

Repeat Study of Parents' Demand for Childcare

Stephen Woodland, Melissa Miller and Sarah Tipping
National Centre for Social Research

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Child level analysis reported in the previous report, published in May 2002, used incorrect weights. This has been corrected in this revised version.

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

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a study of the demand for childcare among parents of children aged 14 and under in England. The survey was carried out by the *National Centre for Social Research* on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (formerly the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)), between February and July 2001. It represents a follow-up of a survey conducted in 1999 (the 'baseline' survey), the results of which were published in the DfEE Research Report series (No. 176)¹.

The survey collected comprehensive information on the current use of childcare for 0-14 year olds. Both formal (e.g. playgroups, day nurseries, early years education, out-of-school clubs) and informal (e.g. grandparents, friends) arrangements were of interest, as was childcare used on an irregular basis. The only types of childcare that were excluded were times when a child was at school or when they were being looked after by the respondent or their spouse. Details were collected on usage 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which therefore included 'non-standard' times such as early mornings, evenings and nights, as well as weekends. Parents were asked a number of general questions about their use of childcare in the last year, while more detailed information was collected about the childcare used in the reference week.

Characteristics of families

Childcare use was analysed by looking at a number of key distinguishing features of the families that were interviewed. As is shown elsewhere in this report, these characteristics help to explain variations in the type and amount of childcare used by parents.

Personal and family characteristics

- A quarter (25 per cent) of the families interviewed were headed by a lone parent.
- Just over a tenth (11 per cent) of the main respondents were from a non-white ethnic background.
- The average size of household was four. Two-fifths of the households contained one child (39 per cent), 43 per cent contained two, and the remaining 17 per cent had three or more children. Four-fifths (80 per cent) of households had children that went to school, with just over half (54 per cent) having only children of school age.
- In a fifth of households (19 per cent) either the main respondent or their partner (if present) had a disability that limited their activities. The proportion of households that contained a child with a special educational need or other special need was 14 per cent.
- A fifth (19 per cent) of all households were claiming Working Families' Tax Credit, and 3 per cent were also getting the childcare tax credit.

Work and economic activity of families

- In 17 per cent of households no parent was in work. This was higher in lone parent households (54 per cent) than in those headed by a couple (5 per cent).

¹ Ivana La Valle, Steven Finch, Andrea Nove and Charlotte Lewin (2000), *Parents' Demand for Childcare*, DfEE Research report 176.

- Around a third (35 per cent) of respondents had an atypical work patterns. Of those currently in work as an employee, around one-in-ten (11 per cent) regularly worked shifts, one-in-fourteen (7 per cent) usually worked more than 45 hours per week, a fifth (21 per cent) sometimes had to work on a weekend and around one-in-eight (13 per cent) sometimes worked from home.
- Around a third (33 per cent) of respondents who were currently in work reported that their employer made available to them some form of assistance with childcare. A broad definition of assistance was employed here as it covers term time working contracts and the provision of information about childcare as well as the provision of childcare facilities and help with the cost of childcare. Considerably fewer parents (20 per cent) made use of this assistance.
- In just over a fifth (21 per cent) of households at least one parent was enrolled in a course that would lead to a qualification.

Parents' use of childcare

Usage of childcare in the last year and last week

- The analysis of childcare usage indicates that most parents (86 per cent or approximately 4.56 million families in England) had experience of using childcare at some time in the past year with just over half (56 per cent or 2.97 million families) saying they had done so in the week prior to being interviewed (the reference week). We believe the latter figure represents the proportion of families that use childcare regularly.
- The use of childcare was closely related to parental work status. Where at least one parent was in work, almost nine in ten parents (88 per cent) used childcare in the past year compared with just under three-quarters (74 per cent) where no parent was in work. Usage of childcare was greater in higher income households and it was lower where the respondent was from a non-white ethnic background.

Types of childcare provider used

- Childcare provision was more likely to be of an informal nature. Around half of families (52 per cent or 2.76 million families) had used either early years education or some other formal childcare provider in the past year compared with three-quarters (72 per cent or 3.82 million families) who had used an informal provider. The use of early years education and other formal childcare was positively related to household income. Couples were more likely to have used these types of childcare than were lone parents.
- Grandparents were the most commonly used childcare providers – 58 per cent of households had used a grandparent for childcare in the past year and 24 per cent had done so in the reference week.

When do parents use childcare?

- Parents' using childcare tended to use it across the year rather than at particular times. Relatively few used childcare only in school holidays (9 per cent) or just in term-time (12 per cent). Most parents (79 per cent) used childcare across both these periods.
- In terms of when during the week parents' used childcare, weekday daytime (40 per cent) and late afternoons (37 per cent) were the most popular times. However, this

varied considerably according to the work status of the family. For instance, 69 per cent of lone parents in full-time work and 56 per cent of couples that both worked full-time used a late afternoon session of childcare.

Quantity of childcare used

- Most parents used more than one childcare provider in the past year. Just under three-quarters of families that used childcare in the past year used more than one provider (72 per cent) with a quarter using exactly two (28 per cent).
- Across all parents, the average number of hours of childcare used in the reference week was twelve. However, restricting the estimate to households that used childcare in the reference week increases the average to 21.4 hours per week. This varied significantly according to the work status of a household. Lone parents in full-time work (30.9 hours) and couples where both worked full-time (24.6 hours) used considerably more hours of childcare than did other parents.

Patterns of childcare use among children

- The use of childcare was closely related to the age of the child. Children in the 3-4 age category were more likely than other children to have received some childcare. Four-fifths (80 per cent) had used childcare in the reference week, with almost three-fifths (58 per cent) attending early years education or some other formal provider. Childcare was less common among other children with fewer than 56 per cent in any of the other age group having received some childcare in the reference week.
- Grandparents aside, the type of childcare provider used was closely related to the age of the child. Children aged 0-4 were more likely to attend a crèche, playgroup or nursery than were other children. Out-of-school clubs were much more commonly used by 5-11 year olds than for children of other ages.

