 in the East of England, the two next most expensive areas.

Childcare fees in London are significantly higher than the national average (they have been estimated as being between a quarter to a third more).¹⁰ This can be attributed to high living costs and resulting higher staff costs which are not offset by higher Local Authority payments for free entitlement.¹¹

However, despite charging these higher fees, childminders in London are no more likely to make a high turnover than in other areas: according to the 2011 membership survey, 58% of London childminders had a turnover of less than £10,000, while 39% had a turnover of £10,000 or more, both in line with the national membership as a whole. Overall, 72% of childminder members in Greater London report making a net profit from their business, so it is clear, then, that despite demand-side concern about high costs of childcare, childminding is not a hugely profitable business for most of those involved and our members are not making unreasonable profits. As this is the case it is important that registered childminders are supported with the costs associated with developing their service, such as accessing training and CPD, and that consideration is given to the appropriateness of some of the requirements placed on a childminding business. For example, registered childminders are required to register as a data controller with the Information Commissioner's Officer. There is a two-tiered notification fee for this requirement. The two-tiered structure is based on an

⁷ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/registered-childcare-providers-and-places-england-december-2008-onwards>

⁸ LDA (2011). *London Childcare Market: Labour Market Research Series 5*, p. 23 - 29.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 33

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.51

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. iv

organisation's size and turnover and sees a childminder paying the same fees as a business with a turnover of £25M or over 200 members of staff.¹²

Many families currently receive financial support with childcare costs and NCMA notes that the new Universal Credit will come into effect from October 2013. The transition from the old benefit system to Universal Credit will take place in three phases over four years, ending in 2017. In addition, the free Early Years Entitlement (EYE) has enabled more families to access childcare. Childminders have the capacity to deliver this EYE. However, while NCMA members in London are more likely than members in other parts of the country to provide the EYE, only 25% currently do so. This compares with the lower average of 17% across all other regions. NCMA childminder members in London are also more likely to offer the free entitlement for 2-year-olds, with 21% doing so and a further 11% accredited to do so. This is compared with a national average of 11% offering the EYE to two year olds.¹³

NCMA recommends that childminders receive support to enable them to deliver the EYE so that parents are able to exercise a meaningful choice about childcare. The nature of the childminding setting can suit a diverse range of families' needs. Therefore it is important that parents are able to use their EYE to choose local home-based childcare practitioners.

Equally important is that the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) is applied appropriately by central Government and Local Authorities to ensure that it is economically viable for childminders to deliver the EYE to families. Currently, in some areas, the funding provided by Local Authorities to implement the EYE is below the rate normally charged by the childminder.

NCMA recommends the base rate paid by Local Authorities must be competitive and should be based upon the rate for an individual childminder rather on the average charged by all childminders in the area. **NCMA recommends** that the EYSFF should also be developed to take account of the differences between settings, which could include a supplement for a higher practitioner-to-child ratio. For example, there is currently a provision for two-year-old places to be funded at a higher rate than three- and four-year-olds to reflect the higher ratio requirements for this age group. The Early Years Foundation Stage requires childminders to operate at a ratio of 1:3 for 3- and 4-year-olds, so it is important that the funding they receive for caring for children at this age also reflects this.

At present, a childminder caring for a disadvantaged 2-year-old will receive a drop in income when the child turns three, even though they are continuing to care for the same number of children. This is of particular concern for NCMA because while children benefit developmentally from continuity of care, some childminders may find that it is no longer financially viable to continue to care for that child. A supplement for a higher practitioner-to-child ratio for 3- and 4-year-olds that aligns it with the 2-year-old offer could help to enable the child to remain in the setting. This concern is particularly pertinent given that registered childminders will be crucial in meeting the demand for new places with the introduction of the offer for disadvantaged 2 year olds in 2013.

