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Childcare use and attitudes

Literature review and feasibility study

Authors: Ellie Roberts and Svetlana Speight

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This report focuses on findings from a literature review and data scoping exercise covering childcare policy and childcare use and attitudes among families. Using this methodology we outline the shape of the current and changing childcare market and highlight key barriers that families face in terms of accessing and affording childcare. Over recent years the government has implemented policies to tackle these barriers; however it seems apparent there are still gaps worthy of further consideration and research, as this review highlights.

1 Background

Save the Children commissioned NatCen Social Research to find out more about parents' use of and attitudes towards formal childcare and early education in the UK. The first stage of the research which is covered in this report was a feasibility study to identify the evidence gaps and to recommend further research to address these.

The overarching aims of the feasibility study are to identify evidence gaps and assess the scope for further research on the current state of the childcare policy landscape and childcare market, patterns of formal childcare use and attitudes towards quality in formal childcare. The research specifically seeks to address the following three questions:

- What is the state of the current childcare policy landscape and the key features of early years and school-age childcare provision in each of the four countries of the UK (including availability of free hours, subsidies for childcare use, the childcare services market etc.)?
- What are the patterns of pre-school and school-age childcare use by income and employment status of parents? How do these vary between different countries of the UK?
- How do parents understand and value quality of childcare and what are parents' perceptions of and attitudes to childcare quality, availability and affordability?

The literature review draws on key methodological principles of rapid evidence assessments to ensure the most relevant sources of evidence and key literature are identified. The review covered evidence on formal (paid-for by parents and government-subsidised) childcare for pre-school children (0 to 4 years) by registered settings and individuals, and childcare for school-aged children (5 to 14 years) provided in registered childcare settings such as after-school and holiday clubs and

childminders. More detailed information on the methods we used to carry out the literature review is included in Annex A.

2 What is the shape of the current childcare policy landscape?

2.1.1 Overview of childcare market

The childcare market is varied and aims to offer parents a great deal of choice providers depending on the needs of the family. Unfortunately, the market does not seem to be equally accessible to all. The availability and affordability of provisions differ considerably across income groups and geographically, as this chapter outlines in more detail.

A recent publication by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Butler & Rutter, 2016) reported that the four nations have a similar mix of public, private and voluntary childcare providers. Schools provide the majority of early years places, daycare providers around one third, (of which around two thirds are private and one third, voluntary) and childminders and sessional pre-schools (most of which are voluntary) provide the remaining 20 per cent (Butler & Rutter, 2016). The same report highlighted that there are higher proportions of public sector nurseries in Scotland and Wales than in England, and that in Northern Ireland (NI) there is less centre-based childcare than elsewhere in the UK. This highlights that whilst schools and daycare providers are more prevalent, parents are also using other forms of childcare and that there are some differences in the make-up of the market across the nations. The report will explore patterns of use in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Since 1990, the number of childcare places has increased to meet demands partly driven by free entitlements and to encourage parents back to work (Brind et al., 2014). However, there are still gaps in availability, particularly in disadvantaged areas as a study for the Department for Education (DfE) highlighted in the context of exploring the impact of the extension of free early years education to disadvantaged two year olds (Dickens et al, 2012). Furthermore, the most recent Family and Childcare Trust survey reports that one third of Local Authorities in England do not have enough childcare places for three and four year olds (Rutter, 2016). Using data collected from Local Authority Family Information Services, the survey, which has been running since 2002, shows significant increases in childcare costs and gaps in provision, which when taken together, means that for many families, working and using childcare is not a viable option. The report found that the average cost of sending a child under the age of two to nursery part-time (25 hours) is now £116.77 per week in Britain, or £6,072 per year¹.

Weekly childcare costs are significantly more expensive in London and the South East in comparison to other areas of the country, and the average costs for England higher

¹It should be noted that these are gross costs and do not highlight how cost impacts on take-up, particularly among low-income parents where subsidies are generous.

than those for both Scotland and Wales (see Table B1 in Annex B). Whilst a recent assessment undertaken by the DfE found that the childcare ‘market appears to function reasonably effectively’ (Department for Education, 2015), it was also acknowledged that more needed to be done to improve the cost and quality of provision available to parents across the UK.

To give an overview of how childcare is used, a study undertaken for the DfE (Huskinson et al., 2014) in 2012-13 looking at the use of childcare in England under the Coalition government’s childcare policies is an important source. It indicates that 63 per cent of families used formal childcare and early years provision in their most recent term-time week and that those more likely to use formal childcare were parents with children aged three to four (due to the financial subsidies and provisions available to these families), those on higher incomes and in households where both parents worked. On costs, the report surveyed parents’ perceptions and found mixed views towards ease of paying for childcare; 68 per cent were either unsure or reported that the affordability of local childcare was fairly or very poor. Another report undertook analysis of the Family Resources Survey and concluded that ‘current childcare does not cover what parents need, especially to work full time’ (Simon et al., 2015).

It is clear that the market and provision available to families represents a complex picture. Provision varies by region and studies highlight that parents (especially those on low incomes) struggle to meet the costs of childcare across different provider types. Costs are also particularly high in comparison to other European countries. The government recognises cost as a barrier for families and over recent years has tried to implement policies to tackle this. Indeed, a recent IPPR report highlighted that all four political parties had pledged to do more to improve the state of childcare, noting that ‘childcare is a sound investment, one that will pay dividends for families and the UK’ (Cory, 2015).

2.1.2 Recent and current childcare policy

Publicly funded childcare can help to reduce poverty in two key ways: by providing high quality early education which can have the effect of improving long-term developmental and employment outcomes for children, and through increasing the opportunities for parents to participate in work and work-related activities (Butler & Rutter, 2016). Over the years, governments have acknowledged the need to address childcare as part of a wider agenda to tackle amongst other things, unemployment, poverty and inequality.

In 1998, New Labour launched the first National Childcare Strategy which was intended to establish high quality, affordable childcare within communities through the expansion of childcare places and the introduction of Sure Start. Free nursery places for four year-olds were introduced from 1998 and provision was extended to all three year olds by 2004. Subsequent governments have built on this with further investment in early years services and the introduction of free early years provision for disadvantaged two-year olds. The Coalition government acknowledged the policy challenges of availability and affordability of provision and made efforts to tackle this (HM Government, 2013). The Coalition government explained that they would seek to tackle issues of affordability and availability through:

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- helping families to meet the costs of childcare;
 - increasing the amount of affordable provision; and,
 - giving parents information to make informed choices.