Reasons for not using childcare in the past year

- The chapter concluded with an analysis of the reasons why some parents don't use childcare. Rather than being because of a problem with the cost or availability of childcare, a majority reported that they did not do so out of choice. This was usually because they had made the decision to look after their children themselves.

Changes in parents' use of childcare since 1999

Chapter 4 describes how parents' use of childcare has changed since the baseline survey was conducted in 1999.

Changes in the usage of childcare

- A slight fall was recorded, from 58 to 56 per cent, of parents using childcare in the reference week, and from 87 to 86 per cent of parents using childcare at some time in the past year. Only the first of these changes was significant. Given the short period of time between the baseline survey and the current study, it seems reasonable to interpret these figures as indicating no real change.
- Although there were only small changes in the parents' overall use of childcare between 1999 and 2001, there appeared to have been greater changes in the *types of providers* they

used. In terms of informal provision, there was a similar level of use of grandparents, but a slight fall in the usage of friends or older siblings.

Changes in the types of childcare provider used

- More distinguishable were changes in the use of early years education and other types of formal provision. Overall, the use of these childcare providers increased between 1999 and 2001 from 49 to 52 per cent, and there were signs that parents had substituted one type of provider for another. There was a slight increase in use of crèches/nurseries (from 14 to 16 per cent), nursery/reception classes (from 9 to 12 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (11 to 14 per cent), while fewer parents used babysitters (from 14 to 10 per cent) or playgroups (from 14 to 11 per cent).
- The changes in the reference week were similar: slightly more parents were using nursery/reception classes (from 5 to 7 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (from 4 to 6 per cent); slightly fewer parents were using childminders (from 6 to 5 per cent) and playgroups (from 7 to 6 per cent). Overall, the use of early years education and other types of formal childcare provision in the reference week increased between 1999 and 2001 from 28 to 32 per cent. This was matched by a similar fall in the level of use of informal childcare in the reference week.
- Low income families were using more early years education and other formal childcare while higher income families' usage these providers was unchanged.
- More lone parent families were using early years education and other types of formal childcare in 2001 than in 1999. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) had used one in the reference week in the repeat survey compared with 23 per cent in the baseline survey. This was matched by a fall in the proportion using an informal provider (from 46 to 42 per cent). Lone parents working part-time markedly increased their use of formal providers - 19 per cent had used some early years education or other formal provision in 1999 compared with 29 per cent in 2001.

Changes in the quantity of childcare used

- In terms of changes in the quantity of childcare used, the mean number of hours of childcare used by parents in the reference week increased from 19.9 to 21.4 (among families that used childcare in the past week). This was associated with a slight increase in the proportion of families that used larger amounts (over 30 hours per week) of childcare.

Changes in the patterns of childcare use among children

- Children aged 11 or under were all more likely to have received some childcare in 2001 than was reported in the 1999 baseline survey, particularly for those aged 0-2 and 5-7. There was a small, but not significant, reduction in the level of childcare use for those children aged 12 to 14.

Parents' use of formal childcare and the National Childcare Strategy

In Chapter 5 an alternative analysis of the childcare use data is presented focussing on the use of formal childcare. Formal childcare was defined as being care coming from one of the following three provider types: registered childminders, crèche/nursery providers and out of school clubs (including holiday schemes). This definition matches that used in the *National Childcare Strategy*.

- Under a fifth (18 per cent) of parents reported using one of these providers in the reference week while a third (32 per cent) had used one in the past year. The household characteristic that most strongly influenced the use of formal childcare was parental work status. Usage in the reference week was highest for lone parents in full-time jobs and for couples who both worked full-time (both 28 per cent). Usage was also higher among parents in higher income groups. Least likely to have used a formal provider in the reference week were households where no parent was in a paid job. These characteristics also tended to explain variations in the quantity of formal childcare used by parents.
- In terms of changes in the use of formal childcare since the baseline survey in 1999, the general picture is of more parents using this type of care. Lone parents in paid work and low income families appear to have made the biggest change in terms of their use of formal childcare. Whereas a fifth (21 per cent) of lone parents were using a formal provider in 1999 (in the reference week), 28 per cent were doing so in 2001. Given that the overall use of childcare appears to have remained unchanged, it therefore seems likely that parents have been substituting formal provision for other types of informal arrangements. It is estimated that formal provision now accounts for around 26 per cent of the total childcare regularly used by parents, whereas it represented 24 per cent in 1999.
- In the concluding section of the chapter an estimate is made of the gap between actual and potential use of formal childcare. Using parents' views on their ideal childcare provision we estimated that around three-quarters of parents would like to use some type of formal childcare. Of the parents that expressed this desire, less than two-fifths had actually used a formal provider in the past year. This gives an indication of the potential to increase the use of formal childcare.

Difficulties with childcare

In Chapter 6 a number of findings are presented in relation to the types of difficulties faced by parents with respect to their childcare arrangements.

Unmet demand for childcare

- A quarter (24 per cent or approximately 1.3 million) of all families experienced some form of unmet demand in the past year. Unmet demand was defined as occasions when the parent wanted or needed childcare for their child(ren), but had been unable to get it. This excluded occasions when existing arrangements had become unavailable at short notice.
- The incidence of unmet demand was considerably higher among families that had used some childcare in the past year. They were twice as likely as non-users to have experienced some unmet demand - 26 per cent having done so compared with 13 per

cent. No association was found between the level of relative deprivation and the incidence of unmet demand – those in the most deprived areas were just as likely to have experienced some unmet demand for childcare (27 per cent) as families in the least deprived areas (26 per cent).