¹² <http://www.ico.gov.uk/Global/faqs/notification.aspx#f716982D9-43FB-42D7-91D2-265C69C72AF7>

¹³ NCMA and Lake Market Research (2011), *Childminder and Nanny Annual Membership Survey*, Bromley and Cardiff: NCMA

5. Accessing suitable childcare, including childcare outside office hours

According to the London Development Agency's (LDA) report *The London Childcare Market*, a substantial minority of mothers report that working atypical hours causes problems with accessing childcare.¹⁴ The lack of availability of suitable childcare can negatively affect parents' ability to take up paid employment. It is important that every family has the opportunity to access childcare that can meet their particular needs and requirements.

While atypical working patterns are relatively common in London, the childcare sector is perceived as operating core-hour services only. This is because profit margins for centre-based facilities outside these hours are lower. This barrier to childcare during non-core hours is felt especially hard by lone parents and those in families in the service industry on low to middle incomes who may need to be sure of the availability of childcare in order to even consider entry into the workforce.¹⁵ Yet, figures from *Ending Child Poverty: Making it Happen*, demonstrate that having a family member in paid employment significantly reduces the risk of poverty. Living in a household where no adult is working puts a child at a 63 per cent risk of poverty.¹⁶ In addition, research has shown that nationally most parents of disabled children experience problems in accessing suitable childcare. Some experience being turned away from providers on the basis of their children's disabilities, especially during school holidays.¹⁷

Childminders are able to offer flexible care to meet families' needs and could play a further role in filling the gap in childcare provision during atypical hours. According to our 2011 membership survey, almost 9 out of 10 of our London childminder members said that they had provided or would offer the following

- after-school care for school-aged children (89%),
- care for pre-school children during holidays (89%)
- and care for school-aged children during holidays (89%);

Seventy-nine per cent said that they would or had provided care before 8am, while 56% had provided or would offer care after 7pm but not overnight; this compares with national averages among NCMA members of 90% and 51%. Thirty-four per cent and 15% had provided, or would offer, weekend or overnight care respectively (compared with national averages of 36% and 19%).¹⁸

As many childminders provide overnight care, the support of registered childminders can be crucial for parents working atypical hours or shift patterns in what is increasingly a 24 hour service society in England. Childminding settings stay open for longer each day than other types of care¹⁹ and the length of childminders' hours and

¹⁴ LDA (2010) *London Childcare Market: Labour Market Research Series 5* (2011).

¹⁵ Ibid, p. iv

¹⁶ *Ending Child Poverty: Making it Happen*, HM Government

¹⁷ Mencap/Kids (2011). *Are cuts to Local Authority budgets denying families the right to childcare?*

¹⁸ NCMA and Lake Market Research (2011), *Childminder and Nanny Annual Membership Survey*, Bromley and Cardiff: NCMA

¹⁹ Philips, R., Norden, O., McGinival, S. and Cooper, J. (2009) *Childcare and Early Years*

their willingness to provide flexible care, such as overnight, weekend or school holiday care, means they may be more viable as a single childcare option.

Registered childminders regularly go above and beyond in the support they provide. This is demonstrated by Cath Shepherd, an NCMA and network childminder from Salford who is happy to care for her minded children at any time. Cath often provides weekend care for children of shift workers. One child's mother works at an airport so requires childcare beginning at 6.30am. Cath looks after him in the morning, taking him to school in term time and during school holidays his mum picks him up at 1.30pm. Last Christmas, one of Cath's minded children actually came to her for Christmas Day and joined in with the family's Christmas as his mother was required to work.

While the majority of NCMA childminder members care for children aged 1 – 7, in 2011 55% were caring for a child aged 8 – 11 and 8% were caring for children aged 12 – 16.²⁰ The capacity of childminders to care for a variety of ages of children means that parents can continue to access the same childcare throughout primary and secondary education, and the child receives continuity of care from someone who understands their needs. This ability to care for older children is important for families with a disabled child. A study by the Daycare Trust *Open All Hours?* found that parents had increasing difficulty finding appropriate care as their child got older.²¹ Being cared for with children of different ages can encourage children to learn to play and work together, as well as supporting families by allowing siblings to be cared for together.