Policy over recent years has been aimed at helping children achieve their full potential academically and socially and to create opportunities for parents, including through employment. There are a number of provisions that families can take advantage of to varying degrees. The extent to which families can access and benefit from each provision depends on a number of factors including household income, number of children and work status. The provisions are explained in more detail in the remainder of this chapter and summarised in Annex C.

Free early years education (for three and four year olds and disadvantaged two-year-olds)

From September 2010 all three and four year olds in England became entitled to 15 hours of state-funded education (an increase for the 12.5 hours that was offered previously). This free entitlement was described by the National Audit Office as ‘the Department for Education’s main financial intervention in children’s early education’. (National Audit Office: 2012). Parents can select the childcare they wish to use and pay for additional hours, though some use less than the full entitlement. Settings where this provision can be accessed include a range of public private and voluntary providers. The 15 hours allowance can be used flexibly by parents. They can, for example, use their allowance for two and a half days or five half-days per week in a day nursery, and can chose to spread the allowance out across the year or use it just in term-time. The financial subsidy is apportioned directly to the provider which means that parents do not pay upfront.

From September 2013, two-year-old children living in the 20 per cent lowest income households in England became eligible for 15 hours of funded early education per week. This was extended in September 2014, so that two-year-old children in the 40 per cent lowest income households in England were eligible for 15 hours of funded provision. Two-year-old funded places are available in formal childcare and early education settings such as day nurseries, childminders, nursery schools and nursery classes (HM Government, 2013).

Each UK nation has slightly a slightly different policy for administering and delivering free early years education. The entitlements themselves also differ, as set out below.

In Scotland, parents can access what is called the ‘Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement’ for three and four year olds for up to 600 hours a year, which is slightly more than in England (570 hours). The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced the new Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement to replace the 12.5 funded hours per week during term-time of pre-school education in 2014, and extended the support to vulnerable two year olds in line with a similar policy in England in the same year.

In Wales, all three and four year olds are entitled to a minimum of ten hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year, which is less than in both England and

Scotland². One of the main critiques of the arrangements in Wales is that it does not offer the same level of flexibility either in the overall allowance or the hours in which parents can access provision, which is typically sessional and during school hours and therefore not convenient for some working parents (IWA, 2016³).

Early years provision in Wales is supplemented by a programme called Flying Start, which offers free early education of up to 12.5 hours per week to disadvantaged two year olds, benefitting around a quarter of two-year-olds. This money goes directly to the Local Authority, which means that there are some regional variations in terms of how Flying Start is provided.

In Northern Ireland, one year of funded part-time early education is available for 12.5 hours per week. This can be taken as 2.5 hours per day, five days a week during term time. The provision is regarded as education and preparation for school rather than childcare and there is therefore less flexible, especially for working parents, than in the other nations. Some disadvantaged two year olds receive part-time early years education through Sure Start.

The introduction of free early years education in England has resulted in 96 per cent of all three and four year olds taking up places in formal childcare settings (Department for Education and HM Treasury: 2013), which indicates that most families (in England) benefit from some form of basic free early years entitlement when their children are aged three to four. However, as noted with regard to the provision in Wales and Northern Ireland, there are criticisms of the different provisions available to parents across the devolved nations which focus on the restrictive availability of some policies. This includes spreading support sensibly over the year, and having flexibility over the hours on offer, which some say can limit parents' employment opportunities (Ben-Galim et al., 2014).

Tax Credits

Tax Credits are available to families across the devolved nations. The main aim of Tax Credits is to support families who use formal childcare, to enable parents to stay and progress in employment. Tax Credits have changed to benefit couples as well as lone parents and over time analysis indicates that Tax Credits have increased with rises in childcare costs, though some research suggests increases have not been high enough to match increases in living costs and for parents to afford an 'adequate standard of living' (Hirsch, D., 2014). The allowance is currently worth up to 70 per cent of childcare costs each week⁴.

If eligible, parents on a low income can receive a subsidy of up to £122.50 extra per week for one child, or £210 extra for two or more children to help with childcare costs. In order to be eligible for tax credits, parents need to be in paid work for at least 16

² Whilst the hours that families in Wales receive is less, children start compulsory education slightly earlier (in the September of the year they are four years old).

³ IWA critique of early education in Wales is discussed at the following link:
<http://www.iwa.wales/click/2015/07/30-hours-of-free-childcare-in-wales-why-its-difficult-to-match-englands-offer-and-why-it-matters/>

⁴ Though the value of this support mechanism was higher in previous years. For example in 2010, 80 per cent of up to £175 (for one child) and £300 (for two or more children) was refundable (Kennedy et al 2012).

hours per week and spend money on registered childcare for children aged under the age of 16. Parents with children who are disabled are able to claim this allowance up until the child's 17th birthday. As outlined further on in this chapter, Tax Credits will be incorporated into the new benefit, Universal Credit, which is currently in the process of being rolled out in phased stages across the UK.

Childcare Vouchers

Childcare vouchers are offered by employers and are aimed at supporting parents in work and helping families pay for childcare by exempting a portion of a parents' salary from tax and National Insurance contributions. Parents can use up to £55 of their earnings, (before Income Tax is deducted) per week (or £243 per month) to buy childcare vouchers, and both parents in work can sign up for vouchers to use across a range of registered providers. Childcare vouchers can affect the amount of money families receive in Tax Credits as Tax Credits are calculated on the amount that the parent pays directly (not in vouchers) to the childcare provider. One critique of the voucher scheme is that only a minority of employers offer vouchers to their employees (Daycare Trust: 2010).

Early Years Pupil Premium

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is additional funding that Local Authorities in England allocate to early years providers to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged three and four year-olds. Providers can claim this subsidy if the family of the child in their care is deemed to be 'disadvantaged' through a number of largely income-based proxy measures such as claiming a benefit, for example, Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). Providers can claim a national rate of 53 pence per hour per eligible pupil, which means that providers can receive up to £302.10 for each eligible child if the family opts to use the 570 hours (per year) of state-funded early education they are entitled to (DfE: 2014). On a practical level, providers can use this money as they wish, and the funding does not have to go directly to the child. It can, for example, be pooled and used for universal interventions or resources.