- Where a parent experienced some unmet demand they reported that it occurred relatively infrequently. Just over a tenth (11 per cent) said that it had occurred at least once every two months. A mixture of work and non-work situations were reported by parents as the occasions when they experienced some unmet demand. Just over a quarter (29 per cent) said their unmet demand was work related and this was usually when they wanted or needed to work additional hours. Another quarter said that their unmet demand was related to times when they wanted to take up employment (26 per cent). This was particularly high among lone parents (30 per cent). Just under one-in-ten parents (8 per cent) said they wanted to start studying and 8 per cent that they wanted/needed to study extra hours.
- Around three-quarters (73 per cent) of parents who experienced some unmet demand said that not getting this childcare caused them some difficulties, of which a fifth (22 per cent or 13 per cent of all parents) said that these problems were serious. For most parents these problems usually meant that the respondent or their partner (if present) had to take time off from their work or study. Almost half (45 per cent) of the families mentioned this as a consequence.

Breakdown of childcare arrangements

- Just over a quarter of parents (29 per cent or approximately 1.3 million families) said that their childcare arrangements had broken down at short notice in the past year. When it did happen, childcare arrangements broke down relatively infrequently, usually less than once a month. The proportion of parents reporting that their arrangements had broken down was somewhat higher than that was recorded in the baseline survey (24 per cent).

Organising childcare arrangements

- Relatively few parents (5 per cent) reported that they had a child who had received consecutive sessions of childcare with different providers in the reference week. Of those that did around a third (34 per cent) said that they would prefer it if one of the providers could look after their child for longer hours. They expressed this view even though most (88 per cent) said that having to manage these childcare arrangements had not caused them many problems.
- Around 10 per cent of families used some childcare immediately prior to the start of the school day. Very few of these families (6 per cent) had ever experienced difficulties with such arrangements. Considerably more families (62 per cent of those with children attending school and who had used childcare in the reference week) used childcare immediately after the end of the school day. Few parents reported a problem with these arrangements – 11 per cent of parents said they had experienced a problem with the arrangements they had used to get their child from school to their after-school provider.
- Around a quarter of respondents that either started work before 8am or continued to work after 6pm said that these arrangements caused them (or their partner if there was one) some problems. Respondents with younger children were more likely to have said

they experienced problems, as were those that were using some type of formal childcare including early years education.

Parental evaluation of childcare provision

Chapter 7 presents information on the childcare providers used by parents in the past year. It relied on information from the main interview conducted with parents as well as the follow-up telephone interview with providers.

Characteristics of the providers.

- While most formal providers (including early years education) had been operating for 10 or more years, around one-in-ten (11 per cent) had opened for business in the past two years. This was most likely to have happened if the provider was an out-of-school club (22 per cent) or a childminder (16 per cent).
- In the past two years a third (31 per cent) of formal childcare providers (including early years education) increased the number of childcare places at their establishment. Out-of-school clubs and crèche/nurseries were more likely to have reported an increase than were other providers.
- Relatively few formal childcare providers (37 per cent) were accredited with a quality assurance scheme. Among formal providers, crèches and nurseries were most commonly accredited, the proportion being almost half (45 per cent). More importantly however, for half (50 per cent) of the providers used in the past year, parents did not know whether they were accredited. The levels were similar for crèches/nurseries (45 per cent), out of school clubs (47 per cent), playgroups (53 per cent) and reception / nursery classes (58 per cent).
- For one-third (65 per cent) of providers there was no similar alternative provider in the local area. This proportion varied considerably across different provider types. In particular, for 74 per cent of the cases where an out-of-school club was being used, a parent did not know of another similar provider situated in their local area.

Influences on choice of provider

- Overall, two-thirds (67 per cent) of providers used in the previous year were chosen by parents because they could be trusted. The next most prevalent reason for being chosen was that the provider would show their child affection. Both of these reasons were cited more often when a person rather than a service provided the childcare. A good reputation was an important selection criterion for many parents (39 per cent) who used formal registered childcare providers. Other reasons for choosing a provider were having trained staff, offering education, cost and lack of alternative provision.

Reasons for no longer using a provider

- Relatively few providers (15 per cent) that had been used at some time in the previous year were no longer being used by parents. The main reason for ceasing to use a provider was that the child was older and no longer required the same type of care. In general circumstantial reasons were much more commonly cited for no longer using a provider compared with reasons related to the quality or cost of provision.

Ratings of childcare providers

- The majority of parents were satisfied with the providers they had used in the reference week: three-quarters (76 per cent) were rated as 'very good' and a fifth as 'fairly good' (21 per cent).

Ways of improving childcare provision

- In spite of high standards, parents reported that just under half (49 per cent) of providers could improve at least some aspects of their provision. The types of things that needed to be improved included the range of hours a provider was open for (16 per cent), communication between providers and parents (15 per cent) and the quality of the buildings (14 per cent).

Accessibility of providers

- The majority of providers were thought to have been in easy reach of parents: parents found two-thirds (64 per cent) of formal registered providers to be very easily accessible, as were 48 per cent informal providers and 30 per cent of formal unregistered providers.

Costs and the affordability of childcare

Payments to providers

- The survey findings show that just over half (51 per cent) of parents paid some money for the childcare they used in the reference week with 40 per cent having made a payment covering fees or wages. Both these remained unchanged from the baseline survey in 1999.
- Paid-for childcare was more likely to have been used by families with high incomes and by those with pre-school aged children. Lone parents were less likely to have used paid childcare than were couples. Families living in socially deprived areas were less likely to have used paid childcare relative to those in the least deprived areas.
- Understandably, whether a payment was required was closely related to the type of childcare being used. A majority of parents using early years education and other formal childcare had to pay for this childcare, whereas this occurred relatively infrequently with respect to informal providers. However, it did matter whether the provider was privately owned or run by the Local Authority, use of the latter being less likely to incur charges for fees or wages.
- The overwhelming majority of informal providers were not paid which partly explains why they were used by so many parents. However, just under half of these providers received a payment in kind. Gifts or treats were the most common form of payment in kind with respect to relatives, while looking after the provider's children was the most frequent response among friends;

Weekly childcare costs

- The median weekly cost of childcare among parents that used childcare was £21. Two-fifths of parents paid less than £20 per week and one-in-ten paid more than £100.
- There was considerable variation in these costs between different groups. Families in the highest income bracket and those with children not yet attending school had the highest

childcare costs. There were also large regional differences in childcare costs with median three times higher in London than in the East Midlands.