The Day Care Trust analysis of working pattern data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) highlights that 16 per cent of parents work shifts and 1 in 10 work over 40 hours. A further challenge for parents is when work hours vary week to week, the case for 4 in 10 parents, as their demand for childcare is irregular. Lone parents are more likely to be found in jobs that demand they work atypical hours. Day Care trust research also demonstrates that some providers struggle to meet parents demand for childcare on an ad hoc or emergency basis.

NCMA recommends that local authorities established childminder networks to be able to meet these parents' needs. Childminding networks support a range of availability, which allows the network coordinator to find a practitioner who is available at relatively short notice. In Hounslow childminders work with the short breaks team and social services as *befrienders* and to provide both emergency and short breaks for children with disabilities and families in need.

What is a childminding network?

Childminding networks are quality improvement schemes that link childminders together under the management of a network coordinator. To be able to join a network, the childminder must demonstrate and give evidence that they are working above and beyond the requirements of Ofsted and are constantly reviewing and

Providers Survey 2008. DCSF-RR164. London: DCSF

²⁰ NCMA and Lake Market Research (2011), *Childminder and Nanny Annual Membership Survey*, Bromley and Cardiff: NCMA

²¹ Singler, R., (2011) *Open all hours? Flexible childcare in the 24/7 era*. London: Day Care Trust

developing their childcare practice. NCMA believe that every childminder should be able to access a quality improvement childminding network.

Under the auspices of the network coordinator, childminders on the network have access to professional development and support to help them to build on their skills and extend their services; by providing a pathway to accreditation, networks also enable childminders to deliver Early Years Education (EYE). Moreover, the network provides the link between childminders and other agencies – such as social services and children’s centres – with whom they work to provide specialist care, e.g. emergency childcare, day-to-day childcare for disabled children, and short breaks. These arrangements are often formalised into long-term projects: one such example is Marvellous Minds, an inclusion scheme which provides shared care for parents of disabled children with registered childminders. Referrals to this scheme are made directly by parents or via the children’s services team, working with the childminding network.

Research undertaken by GfK NOP has shown registered childminders value networks because of the additional training available, extra support and meetings (information sharing and networking) and their help in attracting new parents to their settings through referrals and the reputation of the network.²²

The challenge of finding suitable childcare is especially pronounced for parents of disabled children/children with SEN. In research undertaken on behalf of NCMA, nine in ten parents of disabled children/children with SEN reported difficulties in finding childcare that was accessible to their child and could provide the right kind of care to meet their needs.²³ Significant barriers included difficulties obtaining information about available childcare and meeting the cost of childcare provision, particularly where providers - which included early years group settings and after-school care - charged higher fees to cover the additional costs of caring for a disabled child. Parents who struggled to find suitable childcare regretted not only the income they lost from not working, but also the lack of financial and social independence for themselves and the loss of social opportunities for their children.²⁴

A recent Mencap and Kids study²⁵ which looked at childcare provision for disabled children found that 18% of parents would like a childminder for their child, while no parents expressed a preference for nursery care. It is important that registered childminders are supported to meet this demand. Currently 38% of London members had had training in caring for disabled children, compared with 42% NCMA members nationally. However, only 13 per cent of NCMA members in the capital reported caring for disabled children in response to the 2011 membership survey, compared with 20% nationally.

Luton Local Authority, which has been a pilot authority for Disabled Children’s Access to Childcare (DCATCH) funding with the aim of supporting parents of disabled children who want to go back to work. Luton has an NCMA Children Come First (CCF)

²² NCMA/GfK NOP (2010) *Qualitative Childminders research*, Bromley: NCMA

²³ Melyn Consulting (2009). *Childcare for Disabled Children and Young People*. Bromley and Cardiff: NCMA

²⁴ Melyn Consulting (2009), *ibid.*

²⁵ Mencap/Kids (2011). *Are cuts to Local Authority budgets denying families the right to childcare?*

Network, covering the whole authority, and is a valuable example of childminders working in partnership with other services to provide a tailored service to families in the area. Referrals to the network come from the Disability Social Work Team, the Luton Early Years team, Children's Centres, and Children's and Families Information Service. The scheme provides brokerage services and supporting placements to parents, and facilitates specific training according to each child's requirements. This work has made a significant difference to families by supporting parents through the process of looking for childcare, and by ensuring the child is placed in a setting that is tailored to their needs. All of the community childminders received blanket training courses including Disability Awareness, Makaton and Lifting & Handling training. Additionally, a full-time DCATCH Development Worker is available to support childminders and also promote the scheme to parents, provide brokerage services and facilitate specific training according to each child's needs.