Whilst this policy represents a particular commitment to support children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds, a consultation has highlighted that the initiative appears to present a number of challenges to childcare providers, especially in terms of identifying children eligible for funding and incentivising parents to register their children (DfE: 2014). The most recent Annual Nursery Survey found that uptake was low and many children were missing out on benefiting from the subsidy (NDNA, 2016). In addition there are concerns about high administrative costs for both providers and Local Authorities associated with the need to complete and monitor the required paperwork and documentation to claim the incentive (Department for Education, 2014).

2.1.3 Forthcoming childcare policy

In addition to the key policies outlined above, the government has outlined a number of reforms to childcare policy and provisions that will be implemented over the coming years. As highlighted previously, the aim of these reforms seems to be centred on

simplifying and extending provision, to enable parents to participate as fully as possible in the labour market (DWP, 2015).

Universal credit

In 2010 the coalition government announced plans to replace both Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Working Tax Credit (WTC) with Universal Credit (UC) - an integrated, income-related benefit for people of working age which combines both in-work and out-of-work benefits. The key aims of UC are to:

- Simplify the current benefit system;
- Strengthen incentives to work through high work allowances and lower withdrawal rates;
- Improve the transition in and out of work – particularly for people moving from benefits into low paid work;
- Reduce in-work poverty; and
- Reduce fraud and error.

UC started a staged roll-out from 2013. Eventually UC will replace in and out-of-work benefits for approximately 10 million families⁵, of which an estimated 2.5 million families will be former tax credit customers. UC is paid as a single monthly combined payment.

UC represents an extension of support with childcare costs through the benefits system to those working under 16 hours a week. The policy enables parents to claim back up to 85 per cent of childcare costs depending on their earnings and UC award rather than the 70 per cent that families were able to claim in Tax Credits.

The government's decision to extend help with childcare costs through the benefits system to those working under 16 hours per week and increase the proportion of costs covered to 85 per cent seems to have been welcomed. However some analysis suggests that families who claim a combination of different benefits and tax credits (including CTC) might lose out as an additional disregard of 26 per cent will be lost with the restructuring of support (Children's Society, 2015).

Organisations have raised concerns about the impractical nature of the system delivering this support, which fails to take into account challenges that some parents are likely to face when, for example, they are required to pay upfront to access childcare, even if they are reimbursed at a later date. Moreover, some analysis has concluded that UC will not provide enough support or strong enough work incentives to properly help families, (especially second earners) adequately meet childcare costs. Therefore, gaps in the structure of support are likely to remain (Butler & Rutter, 2016).

Tax-free childcare

⁵ Finch, D., Corlett, A., Alakeson, V. (2014) [Universal Credit: a policy under review](#).

The government is planning to replace the childcare voucher scheme with a new system for tax relief on childcare costs. It will be available for lone and couple families where both parents are in work and not claiming Universal Credit. It is expected that it will allow parents to return to work or work more hours. Parents will be able to claim a 20 per cent rebate on childcare spending, per child, spending up to a maximum of £10,000 annually. Self-employed parents will also be eligible. The new tax relief system will be available to approximately 1.8 million families in the UK and will be administered by HM Revenue and Customs. This means that there will no longer be a reliance on employers to offer the voucher scheme, which the government expects will widen eligibility (HM Treasury 2014).

Extension of free early education

The government has promised that from September 2017, free early education will be extended to 30 hours per week in England for all three and four year olds in households where the parent(s) are in work and earn under a defined income threshold. This represents a major expansion in the 'free entitlement', building on the existing, universal three- and four-year-old early education entitlement; and the two-year-old entitlement for disadvantaged children (Department for Education, 2015). The review published by DfE states that 'It is essential that all of these entitlements are funded properly, at a level that enables providers to deliver the good-quality early education and childcare that benefits children, meets the needs of parents, and which is fair and sustainable for the taxpayer' (DfE: 2015). However, concerns have been raised about how the government will ensure that there is enough money to enable childcare providers to meet higher levels of demand without putting the childcare system and markets under significant pressure (Cory, 2015). Furthermore, this extension of early education is only for parents who are in work. Parents who may be unemployed and looking for work around caring responsibilities will not benefit from this extension.

As in England, the Scottish government has also committed to expanding free provision to 30 hours by the end of the next parliament (2021). There are currently no firm plans for Wales and Northern Ireland to do the same.

2.1.4 Additional subsidies for specific groups of parents

In addition to the current and future provisions discussed in detail in this chapter, young parents in education and parents with disabled children are eligible for additional grants and extensions of particular subsidies to help with childcare costs. For example, in England, those in full-time education and eligible for student finance can access a Childcare Grant, which they do not have to pay back, of up to £155.24 per week for one child and £266.15 per week for two or more. Care to Learn is another provision that can be accessed by young parents in England which offers payments that go directly to the provider to assist with the cost of childcare.

Finally, parents with a disabled child can also receive slightly increased or extended subsidies; for example Tax Credits up until the age of 17.

2.1.5 Summary of childcare policy landscape

This chapter aimed to set out the range of provisions and entitlements that families can access. This includes help towards the costs of childcare in the form of subsidies and allowances. The picture of support is complex and varies according to a number of factors including the size of a family, whether the parent(s) are in work and where the family lives. This makes it hard to uniformly summarise how families use and navigate the system.

The situation is soon to become more complicated, with the move to Universal Credit and policies covering tax exemptions being introduced. Furthermore, it is still unclear at this point in time how the commitment to extend early years education will be resourced, though if achieved; increasing the provision available to some families will be greatly beneficial. Key barriers such as cost and availability of childcare are themes that emerge at this early point in the review and are carried through the rest of the report. We suggest that these issues are explored further in future research, with a particular focus on how they interact with the changing and somewhat unknown policy landscape and with a focus on low income families.

3 What are the patterns of childcare use amongst parents?

The survey datasets available for different nations of the UK are not comparable, (see Chapter 5 for details) and therefore it is difficult to compare take-up of childcare and patterns of childcare use across the four nations. For this reason, this chapter's main focus is on patterns of childcare use in England, drawing on findings from the latest survey in the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series (Huskinson et al. 2016).

There is a clear gap in research evidence when it comes to comparing take-up of childcare and patterns of childcare use across the four nations of the UK. More generally, the availability of good quality childcare data for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which would be representative of different age groups of children, is more limited than it is for England.