- A slight increase in the median weekly cost of childcare was recorded between the repeat and baseline surveys. Costs had increased from £19 in 1999 to £21 in 2001, a rise of approximately 11 per cent. Weekly costs of childcare for families with children not yet attending school increased by £8 - from £27 to £35 and lone parents working full-time saw their weekly childcare costs increase from £25 to £37. Couples where both parents were in full-time work were paying £6 per week more - the median weekly cost of childcare increased from £38 to £44.

Affordability of childcare

- The generally low cost of childcare is reflected in parents' evaluation of its affordability. A majority of parents found it easy to manage their childcare costs. However, somewhat at odds with this, only a third of all parents regarded the affordability of childcare in their local area to have been fairly or very good. In addition, very few parents thought childcare was becoming more affordable.
- Most (72 per cent) providers were thought to represent 'very good' value for money. One-in-three providers (34 per cent) increased their childcare costs in the past year although this appears to have had very little effect on parents' use of childcare. Just 4 per cent of parents changed the number of hours their child(ren) attended the provider as a result of the price change.

Impact of WFTC and the childcare tax credit on childcare use

- Parents receiving the childcare tax credit were asked to estimate the percentage of their childcare costs covered by the tax credit. Under the rules governing the tax credit, parents can claim for up to 70 per cent of their childcare costs, for certain types of providers. Just under a third (31 per cent) had 70 per cent of their total childcare costs met by the tax credit and one-in-four parents reported that 50 per cent or less of their costs were met. Almost one-in-five parents (18 per cent) said more than 70 per cent of their costs were covered while 16 per cent said they did not know how much of their costs were covered. The latter two figures, along with the fact that almost a fifth of WFTC recipients did not know whether they qualified for childcare tax credit, reflects a general lack of knowledge about the childcare tax credit.
- Whereas a small majority (53 per cent) of parents said the childcare tax credit had affected the type of childcare they used, a much smaller proportion (27 per cent) reported that they had changed the number of hours they had used childcare for. Not surprisingly, almost all (96 per cent) parents reported an increase in the number of hours.
- In terms of the impact of childcare tax credit on the number of hours worked, around a quarter (25 per cent) of respondents said that they had changed their hours, and of these, four-fifths (80 per cent) said their hours had increased. The receipt of the tax credit did not appear to have had much of an impact on the labour supply of partners as just 5 per cent of respondents reported that their partner had changed the number of hours they worked as a result of the tax credit.

Parental attitudes towards childcare

In this chapter we have described the views parents have about their own childcare and what is available to them in their local area.

Sources of information about childcare

- Just over half of parents (54 per cent) had obtained some information about childcare in the past year. By a considerable distance, the main source of information about childcare is word of mouth – 38 per cent of parents had received information about childcare from this source which was almost three times as many as the next most commonly used source of information, the Local Authority (13 per cent). Generally speaking, parents relied more on informal sources of information than from formal sources such as childcare information services.
- Parents were asked specifically about their use and awareness of *ChildcareLink*, the government sponsored helpline and internet site. Relatively few parents (1 per cent or approximately 55,000 families) reported having used *ChildcareLink* in the past year.

Parents' evaluation of childcare information

- Almost half (45 per cent) of parents thought that there should be more information available. Those with children of pre-school age are most likely to think that more information is needed. Of those who wanted more information about childcare, 54 per cent wanted general information, 17 per cent wanted specific information about cost and 7 per cent wanted more information about quality. Most parents thought that in the past two years there had been either no change (46 per cent) or did not know (37 per cent) if there had been any change in the amount of childcare information available in the local area.

Parental perceptions of the availability of childcare in their local area

- Just under half (47 per cent) thought there were not enough childcare places in their locality. Dissatisfaction with the number of childcare places did not appear to be related to many of the key characteristics we have used to classify families apart from ethnicity. Families of black ethnic origin were more likely to have reported insufficient childcare places in their local area than other families – 56 per cent said there were not enough places compared with 47 per cent of white families and 38 per cent of Asian families.
- In comparison with the 1999 baseline survey, this repeat study shows that there has been a fall in the proportion of families that appear to be satisfied with the number of childcare places available to them.
- More specifically, parents were asked about the need for more pre-school childcare and supervised places for school age children in their local area. A large majority (77 per cent) thought there should be more childcare places for pre-school children and an even higher proportion (86 per cent) thought there should be more out-of-school childcare places. Across most of the characteristics which we have used to define parents and households, there was little variation in these proportions. One notable exception was families in socially deprived areas who were more likely to have strongly agreed that there was a need for more pre-school and out-of-school childcare.

Parental perceptions of the quality of childcare in their local area

- All parents were asked about the quality of childcare in the local area and about half (49 per cent) thought that it was 'fairly' or 'very good'. Not surprisingly, users of childcare are more likely to report good quality than non-users (51 per cent compared to 38 per cent). There has been no change in the parental evaluation of childcare quality since the last survey.

Labour market participation and the use of childcare

In this chapter we have looked at how childcare impacts on the decision to work. The analysis was restricted to mothers as it appears that it is their work which is most affected by childcare arrangements. The study identified a total of 3,363 mothers who were in paid employment at the time of the survey, of which 2,713 were in two-parent households and 650 were lone mothers.

The transition to work

- A majority (58 per cent) of mothers who were in employment at the time of the interview had started a job within two years of having their youngest child. Similar proportions of working mothers had entered employment before (20 per cent) and after (21 per cent) their youngest child had reached their fifth birthday.
- Most women (60 per cent) in couple households had started work within two years of the birth of their youngest child. In comparison, just half (50 per cent) of female lone parents had done the same.
- A key factor in *entering* work (mentioned by 35 per cent of those who started a job in the last two years) was finding a job which allowed the woman to manage childcare. Twelve per cent of lone mothers said that they entered work because of the extra in-work support available through WFTC. This reason was cited by only one per cent of mothers in couple households.