NCMA recommends that local authorities support childminders through training so that they can offer care for disabled children. At present, childminders' access to training in specialist care and other quality improvement opportunities is extremely variable. It can be dependent on the amount of funding that a local authority makes available for childminders' training and development, the scheduling of training opportunities at convenient times for childminders, and childminders' access to quality improvement networks. According to NCMA's 2010 membership survey, more than a quarter of those who had not attended any childcare training in the previous year said this was because training was not available locally or outside their childminding hours. Just over two thirds (68%) of childminder members who do not currently care for any disabled children or children with special educational needs indicate that they would be concerned they would not have the appropriate equipment if asked to care for them. It is important that childminders are supported to meet the needs of local families and have equal access to funding streams to support them to do so.

Research from the Department for Work and Pensions demonstrates that rates of child poverty are higher in families where a child is disabled. 56 per cent of children in families with one or more disabled children, and no disabled adult, are in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution, compared with 44 per cent of children in families with no disabled children or adults. Only 16 per cent of mothers of disabled children are in paid employment, compared with 61 per cent of all mothers.²⁶

Childminders can build close professional relationships with parents in settings; the parent will collect their child from the same practitioner who has been providing care throughout the day. The discussions between parents and childminders at drop-off and collection times allow parents to keep up to date with their child's daily activities and progress, as well as providing an opportunity for both parties to raise any concerns or update one another on any ongoing issues. This can be particularly valuable where the childminder is involved in the child's medical care, such as taking the child to appointments at hospital or a speech and language therapist, or, with approval from parents and after training, in administering basic care themselves. The consistent and personalised approach means that they can be considered well placed to support parents who may have a particular requirement such as a disabled child or be themselves teenage parents or lone parents. **NCMA recommends** local authorities conducting sufficiency assessments should also consider the specific needs of families rather than primarily focusing on the number of available places.

²⁶ Department for Work and Pensions (2010). *Households Below Average Income 2008/2009*. Available at: http://campaigns.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai_2009

This should be taken into account in the development of any information or guidance developed for local authorities.

An additional factor when considering access to childcare is the availability of respite or emergency provision. Childminders are well placed to offer this type of care. Of childminder members questioned in Greater London as part of NCMA's membership survey, 18% provided care funded by social services, most commonly emergency childcare, respite childcare, and family support services. This compares with 15% nationally among NCMA members.

Childminders can play an important role in early intervention projects by working with social services to provide support for families going through difficult times, as well as those with disabled children or children with additional needs. NCMA recommends that local authorities consider registered childminders, through childminding networks, to deliver services like these, as they can be more cost effective than other interventions. Research shows that work of the Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network (BCCN) saved the social services team £269,000 over a two-year period, and also led to additional savings in health.

Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network (BCCN)

The BCCN is an NCMA established network of quality-assured childminders, who have been trained and supported to provide care for children with a wide range of physical, emotional and learning needs. Initially a small group of childminders who had a proven track record of providing quality care and who were willing to extend their experience by meeting the needs of a wider age range and a diversity of needs were recruited. The network was then promoted to other professionals and children and young people were referred to BCCN and offered home-based quality care.