3.1.1 Take-up of formal childcare by age of child

The evidence suggests that the take-up of formal childcare is fairly high, and it is particularly high for children aged three to four years old. In the 2014-15 Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, 55 per cent of children aged 0-14 were receiving childcare from formal providers in a typical term-time week. This ranged from 90 per cent of three and four year olds to 36 per cent of 12-14 year olds (see Table B2 in Annex B). The types of providers differed depending on the age of the child. For example, for those aged under three, day nurseries were the most common provider (20 per cent of children in this age group attended a day nursery). Other providers were less commonly used. For example, only seven per cent of children aged 0-2 attended a

childminder. In the age group of three-to-four year olds, the range of providers attended was much wider: 24 per cent were in reception class at school⁶, 20 per cent were in a nursery class at school, 17 per cent attended a day nursery, and 14 per cent attended a pre-school.

Once children are old enough to attend school, breakfast and after-school clubs can be used for childcare. Breakfast clubs were attended by 12 percent of 5-7 year olds, 9 per cent of 8-11 year olds, and 1 per cent of 12-14 year-olds. After-school clubs were attended by higher proportions of children, from 50 per cent of 8-11 year olds to 34 per cent of 12-14 year olds. However, the Childcare Survey does not distinguish between after-school clubs which are used predominantly as childcare and those which children attend because of their interests (e.g. a dance or sport class at a venue different from the school).

3.1.2 Patterns of pre-school and school-age childcare use

Pre-school children spent an average⁷ of 17.5 hours per week in formal childcare in 2014-15, or 21 hours per week in total across formal and informal childcare providers (Huskinson et al., 2016). The three 'packages', or combinations, of childcare most common for pre-school children included formal centre-based care only (such as nursery classes or day nurseries) (30 per cent); a combination of formal centre-based and informal care (19 per cent); and informal care only (such as non-resident parents or grandparents) (12 per cent).

The data for school-aged children indicated that they spent less time in childcare, which is mostly due to the fact that these children attended school full-time. They attended formal childcare on average for 3 hours per week, and spent on average 5.8 hours per week in total in any childcare, including formal and informal. In terms of packages of childcare families were putting together for their school-aged children, these varied by age of the child. The oldest children, aged 12- 14-years-old, (17 per cent) were more likely than younger children to receive informal childcare only. Children aged 8 to 11 were more likely than other age groups to attend out-of-school childcare, either on its own (28 per cent) or in combination with informal childcare (19 per cent) (Huskinson et al., 2016).

3.1.3 Differences in use of childcare by parent characteristics

Higher income families and families where both parents were in work were more likely to use formal childcare than those with lower incomes and/or not working. For example, of those families with a household income of over £45,000, 69 per cent used formal childcare. This compares with 45 per cent of families with an income under £10,000 (see Table B3 in Annex B). Where parents were working, 65 per cent of two-parent families used formal childcare (where both parents worked) and 56 per cent of lone parent families. Where neither parent was in work, rates of formal childcare take-up were at 42 per cent for two-parent families and 44 per cent for lone parents (see Table B3 in Annex B). Larger families (those with three or more children) were substantially

⁶ Reception class is considered formal childcare for children aged under five.

⁷ These are median values. Mean values are also available, see Huskinson et al. (2016).

less likely to use formal childcare (49 per cent) than those with just one or two children (56-59 per cent, see Table B3).

The types of providers used by families in different circumstances also differed. For example, childminders and nannies were largely used by families where both parents worked, while nursery classes were used more by those families where the lone parent did not work or where only one parent worked (see Table B4). With regard to childminders and nannies, a similar pattern was found by Speight et al. (2015) in their analysis of childcare use among two-year olds in England in 2013-14. Among the 20 per cent most disadvantaged families, only 2 per cent used a childminder when their child was aged two and almost no one used a nanny. This is in contrast with 11 per cent and 4 per cent respectively among families who were in the top 60 per cent income group (which is the group not eligible for any funded hours as part of the offer for the two year olds).

These differences suggest that different types of providers are used for different reasons and are differently accessible to groups of parents. This is linked to:

- the opening hours of those providers (e.g. with nursery classes being typically for three hours per day only); and
- whether the provision is free at the point of use (e.g. nursery classes) or is financed using a range of tax credits, childcare vouchers etc. (e.g. childminders).

4 Parents' perceptions of childcare quality, availability and affordability

In order to explore parents' perceptions of quality, availability and affordability, data was extracted from 12 relevant studies published between 2004 and 2011⁸. The studies covered data collected across the UK and for a range of parent and child characteristics. A variety of research methodologies were used to collect the data in the studies presented in this chapter. They included for example large-scale quantitative surveys and smaller qualitative studies. We searched for studies in the UK and focused specifically on selecting up documents which focused on parents' attitudes to formal childcare.

Studies that fell outside of the scope of the search criteria when screened were saved and may be useful to return to at a later stage.

4.1.1 Information on childcare

There was evidence to suggest that more disadvantaged families were less likely to have a range of good sources of information available to them about childcare. A

⁸ More information on the methodology used for the identifying relevant literature to review is included at Annex A.

survey with just under 7,100 parents conducted in 2010 found that families with multiple disadvantages were less likely to be well informed on the range of options available to them and more likely to receive information about childcare via organisations such as the Job Centre. Specifically, disadvantaged families felt they lacked information on cost, availability and quality of childcare (Speight et al., 2010b). This seemed to contribute to parents' apprehensiveness and mistrust of formal childcare providers. Low income parents in another study felt strongly that they wanted more information about what their options were (Irving: 2008).

Even with regard to the free entitlement, the research suggests that not all families are equally aware of their eligibility. Speight et al. (2010a) found that among the families with three and four year olds did not use the free hours, 38 per cent were not actually aware that they could access free childcare. Low awareness of the scheme was a particular barrier for the more disadvantaged families: parents of 50 per cent of children in these families were not aware of their entitlement, compared with parents of 26 per cent of children in less or non-disadvantaged families.

4.1.2 Access, availability and affordability of childcare

The extent to which parents felt childcare was easily accessible differed by social class. The research highlighted that working class parents felt that childcare was more inaccessible and expensive, and that there were not enough local childcare places available to access (Vincent et al., 2008; Speight, 2010b). Therefore it was perceived by more disadvantaged families in particular that 'childcare available does not meet their needs' (Irving: 2008).

A study which collected data from over 100 parents of different social class found that disadvantage was an indicator of using state-funded provision. In comparison, wealthier parents in the study explained they could exercise more choice and access what they perceived to be a higher quality of care (Vincent et al., 2008). The review also found that some parents felt that the childcare they could access offered a distinct lack of flexibility. For example, one mixed-method study with socially disadvantaged families in London identified that parents found it difficult to obtain part-time work that fitted with the hours that their childcare provider was available and thus they struggled to make the provision meet their needs (Toroyan et al., 2004).