Reasons for changing hours of work

- A small group (6 per cent of all mothers in paid work) of mothers who decided to increase their hours from less than 30 to more than 30 per week were identified in the survey and were asked why they had done this.
- The most common reason was financial need, mentioned by 28 per cent of mothers. However, for a significant minority the decision to increase weekly hours appears to have happened somewhat by chance. Twenty-two per cent simply said that 'the job was offered to me.' This may nevertheless indicate a latent interest to extend work for financial or personal reasons.

The decision to work

- When asked the more general question about why they were currently working, half (51 per cent) of mothers mentioned financial autonomy as a factor influencing their decision. However, attachment to working was also very often mentioned, in terms of wishing to get out of the house or more simply as something valued for its own sake, especially by respondents with higher levels of qualifications.

Childcare factors which enabled mothers to work

- We also asked whether there were any factors related to their childcare requirements which enabled mothers to go out to work. The key factor allowing mothers to work (mentioned by 50 per cent) was having children of school age. Childcare support provided by relatives was mentioned just as often (49 per cent), slightly more often by lone parents than by mothers in a couple. The availability of free or low-cost childcare was a factor mentioned by one-third (30 per cent) of mothers, and again slightly more often by lone parents (40 per cent). However, employer involvement in provision of childcare was notable by the low percentage of mothers who mentioned this factor in enabling them to work (1 per cent).
- When asked to judge whether work or childcare related factors were more important in terms of the decision to work mothers were generally divided. Half (50 per cent) thought the work related reasons were more important, two-fifths (42 per cent) thought the childcare related reasons were more important with the remaining mothers undecided between the two of these.
- Lone mothers were more likely to have been working for work related reasons than were mothers in two-parent households, 67 and 44 per cent respectively. Where a lone mother had said their main reason for working was because they needed the money, they almost unanimously (92 per cent) said they were working because of a work related reason.

Preferred arrangements for work and childcare

- The chapter finished with an analysis of mothers' preferred arrangements for work and childcare. The findings on this topic reflect the priority attached by mothers to ensuring the quality of care for their children, at the same time as most of them reported a high degree of attachment to work.
- Two-thirds (63 per cent) of mothers who were currently in employment wanted to work fewer hours and spend more time with their children and just under half (44 per cent) of working mothers said that if they could afford it, they would prefer to give up work and stay at home with their children.
- Many mothers were interested in having greater flexibility in their working arrangements. Just over half (55 per cent) of mothers wanted to only work in school term times (although only about one-in-ten actually did so), and a similar proportion wanted to work no more than school hours each day.
- A quarter of mothers (26 per cent) would like to be able to do some of their work at home; many wished for some combination of family-friendly practices, such as flexi-time. At the same time, a quarter of working mothers would prefer to work more hours if they had access to adequate childcare.
- Most mothers (85 per cent) in work said they would like to use some *formal* childcare if it was readily available and was affordable. The current reality is, however, that less than half (53%) of the working mothers had used some formal childcare in the past year, therefore indicating that there is considerable scope for growth in the availability of formal childcare.

Non-working mothers

The focus of chapter 11 was mothers who stay at home rather than work and the interest was in the reasons why they were not working. Two types of reasons for staying home were explored: those pertaining to issues about work itself, and those dealing with childcare. As the data makes clear, both sets of reasons discourage mothers from working, but the childcare reasons ultimately figure to be more important barriers to work.

Work related reasons for not working

- The most common reason cited was unsuitable work hours (28 per cent), and the second most common was the demands of the job (20 per cent). There were important differences amongst lone mothers and mothers in two parent families. Lone mothers were more likely to cite financial concerns, while mothers in couples were more likely to express financial ease and a preference for staying home.
- Another important factor explaining differences in the reasons for not working was prior work experience. Mothers who had never worked were more likely to cite a lack of qualifications (19 per cent) than those who had worked prior to two years ago (12 per cent) and those whose work experience was more recent (7 per cent). Mothers who had never worked were also more worried about the consequences of losing their state benefits. In general, mothers who had worked within the last two years seemed to be more proximate to work, both temporally and attitudinally.

Childcare-related influences on the decision to stay home

- Compared with the work-related reasons provided by respondents, which were quite diffuse, non-working mothers tended to converge around several key childcare-related reasons for staying out of work. Over half of all non-working mothers (52 per cent) said they preferred to stay at home with their children. Other common reasons included the young age of the children (31 per cent), lack of free/cheap childcare (23 per cent) and the belief that the children would suffer (23 per cent) if they went out to work
- Lone mothers were consistently more likely than mothers with partners to cite reasons pertaining to the quality and availability of childcare. They were more likely to mention the lack of free/cheap child care that would make working worthwhile (30 per cent compared with 19 per cent of mothers in couples), and somewhat more likely to cite a lack of care at suitable times (20 per cent compared with 12 per cent).
- Mothers with partners were more likely to suggest that childcare was inappropriate for them and their children. Fifty-eight per cent said they preferred to stay home with their children, as opposed to 41 per cent of non-working lone mothers.
- Mothers in low income families were less likely to express a preference for staying home as a reason for not working. Forty-three per cent of mothers in the lowest income band preferred to stay home, as opposed to 65 per cent in the highest income band. They were however, more likely to cite the lack of free/cheap childcare as a reason for not working – possibly because their skills would not command sufficient pay to cover the costs of decent childcare. Twenty-seven per cent of those in the lowest income band registered this concern, versus 15 per cent of those in the highest income band.

- Respondents were asked to choose which of the childcare and work related factors were most important in determining their stay-at-home status. Nearly two-thirds of all non-working mothers cited reasons related to childcare as their chief reason for not working (61 per cent).
- Mothers with partners were more likely to cite reasons related to the care of their child(ren) as their chief reason for not working – despite their apparent ability to call on a partner for help with such responsibilities. Sixty-four percent of mothers with partners cited care related factors as their chief reason for not working, as opposed to 57 per cent of lone mothers.