There was an awareness that community networks in other local authority areas had run out of funding within their first year, so BCCN was designed to be sustainable and cost-effective as well as to deliver high-quality, flexible care. In 2007, Buckinghamshire County Council commissioned an independent evaluation of BCCN. The resulting report was an overwhelming endorsement of BCCN as a cost-effective way of providing high-quality, flexible support to families. The Network currently has 30 childminder members and in 2009/10 provided 17,461 hours of care for children and young people. 80% of BCCN childminders are graded by Ofsted as 'good' or 'outstanding' and 84% are either qualified or working towards a Level 3 qualification.

NCMA recommends that local authorities utilise their childminding workforce and establish a Quality Improvement Childminding Network to ensure families can access childcare that meets their personal needs. Childminding networks, through their full-time paid co-ordinator role, provide the link between social services or children centres and local childminders on the network. Networks facilitate childcare for parents including flexible placement lengths, wraparound care, atypical and unusual hours, joining up placements in childcare, and school and specialist services for disabled children and their families. They can ensure there is suitable care for the children of teenage parents so they can return to school or training; provide respite care and family support to families "in need", such as those with complex family needs or during times of crisis; and provide community childminding for families with particular needs.

5. Information on childcare options

A lack of information about childcare is often perceived as being a barrier to childcare take up. In particular, there is evidence that some parents are not able to access adequate or culturally appropriate information about childcare and that those from the most disadvantaged groups in society in particular may struggle to find the information they need.²⁷ The benefits of early education do not appear to be adequately well communicated either.²⁸

The LDA notes that since the mid-1990s information for parents about childcare has been improved, listing Local authority Childcare Information Service; Families Information Service; voluntary sector bodies; other parents; information available from providers; local libraries; and Sure Start Children's Centres and the Internet as sources of information.²⁹ Childminders rely especially heavily on these resources in order to fill vacancies or get established as practitioners.

NCMA recommends a continuation of efforts to strengthen links between children centres and childminders. In Hounslow registered childminders work closely with the children centres who link local parents and providers and childminders are also used to provide cover for creche places where needed. NCMA would also like to see all local authorities benefit from successful practice in other areas of London. For example in Richmond they run regular 'Meet the Minder' Sessions across the borough which is an extremely successful way for parents to meet a range of registered childminders with places. Islington also run a similar programme called "speed minding."

Despite the proliferation of information services, four in ten parents report that there are not enough childcare places available in their region. This perception of a lack of childcare sits alongside the fact that 19% of NCMA childminder members in London reported vacancies in our 2011 survey. This discrepancy between perceived supply and actual supply suggests that information is inadequately communicated to parents and carers about childminding. Better information for parents about childminders, including promoting the professional status of practitioners and highlighting their ability to deliver EYE could lead to increased take up of childcare places. Bearing in mind cuts to local authority budgets, there would be a concern that childminders would be even less supported to adequately advertise their services.

NCMA recommends that the Assembly encourage the sharing of innovation and best practice amongst local authorities in regards to childcare. This could be via a best practice website or other mechanisms, and should include those outlined throughout this response. Childminding networks can again make a positive contribution with research undertaken by GfK NOP showing that registered childminders value networks because of the help in attracting new parents to their settings through referrals and the reputation of the network.³⁰

²⁷ Speight, S., Smith, R. and Lloyd, E., with Coshall, C. (2010) *Families experiencing multiple disadvantage: their use of childcare and views on childcare provision*. DCSF Research Report No DCSF-RR191; Andrew Irving Associates (2008) *Parents as partners 'Harder to engage parents*. DCSF Research report DCSF DCR-1111/

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. v

²⁹ LDA (2011). *London Childcare Market: Labour Market Research Series 5*, p77

³⁰ NCMA/GfK NOP (2010) *Qualitative Childminders research*, Bromley: NCMA

NCMA recommends that bodies such as Jobcentre Plus and Welfare to Work providers have a broader understanding of the role childminders can play in supporting families back to work – especially in acting as a mentor and encourager to young parents. **NCMA recommends** that Government help parents to access early education and care opportunities by supporting local authorities to set up childminder matching service potentially through Job Centres and childminding networks. This serves the dual purpose of ensuring there are sufficient childcare places and also helping unemployed people to take up a career in childcare.