The cost of childcare was also perceived to be a factor which naturally prohibited more disadvantaged families in their ability to access and make choices about what provision they used. These families therefore used less or no formal childcare, or combined formal and informal arrangements (Himmelweit: 2004). Costs of childcare also factored into decisions parents made about returning to work, as the research highlighted that taking up low-paid employment might not be perceived as financially worthwhile for some parents (Irving: 2008).

Finally the review found that attitudes to accessibility, availability and affordability can differ according to where parents lived and how easy it was for them to travel to other places (for example to work or a chosen childcare provider). Parents in several studies explained that living in places where you are required to spend more time and money traveling around were barriers to accessing what they perceived to be suitable

childcare. In rural areas in particular, such practicalities were identified as key barriers and parents in one study, (which collected data from rural areas) explained that they wanted the government to do more to tackle this and ensure consistency in provision across different parts of the UK (Shucksmith et al., 2006).

While the structural barriers to accessing formal childcare discussed above are important, a significant proportion of families reported their personal preference as the main reason for not using formal childcare. For example, 48 per cent of families with two year olds who were not using any formal childcare reported that this was due to the personal preference (Speight et al., 2015). This 'personal preference' is likely to be a combination of different attitudes and considerations, however, survey data in the study does not allow further detailed investigation of this.

4.1.3 Parents' understanding of quality and safety

The existing body of evidence clearly sets out the importance of 'quality childcare' (however defined), in relation to child outcomes. It is a detailed area of research which firstly highlights the positive and long-term impact on children's attainment from attending pre-school (as opposed to not attending pre-school), and attending a high-quality setting as particularly beneficial (Taggart: 2015). This review focused on parents' understanding of quality.

It seemed that parents understood quality differently and made arrangements for childcare that they felt confident with (Himmelweit: 2004, Shucksmith: 2006). Parents considered numerous factors in relation to high quality childcare. In a survey undertaken by Toroyan, these included a wide range of things, such as: the flexibility of provision, happiness of children, hygiene and cleanliness of setting, opportunities for children to develop and learn, atmosphere and relationships developed between staff and children, and ease of getting feedback from staff (Toroyan: 2004).

A number of important elements of quality were identified throughout the studies reviewed:

- **Transparency and openness** seemed to be important when making assessments about quality. In a study looking at parents' relationships of trust with early years childcare providers, Roberts (2011) highlighted the importance parents placed on having access to staff to gather feedback, and of listening to feedback about settings from children themselves to assess if they were happy there (Shucksmith et al., 2006).
- **A personal approach by staff and the development of strong relationships** between both the children and staff and parents and staff were also considered to be important. Drawing on findings from Roberts' work, Shucksmith (2006) highlighted the importance some parents placed on the provider encouraging children to develop close relationships with staff members, especially for younger children.
- Parents from different backgrounds agreed that an important dimension of quality was that **parents themselves played an active role in defining local**

provision and having a say about how childcare was run. Higher quality providers were those that sought to involve parents in service design and delivery (Shucksmith et al., 2006).

The review found that families from lower income backgrounds placed particular emphasis on safety when considering quality (Vincent et al., 2008 and Irving: 2008). Some highlighted concerns that some providers might pose risks to children, through for example hidden abuse. These parents felt that childcare providers linked to schools were more trustworthy and therefore perceived school-based settings to be of a higher quality (Irving: 2008). Whilst parents from higher income backgrounds did not seem to place the same level of emphasis on safety explicitly, some discussed the importance of reputation of the provider. This touches on elements of safety, or at least 'the unknown' as a potentially more risky option (Shucksmith et al., 2006).

Differences were evident between parents in what they perceived to be safe and 'trustworthy'. For example, Roberts' study sampled parents from diverse backgrounds and found that one-to-one provision was considered by some to be riskier than group provision because of the relative ease with which a provider could potentially commit abuse. In other circumstances, group provision was thought to be riskier because of the lower ratios of staff to children. Opinions also differed according to whether childcare was provided privately or via the state. For example, some believed that state-provided services were of better quality and safer than private provision because state services were subject to more scrutiny. Others felt lower wages and poor working conditions in state-run childcare settings might bring about low motivation in staff who could therefore provide a lower quality care (Roberts: 2011). The same study highlighted that parents use a number of techniques to establish whether a setting was safe. This included observing the work ethos of staff to ascertain if they were happy and enjoyed their jobs (Roberts: 2011).

4.1.4 Perceptions and attitudes to quality

Across the studies considered in this review, parents seemed to be generally positive about the quality of care available to them. However, the review found that the more disadvantaged a family was, the more likely they were to hold negative views on the quality of care they experienced (Speight: 2010b), Bryson et al., 2008). The research seems to suggest these parents primarily made decisions about the childcare they used based on practical and rational considerations, such as for example, whether they could afford it and the proximity of provision to their home. By extension therefore, some may not have felt entirely confident about the quality of provision they used. Irving's study which collected data from low income families found that these families experienced some feelings of guilt as a result (Irving: 2008).

Barnes' study in 2006 highlighted some interesting distinctions between mothers' perceptions of quality based on a number of other factors. For example the research found that mothers of boys were more satisfied with the quality of childcare than mothers of girls, and that more progressive mothers were more satisfied than more traditional mothers (Barnes et al., 2006). This suggests that perceptions change and fluctuate in more complex ways over time and in relation to other factors important to the individual.

5 Childcare data sources

One of the aims of the feasibility study was to scope the availability of survey data on childcare use and attitudes which could be used for secondary analysis. Table 5.1 shows the main surveys covering the whole of the UK or particular nations, together with information about their sample quality and sizes, the childcare questions included and the options for using them for secondary analysis.