Arrangements which would facilitate paid employment

- Nearly two-thirds (%) of the non-working mothers in the sample said they would prefer to go out to work or study if they had access to ‘good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare.’ An even higher proportion of lone mothers (%) were interested under these conditions
- Mothers were asked whether there were any working arrangements which would help them get into work. Term-time jobs, ensuring the children were safe and well looked after, and having a job that earned enough to make employment worthwhile were the most commonly cited factors.
- Some arrangements were especially popular among specific groups of mothers. Lone mothers were particularly concerned about not losing their benefits, working flexible hours, and having their employer provide or pay for childcare. Mothers with young children favoured childcare provided or subsidised by the employer, while mothers with older children favoured term-time employment.
- Lone mothers and those with recent work experience were most likely to say they plan to look for a job in the next year. Those anxious to begin work were predominantly interested in part-time employment, and nearly half (47 per cent) were interested in term-time employment.

Student parents and their use of childcare

In this chapter we have reported findings from a study of student parents. When designing the sample for the Repeat Study of Parents’ Demand for Childcare, student parents were purposefully over-sampled in order to make possible a separate analysis of their childcare demands. A total of 1,456 student parent households were identified.

- Generally, student parents used more childcare than non-student households did. Just under two-thirds (63 per cent) of households with a student parent used childcare in the reference week, compared with just over half (54 per cent) of other households that used childcare. Lone parents who studied were more likely to have used childcare than were couples who studied.
- Proportionately more student parent households (59 per cent) used formal childcare (including early years education) in the past year than did non-student households (49 per cent). In terms of the *amount* of childcare used, households with a student parent

used more childcare than did other households. They used an average of 14.0 hours of childcare in the reference week compared with 11.4 hours in all other households.

- Some of the problems parents faced with their childcare were peculiar to student parents. A majority (79 per cent) of student parents had to look after their children whilst studying at home. A direct consequence of this is greater levels of unmet demand for childcare. They were more likely to have recorded unmet demand for childcare (39 per cent having done so) than other student parents (26 per cent) and significantly more than parents who did not study (22 per cent).
- In addition, a quarter (25 per cent) of student parents that had main responsibility for childcare in their household reported that they had missed a class or lecture in the past year because of problems with their childcare arrangements. This did not appear to be related to whether the childcare was formal or informal. However, it was more likely to occur where more than one provider had been used in the past year.
- Informal childcare arrangements such as the help of the respondent's partner or help from friends or relatives were the most commonly reported childcare arrangements that enabled the parent to study.
- Around a third of Higher Education (36 per cent) and Further Education (37 per cent) students reported their college had childcare facilities that were available to students. Few student parents used their college's childcare facilities - 5 per cent of all respondents enrolled on a FE course and 2 per cent on HE courses were currently using their college's childcare.
- Most student parents did not have access to their college's childcare facilities at short notice. Only 8 per cent of FE students and 6 per cent of HE students reported such access. A fifth of student parents either did not know whether their college had any childcare available to students or did not know whether it was available at short notice.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This report presents the findings of a study of the demand for childcare among parents of children aged 14 and under in England. The survey was carried out by the *National Centre for Social Research* on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (formerly the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)), between February and July 2001. It represents a follow-up of a survey conducted in 1999 (the 'baseline' survey), the results of which were published in the DfEE Research Report series (No. 176)².

The study was designed to investigate the use of childcare by parents in England and to explore the factors that influence their decision to use childcare and how these relate to their participation in the labour market. Specifically, the study had following aims:

- to establish the level of usage and nature of take-up of childcare by parents with children aged 0-14;
- to discover what influences a parent's decision to use childcare;
- to assess the financial cost of paid-for childcare;
- to assess parents' satisfaction with current childcare arrangements;
- to establish parents' un-met demand for childcare;
- to identify parents' ideal childcare provision;
- to assess parents' knowledge of the availability of childcare in their local area;
- to ascertain the extent to which their current childcare arrangements enable parents to take up paid work, education and training, and what activities are associated with use of childcare;

As well as describing the current demands for childcare, this report also examines changes in childcare use since 1999 when the first, baseline survey was conducted. Thus this research will be a part of the ongoing evaluation of the *National Childcare Strategy*.

1.1.1 *The National Childcare Strategy*

Childcare and all the issues surrounding its provision have come to occupy a position of increasing importance in current government policy. It has a pivotal role in the current Government's 'welfare to work' programme, as well as being a part of their efforts to confront social exclusion.

Changes in working patterns serve to emphasise how the issue of childcare has increasing resonance for many people living in Britain today. By the year 2000, women's activity rates had increased to 73 per cent of women of working age from

² Ivana La Valle, Steven Finch, Andrea Nove and Charlotte Lewin (2000), *Parents' Demand for Childcare*, DfEE Research report 176.

around 55 per cent 25 years ago³. More specifically, between 1988 and 1998 the proportion of mothers in paid employment outside the home has grown from 52 to 62 per cent. For mothers of very young children, aged between 0 and 5, this trend is even more pronounced: in 1998, 51 per cent of such women were working, compared to 32 per cent ten years earlier. Such an increase in the numbers of mothers working, coupled with British men working the longest hours in Europe, suggests that childcare is an issue that has relevance to many people.

Given the 'welfare to work' agenda of the government, it was clear that the issue of childcare needed to be addressed: it is a necessary pre-condition for many parents considering a return to work. This extends to parents who want to further their education or training, for whom further study would be a means of improving employability, and as such the government's agenda covers these groups of parents.

Previous studies have shown that the majority of parents rely on 'informal' childcare arrangements, such as grandparents, neighbours and friends. If parents are in work, it may be that such arrangements are less suitable, with parents instead requiring a more formal and structured childcare.

Aside from the importance of childcare in encouraging and enabling parents to return to work, policy in this area has also sought to address questions surrounding social exclusion. In the paper, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge*⁴, the government stated that it aimed to offer equal opportunities and access to childcare for all parents, as well as ensuring that all children are in a position to benefit from the stated intention to promote their well-being and development. Essentially, then, childcare needs to be plentiful, but also of a good standard.