6. Quality

Home-based childcare supports children's school readiness and attainment through social, emotional and cognitive development in the early years. Two studies have looked at the impact of childminder care relative to other care for children in infancy, finding overall greater benefits of home-based childcare for babies aged under 12 months, in comparison with centre care.³¹ Both studies found higher levels of positive caregiving among home-based carers, and notably, Leach et al found that the level of activity relating to language development and reasoning was also higher for childminders than for nurseries.

Quality plays an important role in determining the impact of early years education and childcare on a child's development, with higher quality consistently achieving better outcomes.³² The UK-based Effective Provision of Pre-school Education project in particular found that high quality pre-school experiences were related to better intellectual and social/behavioural development for children. In settings where staff had higher qualifications, they also received higher quality scores and their children made more progress.³³

Childminders in particular can have a further positive influence on children's development because of the stability they provide. Studies have shown that among children who attend early years settings, those who experience greater "caregiver stability" have more secure relationships with their carers and higher levels of social competence.³⁴ Included in the definition of caregiver stability is the amount of time that the carer spends with each child; the rate of change of the primary carer; and the number of different childcare arrangements experienced by each child.³⁵

For many parents, a particularly important indicator of quality in childcare is a smaller child to adult ratio. Childminders are well placed to provide this, given that a childminder may only register to care for a maximum of six children. Our 2011 membership survey demonstrated that there was a higher proportion of London childminder members registered to care for smaller numbers of children. 31% cared for one to three children compared with the average for the rest of the country at 10%, and the national average at 12%. There was a lower mean number of children cared for in London (at 4.2 children) than compared to the rest of the country where the average number of children is 5.6.

In terms of regulation, London childminders receiving an Outstanding grade as a result of their most recent Ofsted inspection stood at 15%. A Good Ofsted grade was awarded to 61% of London childminders, in line with the national average. However, Children living in deprived areas have less access to high quality care than those

³¹ Leach et al, 2006; NICHD, 1996

³² Campbell-Barr, V. and Garnham, A. (forthcoming) *Childcare: A Review of What Parents Want*. London: Equality and Human Rights Commission. Cited in EHRC (2010). *How Fair is Britain?* London: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

³³ Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004). *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education [EPPE] Project: Final Report*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

³⁴ Leach, P., Barnes, J., Malmberg, L.E., Sylva, K. and Stein, A. (2006), *The quality of different types of child care at 10 and 18 months: a comparison between types and factors related to quality* [online] Available at: http://www.familieschildrenchildcare.org/images/21story_pdf.pdf [Accessed 7 February 2011]

³⁵ (Leach et al (2006).)

living in more affluent areas. NCMA's 2011 membership survey found that childminders living in the 20% least deprived areas were more than twice as likely to achieve an 'outstanding' Ofsted grading than those living in the 20 per cent least deprived areas. It is vital that childminders in these areas are supported to improve their quality of practice in order to deliver the very best standards of early years education and care for disadvantaged children.

NCMA recommends that local authorities invest in Quality Improvement Childminding Networks to support their childminders to deliver the very best standards of early years education and care for disadvantaged children. The positive impact of supporting childminders is demonstrated across the country. For example, in Bedford Borough there are 156 childminders providing care and education for approximately 1000 children. Support and development opportunities provided by NCMA staff has ensured that 80% of childminders in Bedford hold 'outstanding' and 'good' Ofsted gradings. There are no Ofsted graded 'inadequate' childminders in Bedford Borough.

NCMA recommends that local authorities should support their registered childminders to achieve a Level 3 qualification at the earliest opportunity. The introduction of the EYFS has raised the profile of registered childminders and NCMA supports the moves by a number of local authorities to build on this step forward by encouraging their childminders to study for a relevant level 3 qualification.

Evidence shows that the more qualified and supported the practitioner, the better the quality of childcare and early learning experience. NCMA registered childminder members holding a Level 3 or above qualification were significantly more likely to be graded outstanding at their Ofsted inspection than those with a lower level qualification.³⁶ It is important that childminders, given their low level of income as indicated previously, are given the financial support to access training and continuous professional development opportunities.