Table 5.1. Survey data on childcare use and attitudes

Table 5:1 Key survey datasets containing information about childcare collected from parents								
<i>Nation-specific surveys</i>								
Survey	Dates of data collection	Funder	Which nations are covered	Topics	Population covered	Sample quality	Sample size	Potential for secondary analysis
Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents series	Continuous cross-sectional survey. Most recent data available for 2014-15	Department for Education	England	Detailed questions about childcare use and attitudes	Parents with children aged 0-14	High quality: random probability sampling	c. 6,000 in each survey	Good potential for secondary analysis focusing on particular sub-groups (e.g. low income families) or particular topics. <u>Limitations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not comparable with other nations
Growing Up in Scotland	Longitudinal surveys of cohorts born in 2002-03, 2004-05, 2010-11	Scottish Government	Scotland	Childcare use and attitudes (plus child outcomes, child health and detailed info about various aspects of a child's life)	Parents with children in GUS cohorts	High quality but representative of particular cohorts only	3,000-6,000 in different cohorts	Good potential for secondary analysis focusing on age groups of children in GUS cohorts; longitudinal analysis of trajectories over time; child outcome data. <u>Limitations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample representative of particular age cohort cohorts only • Not comparable with other nations

Scottish Household Survey	Annual cross-sectional survey (most recent 2016), however childcare info was last collected in 2008	Scottish Government	Scotland	Basic data on childcare use, paying for childcare, some perceptions around childcare (plus other modules in this general population survey)	General population	High quality: random probability sampling	c. 11,000 in total (general population)	Data is out of date (2008)
National Survey for Wales	Annual cross-sectional survey. Most recent available data: 2014-15	Welsh Government	Wales	Use of childcare, costs and some perceptions (plus other modules in this general population survey)	General population	High quality: random probability sampling	c. 12,000 in total (general population)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is up to date; robust methodology <u>Limitations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data is not very rich in detail • Not comparable with other nations
Welsh Childcare and Early Years Survey 2009	Ad-hoc survey in 2009	Welsh Government	Wales	Detailed questions about childcare use and attitudes	Parents with children aged 0-14	High quality: random probability sampling	c. 600 parents	Data is out of date (2009)

Table 5:1 Key survey datasets containing information about childcare collected from parents								
RSM McClure Watters Childcare Research	Ad-hoc survey in Dec. 2012-Jan. 2013	Northern Ireland Executive	Northern Ireland	Detailed questions about childcare use, costs of childcare, unmet childcare needs, barriers to using childcare	Parents with children aged 0-15	Quota sample	c. 1,100 parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not comparable with other nations • Data not available through UK Data Service • Not the most robust methodology
Childcare costs survey	Annual cross-sectional survey (2010-2016)	Employers for Childcare	Northern Ireland	Use of childcare, choosing childcare, costs and affordability of childcare	Target sample: parents with dependent children	Convenience sample (web survey open to anyone). Very skewed sample: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone parent families underrepresented (4%) • Non-working parents underrepresented (0.3%) • Low income families underrepresented (8% have household income under £31,000) 	c. 1,200 parents in 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrepresentative sample • Data not available through UK Data Service • Not comparable with other nations
UK-wide surveys								

Family Resources Survey (FRS) series	Annual cross-sectional survey. Most recent available data: 2013-14	Department for Work and Pensions	UK	Childcare use and costs (plus other modules about families' finances and background)	General population	High quality: random probability sampling	c. 20,000 households in total (general population)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is up to date; robust methodology <u>Limitations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is not very rich in detail, no attitudinal data Sample sizes of parents for Scotland and Northern Ireland are small and for Wales very small
Understanding Society (USoc)	Longitudinal survey of USoc panel, with annual data collection. Wales available: 1-5 (2009-2014)	Multiple funders	UK	Childcare use (plus other modules covering various topics)	USoc panel representative of the general population	High quality: random probability sampling (plus BHPS panel)	c. 40,000 households in total (general population)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is up to date; robust methodology <u>Limitations:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is not very rich in detail Low sample sizes of parents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Note: the table does not include datasets where information was collected from *providers* of childcare and early education.

To summarise the data sources shown in Table 5.1, high quality, detailed childcare data is available for England from the Childcare and Early Years Survey series. This allows different types of secondary analysis focusing on particular sub-groups (e.g. low income families, families with children in particular age groups) or particular topics (e.g. patterns of childcare use including typical packages of childcare for different age groups). However, some aspects of the data set are not as reliable. For example, it is difficult to obtain accurate estimates of how much each family pays for childcare, given the complexity of funding subsidies and how they apply to different groups of parents (e.g. free hours for three-and-four-year-olds and disadvantaged two-year-olds, tax credits, childcare vouchers etc.). It is also difficult to understand in detail parents' perceptions of childcare use and the decision-making processes that families go through when deciding whether to use childcare, which type and how much of it. Qualitative research methodologies are required to answer these types of research question.

As for datasets for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is clear that they have significant limitations in terms of how recent the data is, how robust the data collection methodology was, whether the sample was representative, and how much detail was collected. These datasets allow for very little comparison between the nations.

For a research study which aims to compare the nations of the UK with each other in terms of childcare take-up and attitudes, use of a UK-wide source would be required. However, even with large-scale surveys such as the Understanding Society or the Family Resources Survey (FRS), sample sizes for parents with dependent children in particular nations could be too small. One idea to consider would be to pool several waves of a cross-national survey series together to boost the sample size. For example, pooling the three most recent waves of the FRS (2011-2014) would produce the following sample sizes for each nation (by key questions):

Table 5.2: Valid survey responses by country, FRS 2011-2014

	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland	England
Type of childcare used	394	1,011	1,291	7,076
Hours of childcare used in past seven days (per child)	394	1,011	1,291	7,076
Whether childcare costs anything	381	994	1,259	6,900
Costs of childcare	59	302	303	1,871
Whether employer provides this form of childcare	35	172	167	997

Base: FRS 2011-2014 (three waves), parents with children aged 0-15

Sources of survey data on childcare use and attitudes are discussed further in the next section on research gaps.

6 Research and data gaps

The review highlights how varied and complex childcare provision and patterns are across the UK and in relation to a number of other factors such as family composition and geographic location. The government has responded to barriers faced by families over the recent years with support aimed at improving access and affordability. Low income parents have been a particular focus of recent changes to policy, especially in relation to welfare policy and supporting parents to work. However, the landscape is still patchy and complicated to navigate, and there are differences in the views, aspirations and motivations held by different groups of parents in terms of how and what childcare they use, which will be important for consideration for future policy.

This literature review highlights a number of gaps where the research evidence appears insufficient and where it would be beneficial to do more research. We have summarised four gaps below, some of which might be further explored using the data sources outlined earlier in the report (particularly in relation to secondary data sources across the nations). The gaps identified are however by no means exhaustive, and there are endless ways in which you could further explore this ever relevant and changing body of research.