Thus in May 1998 the government launched the *National Childcare Strategy (NCS)*. The NCS is founded on five principles - quality, affordability, diversity, accessibility, and partnership. The Strategy was developed in response to a number of problems that were identified in the provision of childcare in Britain. Firstly, quality seemed to vary between geographical area, between types of provider, and depending on the age of the child. There were no set definitions for standards beyond the basic registration for health and safety checks. Second, childcare costs were high: families could be spending up to a third of their income on paying for childcare. For many, therefore, more formal types of childcare were simply not an option. Third, there were simply too few places for the number of children. In addition to this was the problem that when there were places available, communication of information was so poor that parents were not fully aware of the childcare that they could use. The NCS was designed in an attempt to address some of these problems.

The emphasis on partnerships recognises that a 'national' childcare strategy could only go so far: when the NCS was introduced, it was also stated that local problems required local solutions. These could only be achieved through partnerships - i.e. the bringing together of all the local groups that had an interest in childcare, from parents, through to schools and to voluntary organisations. However what the NCS

³ Dex, S. (2000) *Families and the Labour Market*, Family Policies Studies Centre, London and Labour Force Survey, Historical Supplement.

⁴ Meeting the Childcare Challenge - Summary of Responses to the Green Paper, DfEE publication, November 1998.

did offer were guidelines as to what any new local childcare initiatives ought to incorporate, which covered:

- Diversity across private, public, and voluntary sectors
- Particular attention to the development and maintenance of provision in rural and disadvantaged areas
- Where possible and appropriate, childcare for children with special needs or disabilities to be part of the services offered
- Equal opportunities for all children, and appropriate places for families from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds
- Stimulating activities as well as care and attention – staff to be continuously improving their services
- Affordable places
- Places to be accessible to where children live and/or where parents work
- Provision to include the integration of early years education with childcare
- Parents and other carers, as well as children, to have access to good local information about childcare

Thus, the NCS can be seen to provide the overarching structure for improving the three aspects of childcare that seemed to demand attention – namely quality, affordability and accessibility. However it is the government’s intention to see that these improvements be brought about by local partnerships which are able to recognise the specific needs of one particular community. In this sense, the NCS also acknowledges that the key to any successful childcare policy is ensuring parents have the choice to use whatever type of childcare that suits them and their lifestyle.

1.2 Study design

The baseline study conducted in 1999 was a large cross-sectional survey designed to yield nationally representative data of parents’ use of and demand for childcare. Participants were randomly selected from Child Benefit records held by the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly the Department for Social Security (DSS)). After an ‘opt-out’ procedure was administered, whereby selected parents were sent a letter from the DSS to inform them of the study and give them the opportunity to withdraw from it if they wished, parents were contacted by members of the *National Centre’s* interviewer panel.

The repeat survey sought to replicate this methodology so as to make possible comparisons between the two surveys. However, changing areas of policy interest and the desire to improve the survey meant that a number of alterations were made to the basic design.

First, whereas in the baseline study there was a single respondent, in the repeat survey both a main respondent and their partner (where present) were interviewed. The main respondent was the parent or guardian who had main or shared responsibility for making decisions about any childcare received by the child(ren) in the household, which was consistent with the method used to select the respondent in 1999. However, instead of asking the main respondent about their partner’s situation, a separate interview was conducted with the partner. Both the main respondent and the partner each received a separate face-to-face interview. Where

the partner was unavailable or refused to be interviewed, proxy questions about his/her partner were asked of the main respondent.

There were two distinct modules of questions in the *baseline* survey: a core set of questions asked of all eligible households, and a more detailed set of questions about childcare and its interaction with labour market participation, which were asked of a sub-set of households. No such distinction was made in the *repeat* survey, with all eligible households receiving the same questionnaire.

Unlike the baseline survey which covered households in both England and Wales, the repeat study was geographically limited to England⁵. This change meant that results published in the baseline report are not directly comparable to the findings of this survey. Where comparisons have been made with the baseline survey, the 1999 data has been re-analysed with the new results for England only appearing throughout this report.

A further variation from the baseline survey was the introduction of a booster sample. Because of policy interest in a number of sub-groups of parents, it was deemed necessary to over-sample certain sub-populations. An additional sample of households was selected from the Child Benefit records. These were included in the survey if they fell into one of three groups:

- student parents
- parents whose children used out-of-school clubs; and
- parents who received the childcare tax credit.

The following definitions were used to determine eligibility of one of the aforementioned sub-groups. To be a student parent either parent had to be enrolled on a course, either full or part-time, that would lead to a qualification. A family would have been eligible for an interview under the second heading if any of their children aged 0-14 had attended an out-of-school club in the 12 months prior to the date of interview. The final group consisted of families in receipt of childcare tax credit.

The over-sampling took place via a door-step screening exercise. This was a more cost effective method of achieving the appropriate numbers of these parents for analysis purposes compared with the alternative of increasing the overall sample size. Upon making contact with someone at the address, the interviewer would conduct the screening interview with the selected parent - parent or guardian who had the main or shared responsibility for making decisions about any childcare received by the child(ren) in the household - and if they were found to be eligible, a full main interview would then be conducted. Further details of the screening procedure are contained in Appendix A.

1.2.1 Content of the interview

All interviews were conducted face-to-face using Computer-Assisted-Personalised-Interviewing (CAPI) and took on average 60 minutes to complete. The topics covered in the interview were as follows:

⁵ The sample was limited to families in 245 selected postcode sectors.

- Introduction and household grid
- Providers used in the past year
- Reasons for using childcare in the past year
- Problems with childcare arrangements in the past year
- Childcare in the past week
- Further information on providers (e.g. when first used, registration, accreditation)
- The cost of childcare in the past week
- Problems with childcare provider
- Quality of childcare used in the past week
- Information sources for childcare in local area
- *Work activity*
- *Study activity*
- *Reasons for not working*
- *Reasons for working*
- Ideal childcare arrangements
- *Attitudes to childcare*
- Children's health
- *Respondent classification*
- Household classification

Where they were interviewed, a partner received a shortened version of the main interview (topics are shown above in italics), and this lasted, on average, 20 minutes.