NCMA propose that every childminder is required to pass an introductory childcare course prior to registration, rather than attend, as is the current requirement. NCMA believe that this change should form part of a wider range of measures to include a requirement for childminders to undertake mandatory safeguarding training funded by the local authority in conjunction with the existing compulsory first-aid training. Registered childminders are in a strong position to recognise child protection concerns given the close nature of the home setting and it is vital they are trained to act appropriately.

These additional pre registration requirements could begin to form a licence to practice for registered childminders and would mean that every childminder had the foundation of training that would enable them to work towards gaining a relevant Level 3 qualification at the point of registration. At present 51% of NCMA members hold a relevant level 3 qualification.

NCMA recommends that practitioners are supported to access all opportunities to improve their quality of practice and this should include access to apprenticeships for registered childminders. At present, unlike other childcare practitioners, childminders

³⁶ NCMA/Silver Dialogue (2010), *A qualitative exploration of factors that could impact on Ofsted ratings for childminders living in areas classified as being 20% disadvantaged according to the UK index of multiple deprivation*, Bromley: NCMA.

are not able to undertake apprenticeships because they are self employed and do not qualify under the current regulations being considered by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. NCMA recommends that registered childminders are included as an exemption under the 'alternative completion condition' regulations for apprenticeships as part of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act. If this route is not possible, it is strongly recommended that other funding routes to improve qualification levels for childminders be explored. Cost remains a barrier to access with 58 per cent of NCMA members earning an annual turnover of less than £10,000 from their childminding business.³⁷

NCMA recommends that the supplements included in the Early Years Single Funding Formula should also offer a financial incentive for quality improvement and for the very best practitioners to offer the free early education places, rather than just being used to bring up the base rate to a level that makes it competitive with the local going rate.

³⁷ NCMA/Silver Dialogue (2010), *ibid.*

7. A brief overview of projects that support registered childminders to meet the childcare and early education needs of local families

Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network

Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network (BCCN) was established in 2005 and delivers respite care and emergency care for children and young people referred by children's social care services.

The award-winning network provides flexible, high quality care to all within its target groups, which include young carers, disabled children and young people, and teen parents.

During 2009/10, 215 children and young people were referred to BCCN. It provided a total of 17,461 hours care for 207 children and young people from 179 families. As a direct result this project has enabled parents of disabled children and young people to access childcare for the same price as parents of any other child in Buckinghamshire. In addition disabled children under the age of five now have access to respite care short breaks, as well as children with conditions such as Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, autism and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

In 2007, Buckinghamshire County Council commissioned an independent evaluation of the Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network. The evaluation looked at outcomes for children and young people, outcomes for childminders and childminder satisfaction, parent/carer satisfaction, satisfaction levels amongst referring officers/agencies and attitudes and satisfaction levels of the members of the multi-agency management group. The resulting report was an overwhelming endorsement of BCCN as a cost-effective way of providing high-quality, flexible support to families.

Research shows that work of the Buckinghamshire Community Childminding Network (BCCN) saved the social services team £269,000 over a two-year period, and also led to additional savings in health.

Bedford Borough Network

In Bedford Borough Network childminders work on the NCMA managed Community Childminding Scheme with social care to offer respite care for families going through tough times. The placements they facilitate with childminders help to offer parents flexible childcare support, meeting their families' personal requirements.

In Bedford Borough, it is not only Network childminders who are supported to offer services described above. Every childminder in Bedford Borough is visited at least once per year by an NCMA development worker who undertakes a quality improvement programme with the childminder. Childminders are rated Red, Amber or Green (RAG) and those not reaching Green status are provided with additional support, sometimes resulting in several more visits until their action plan is completed and the quality of care improved.

There are 156 childminders providing care and education for approximately 1000 children. Support and development opportunities provided by NCMA staff has ensured that 80% of childminders in Bedford hold 'outstanding' and 'good' Ofsted gradings. There are no Ofsted graded 'inadequate' childminders.