- **Low income families' use of and attitudes towards childcare:** Save the Children has highlighted a significant gap in the current evidence specifically in relation to low-income parents' attitudes towards and use of childcare. It is agreed that now would be a timely moment to enhance the evidence base with fresh data and to understand views on the complexities of interacting with the rapidly changing system of childcare and early years education in England as the policy landscape changes. It is expected that this important qualitative research, which would select participating families on the basis of a number of key parent characteristics and demographics, would explore the ways in which families understand and navigate the childcare system, provide a better understanding of parents' attitudes to using formal childcare including barriers and incentives to take-up, and understand how parents make decisions about working.
- **Comparability of data between the nations of the UK:** while data available for England is fairly up to date and comprehensive, the same is not the case for the other three nations. This means we cannot conclude if any of the nations have been more or less successful in their childcare initiatives when it comes, for example, to rates of take-up of childcare places, and rates of take-up of the free provision. Knowing more about how the countries compare would support effective policy-making.
- **Quality of childcare:** while research suggests that quality of childcare is of importance to the parents, it would be useful to know more about how parents make judgements with regard to the quality of their local providers. For example, the extent to which they consult Ofsted reports, rely on the 'word of mouth', read online reviews etc., and how they go about making their own

judgements when visiting the childcare settings. It is also not sufficiently understood to what extent perceptions of quality of different types of provision and of particular providers in the local area are consistent with objective quality measures, as documented in for example, Ofsted reports. This research project would explore the extent to which parents are able to judge the quality of provision.

- **Types of users of childcare:** it appears that research on patterns of childcare use could be more closely linked to research on attitudes and motivations around using paid-for childcare, which would enhance our understanding of the segmentation of the parent population in terms of what they do and think when it comes to using childcare.

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8 Annexes A-C

Annex A: Methodology

The literature review draws on key methodological principles of rapid evidence assessments to ensure that we searched the most relevant sources of evidence and identified key literature. These include an a priori determined search strategy and inclusion criteria, transparent procedures for screening of identified studies and data extraction from included studies, and an unbiased synthesis of findings.

The literature review covered evidence on formal (paid-for by parents and government-subsidised) childcare for pre-school children (0 to 4 years) by registered settings and individuals, and childcare for primary school-aged children (5 to 11 years) provided in registered childcare settings such as after-school and holiday clubs and childminders. We excluded evidence on crèches and similar facilities where children do not attend on a long-term (daily) basis, unpaid childcare provided by grandparents, family members and friends and (unregistered) childcare services which are paid for but undeclared.

We used tailored inclusion criteria and search strategies for each of the three research questions guiding the literature review in order to identify the most relevant and appropriate evidence to answer these questions in the most effective manner. Our proposed inclusion criteria and search strategies for each of the questions were slightly different. Approaches included reviewing a mixture of published and unpublished reports, policy and strategy documents using target searches of relevant electronic databases, websites, and for studies and reports analysing identified data sets to address the question concerning patterns of childcare use. Identified studies and sources were then screened for inclusion criteria and studies judged to be relevant were reviewed a second time and key information extracted using data extraction tools focusing on themes of interest.

Finally, findings were synthesised using thematic analysis. Where possible, we have tried to highlight how findings vary by age of child, parental income and employment status, and across/within each nation. In the process of synthesis, we have also considered the coherence of the findings across studies and relevance with respect to the review's research questions when drawing higher-level thematic findings. We have also identified key gaps in the existing evidence base on patterns of childcare use and perceptions and attitudes to childcare quality in the UK.

Annex B: Data tables

Region/Nation	Nursery 25 hours (under 2)	Nursery 25 hours (2 and over)	Childminder 25 hours (under 2)	Childminder 25 hours (2 and over)	After-school club 15 hours	Childminder after-school pick up
East of England	£113.51	£110.88	£104.13	£104.08	£51.89	£63.04
East Midlands	£116.63	£109.15	£98.79	£98.74	£44.80	£58.65
London	£158.73	£148.74	£148.12	£146.81	£54.39	£88.17
North East	£109.49	£102.20	£97.76	£97.29	£48.20	£59.68
North West	£102.44	£101.08	£88.67	£88.21	£45.80	£55.95
South East	£137.88	£133.32	£117.58	£116.86	£50.81	£71.49
South West	£116.24	£111.63	£104.77	£103.53	£51.49	£63.49
West Midlands	£110.80	£106.91	£95.43	£93.06	£46.92	£59.64
Yorkshire and Humberside	£97.42	£93.60	£92.71	£91.16	£45.78	£55.56
England regional average	£118.13	£113.06	£105.33	£104.42	£48.90	£63.96
Scotland average	£111.13	£104.06	£102.50	£102.02	£53.21	£65.98
Wales average	£110.16	£109.07	£96.51	£96.53	£45.40	£57.16
Britain average of regions and nations	£116.77	£111.88	£104.27	£103.48	£48.97	£63.53

Source: Rutter (2016) Childcare costs survey 2015.

	Age of child					
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	All
Use of childcare	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Base: All children</i>	1,034	1,319	1,309	1,496	1,040	6,198
Any childcare	60	93	72	71	54	70
Formal providers	40	90	60	56	36	55
Nursery school	5	14	*	*	0	3
Nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school	1	20	1	0	0	3
Reception class	0	24	12	0	0	6
Day nursery	20	17	*	*	0	6
Playgroup or pre-school	7	14	*	0	0	3

Table B2: Use of childcare providers, by age of child						
Breakfast club	*	3	12	9	1	6
After-school club or activity	1	8	42	50	34	31
Childminder	7	5	5	3	*	4
Nanny or au pair	1	1	2	*	1	1
Informal providers	37	30	33	32	27	32
Ex-partner	4	4	6	6	5	5
Grandparent	30	23	23	18	13	21
Older sibling	*	1	1	4	6	3
Another relative	5	3	3	4	2	3
Friend or neighbour	2	3	5	6	4	4
No childcare used	40	7	28	29	46	30

Source: Huskinson et al. (2016). Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015.

Table B3: Use of childcare, by family characteristics (NB: data in rows expressed as percentages)				
Family characteristics	Any childcare	Formal childcare	Informal childcare	Unweighted base
<i>Base: All children</i>				
All	70	55	32	6,198
Family type				
Couple	69	57	29	4,651
Lone parent	70	50	39	1,547
Family work status				
Couple – both working	79	65	38	2,690
Couple – one working	58	47	17	1,668
Couple – neither working	51	42	15	293
Lone parent – working	79	56	51	802
Lone parent – not working	59	44	26	745
Family annual income				
Under £10,000	60	45	26	429

Table B3: Use of childcare, by family characteristics

(NB: data in rows expressed as percentages)

£10,000 - £19,999	62	46	28	1,422
£20,000 - £29,999	66	51	31	1,211
£30,000 - £44,999	76	59	38	1,088
£45,000+	80	69	37	1,608
Number of children				
1	73	56	40	1,603
2	73	59	33	2,792
3+	61	49	23	1,803

Source: Huskinson et al. (2016). Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015.