NCMA SPACE scheme

The SPACE scheme in Hampshire (Supporting People, families And young Children Everyday) is an increasingly requested successful service within the Basingstoke area. The scheme is in place to offer short/long term care/education offers to vulnerable children of which anyone can refer a child/family to. The referrals are normally funded through the referring agency/organisation. Basingstoke in particular has developed good working relationships with the local Children's Services Locality Team (one of a number of agencies), offering a unique service in a relaxed home setting, suiting the needs of many children and families in varied situations. Through promotion, re-launch in July 2009 and local success of the scheme there has become a more diverse use of the service request, therefore utilising some more of the unique accommodating features of the inclusive home based setting.

The scheme offers many opportunities for the children, in which they can be supported and effectively help children to achieve more, usually in conjunction with a multi-agency approach to achievement. The outcomes from referrals to date have been successful and enabled children to continue to achieve and progress in a stable, non-threatening home from home environment, conducive to their immediate needs.

The childminders within the Hampshire NCMA Network have many opportunities to access training and develop their skills to enable effective care for the children that are referred. This builds on their minimum level 3 qualification status; some have level 4 and above and there are some approved Foster Carers too. All SPACE carers would have also undergone advanced child protection training and training applicable to support the positive management of behaviour. Where there is additional training required, the settings within the multi-agency forum work together to provide this and/or resources that may be needed for support. Many childminders have experience of a variety of complex needs and strategies to support these needs. The Co-ordinator supports the choice of provider based on the needs and provision offer and facilitates the successful placement through support visits and liaison with engaging professionals and family. Where applicable the Co-ordinator may identify opportunities to access further resource through available funding or local resource and professional relationships.

During 2009/10, the SPACE scheme operating in Hampshire received 198 referrals, a 77 per cent increase on the previous year and placed 146 children and young people. The majority of referrals in 2009/10 were from the social care children in need service. One recent example of the work of this scheme is an eight-year-old child who was excluded from school due to behavioural issues. As a result of the one-to-one care provided by the childminder to support the child, he returned to full-time school six months earlier than predicted.

NCMA Teen Parent Project Lincolnshire

The Teen Parent Project aims to increase the number of young parents returning to school and education by supporting them to find registered childminders to care for their children. The project is delivered by NCMA in partnership with Tackling Teenage Pregnancy (TTP).

Often the daunting task of juggling the challenges of parenting, childcare and returning to school or college is unsurprisingly too much for some young parents. The project supports young parents every step of the way to find a registered childminder

who gives them the confidence they need to return to their place of learning. Parents are offered a home visit to discuss childcare needs and options; accompanied visits to up to three childminders locally that match the needs of the parent concerned and continued support once the care is in place.

Young parents under the age of 20 years returning to education and learning are eligible for Care to Learn to pay for their childcare, and the parents in the project are supported to access this scheme.

Support services to NHS organisations

In the East of England NCMA has worked with Anglia Support Partnership (ASP), which provides support services to NHS organisations in the region. This work has involved working with the ASP Childcare Team to provide childcare support and advice to employees of NHS Trusts. As part of this, NCMA has assisted with the development of a vacancy service to match parents and children with quality assured childminders in the local area.

This has enabled staff members to secure good quality childcare for their children during the hours they have to work such as shift patterns, supporting a number of parents who were looking to return to work after taking a break to care for their children or after a period out of the workforce.

PEAL - Parents, Early Years and Learning - training project

NCMA has been a core partner in the PEAL - Parents, Early Years and Learning - training project which has helped childminders to engage parents even further in their child's learning and development.

The PEAL project trains childminders and other practitioners to work with parents to help them support their children's learning and development, and has a particular focus on working with parents in disadvantaged areas. It is built on the principle that good quality relationships between parents, childcare practitioners and children are fundamental to children's development. NCMA has worked closely with the National Children's Bureau on this project. During phase two, almost 700 childminders were trained to engage with parents to support children's development.

Stuart Turner
Director of Professional Standards
November 2011