Table B.4: Use of formal childcare providers, by family type and work status

	Family type and work status						
	Couples				Lone Parents		
	All	Both working	One working	Neither working	All	Working	Not working
Use of childcare	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Base: All children</i>	4,651	2,690	1,668	293	1,547	802	745
Formal providers							
Nursery school	3	3	3	3	3	2	4
Nursery class attached to a primary or infants' school	3	2	5	5	3	2	4
Reception class	6	6	6	5	6	6	7
Day nursery	6	8	4	3	5	5	5
Playgroup or pre-school	4	3	4	2	2	1	3
Breakfast club	5	8	2	4	7	9	4
After-school club	32	39	23	21	26	32	19
Childminder	4	6	1	*	4	7	1
Nanny or au pair	1	1	*	0	1	1	*

Source: Huskinson et al. (2016). Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2014 to 2015.

Annex C: Overview of childcare policy

Table C.1: Overview of childcare policy

Provision	Description of provision	Eligibility criteria	Coverage and regional variations
Free early years education for 3 and 4 year olds	3 and 4 year olds are entitled up to 16 hours of state-funded education across a range of approved providers.	<p>All children are eligible for free early years education on the first term after their third birthday.</p> <p>Childcare must be delivered by an approved provider and continues until the child enters reception class.</p>	<p>Each UK nation has slightly a slightly different policy for administering and delivering early years education:</p> <p>The policy in England entitles parents to 15 hours per week/ 570 hours per year. It was introduced in 2010.</p> <p>In Scotland the policy is called the 'Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement' and enables parents to access 16 hours per week/ 600 hours per year. This was introduced in 2014.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, one year of funded part-time early education is available for 12.5 hours per week/ 475 hours per year.</p> <p>Families in Wales are entitled to 10 hours for 38 weeks of the year. Some Local Authorities enable parents to access more than this.</p>

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<p>Free early years education for disadvantaged 2 year olds</p>	<p>From September 2014 children aged 2 from the 40 per cent lower income households in England became eligible for the free early years education</p>	<p>Families qualify for 2 year-old provision if they are in receipt of one of a number of benefits including, for example, Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance. Eligibility also covers those children who are looked after, have special educational needs, receive Disability Living Allowance or have left care under special guardianship, child arrangements or adoption orders.</p> <p>Childcare must be delivered by an approved provider.</p>	<p>The information in this table for disadvantaged two year olds refers to England and Scotland only. This extends the 15-16 hours available to parents of 3 and 4 year olds to disadvantaged 2 year olds in England and Scotland.</p> <p>Early years provision in Wales is supplemented by a programme called Flying Start, which offers free early education of up to 12.5 hours per week to disadvantaged two-year-olds. The provision available is not uniform across all Local Authorities.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland some disadvantaged 2 year olds receive part-time early years education through Sure Start.</p>
<p>Tax Credits</p>	<p>Tax Credits enable parents to receive a subsidy of up to £122.50 extra per week for one child, or £210 extra for two or more children to help with childcare costs.</p>	<p>In order to be eligible for tax credits, parents need to be in paid work for at least 16 hours per week, earn under the threshold for their family circumstances and spend money on registered childcare (for children aged under 16). Parents with children who are disabled are able to claim this allowance up until the child's 17th birthday.</p> <p>Recipients of Tax Credits cannot claim Universal Credit at the same time.</p>	<p>Tax Credits are available to families across the devolved nations.</p>

Table C.1: Overview of childcare policy

<p>Childcare Vouchers</p>	<p>Childcare vouchers are offered by employers and are aimed at supporting parents in work to help pay for childcare by exempting a portion of a parents' salary from tax and National Insurance contributions. Parents can use up to £55 of their earnings pre-Income Tax per week (or £243 per month) to buy childcare vouchers.</p>	<p>Parents in work may be eligible to varying amounts depending on their earnings. Not all employers offer childcare vouchers.</p>	<p>Childcare vouchers which exempt parents from paying tax and National Insurance on a portion of their salary are available across the devolved nations.</p>
<p>Early Years Pupil Premium</p>	<p>The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is additional funding that Local Authorities in England allocate to early years providers to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged 3 and 4 year-olds.</p> <p>Providers can receive 53 pence per hour per eligible pupil - up to £302.10 per year for each eligible child if the family opts to use the 570 hours (per year) of state-funded early education available.</p>	<p>Families are eligible to claim this subsidy for their childcare provider if their child is considered to be 'disadvantaged' through a number of income-based proxy measures such as claiming a benefit (including, for example, ESA or JSA). Looked after children are also eligible to receive the subsidy.</p>	<p>The Early Years Pupil Premium is currently available in England only.</p>
<p>Universal Credit (currently being rolled out across the UK. In most areas)</p>	<p>Universal Credit represents an extension of support with childcare costs through the benefits system to those working under 16 hours a week.</p>	<p>Families can receive support through Universal Credit if they are in paid work and pay for childcare. If in a couple, both parents must be in paid work.</p>	<p>Universal Credit is a new benefit to replace existing welfare support that is being rolled out in phases across the UK.</p>

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and for families with children, Universal Credit is forthcoming)	The policy enables parents to claim back up to 85 per cent of childcare costs depending on their earnings.		
Tax-free Childcare (forthcoming)	The government is planning to replace the childcare voucher scheme with a new system for tax relief on childcare costs. Parents will be able to claim a 20 per cent rebate on childcare spending, per child, spending up to a maximum of £10,000 annually.	Tax-free childcare will be available for lone and couple families where both parents are in work and not claiming Universal Credit. Self-employed parents will also be eligible.	Tax-free childcare will be available to families across the devolved nations.
Extension of free early education (forthcoming)	From September 2017, free early education will be extended to 30 hours per week in England for all 3 and 4 year olds in households where parents work.	Parents in work with children aged 3 and 4 will be eligible for the extended free provision.	The extension of free early education is currently planned for implementation in England only.

NatCen Social Research
 35 Northampton Square
 London EC1V 0AX
 T 020 7250 1866
www.natcen.ac.uk

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