1.2.2 Main fieldwork

A total of 11,684 addresses in 245 postcode sectors were selected from Child Benefit records and these were split between the "National" (6,642) and the "Booster" (5,042) samples. An opt-out letter was sent by the DSS to each of these households with 9 per cent (1,076) saying they did not want to take part in the study. This was split fairly equally between the National (8 per cent) and booster samples (10 per cent).

Main fieldwork commenced in the last week of February and continued for 20 weeks. Interviews were achieved in 5,416 households and these were split as follows across the two samples:

- National sample: 4,478 (response rate 76 per cent⁶)
- Booster sample: the screener was conducted in 3,989 (response rate 87 per cent) of which 1,044 were eligible for interview (screening rate of 26 per cent) and 938 of these agreed to be interviewed (response rate of 90 per cent of eligible families).

In most cases (3,951 or 98 per cent of those main respondents interviewed who had a partner) an interview was conducted with respect to the partner. A total of 2,232 partners agreed to an interview (response rate 55 per cent), and in 1,719 households, a proxy interview was conducted with the main respondent about their partner.

⁶ This is the proportion of all contacted address where an interview was achieved. If exclude households that opted-out, the response rate for the National sample would be 84 per cent. See Appendix A for full details.

Further details regarding the conduct of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

1.3 The report

1.3.1 Content of the report

Chapter 2 briefly describes the characteristics of the families that agreed to be interviewed. These data put into context the findings presented elsewhere in the report.

Chapter 3 explores the relationship between the use of childcare and the socio-economic characteristics of the households. In addition, it looks at the relationship between the characteristics of the respondent's children and the respondent's use of childcare.

In Chapter 4 comparisons are made with the baseline survey. This chapter examines how parents' childcare arrangements have changed since the first study, and looks at possible causes for these changes. Chapter 5 builds on this analysis of change but focuses more specifically on the impact of the National Childcare Strategy. To do so the analysis is restricted to just looking at a number of types of formal childcare provision, names registered childminder, day nurseries, out of school clubs and holiday schemes.

Chapter 6 focuses on some of the difficulties faced by parents in terms of their childcare. Specifically, it looks at whether parents have experienced any unmet demand for childcare over the past year and the consequences of such an event. This chapter also looks at how often parents' childcare arrangements break down as well as describing the problems faced by parents when they use combinations of different childcare arrangements.

Chapter 7 presents respondents' views on the quality and adequacy of their current childcare provision. This is followed by a presentation of the data concerning the cost of childcare in Chapter 8.

Parents' views on the availability of childcare information and whether it is sufficient in their local area are reported in Chapter 9. This chapter also looks at parents' opinions on the quantity and quality of available childcare. Comparisons with the baseline survey are also presented.

The following two chapters explore how childcare is related to parental labour market participation. Chapter 10 is concerned with working parents and describes in some detail the interaction between work and the use of childcare. In addition, it focuses on parents that have recently returned to work or increased the number of hours they work.

In contrast, Chapter 11 looks at non-working parents and examines whether decisions not to work are related to parents' access to childcare, as well as

investigating what changes to their childcare arrangements might help them move back into work.

Finally, Chapter 12 describes student parents and their demands for childcare.

1.3.2 Interpreting results in the report

The report presents data for 5,416 families with children aged between 0 and 14.

As with the baseline study, data were collected at three levels:

1. Parent or household level, that is, there is a single record for each household where an interview was conducted.
2. Child level, that is, there is a single record for each child in the household up to a maximum of two. Where there were three or more children in the household, a random selection procedure was used to limit the discussion to two children. The main reason for doing this was to limit the length of the interview, it being thought that an excessively long interview would have a detrimental effect on response rates. The procedure to select the children was the same as that used in the baseline study.
3. Provider level, that is, a single record for each childcare provider mentioned by a parent during the course of their interview. This includes any provider used in the past year regardless of whether the provider is currently being used.

As a result of the screening exercise used to boost the presence of certain groups of parents in the final sample, all data have been weighted. This ensures that the research findings are representative of the population of English families in receipt of Child Benefit with at least one child aged 14 or under. In addition, there is a second stage weight applicable to the child level data that corrects for the fact that in families with more than two children, the interview focussed on only two of them who were selected at random. Where data have been weighted, the percentages represented in the tables have been calculated from the weighted bases, while the unweighted bases show how many cases were actually included in the sample.

The tables in this report contain the total number of cases in the whole sample or in the particular sub-group being analysed, and the base for different columns (e.g. different types of families, income groups etc.). The total base figure includes all eligible cases (i.e. all respondents or all respondents who were asked a particular question). In some tables the column bases do not add up to the total bases and this is mainly because some categories might not be included in the table, either because they are too small or are not useful for the purpose of the analysis. Where this has occurred, a footnote to the table has been included.

Due to rounding, percentage figures may not add up to exactly 100 per cent but may total between 98 and 102 per cent.

The large sample size used for this survey means that the difference between percentages for most sub-groups of the sample are statistically significant. This was specifically addressed for the childcare tax credit, student parent and out of school

club subgroups through using booster samples. However, some bases for some estimates are still relatively small. So it is important to note the unweighted bases at the foot of the tables when drawing comparisons. The table below gives an indication of the confidence intervals to apply to different sizes of percentage results for different sample sizes within this report. These 95 per cent confidence levels are the levels within which we can be 95 per cent confident that the true answer will lie (in other words there is only a one in 20 chance that the true answer will lie outside this range).

Table 1-1 Approximate standard errors for various percentages and sample sizes for the household level data

Sample size	Approximate 95 per cent confidence limits for a percentage result of:		
	10% or 90% + / -	30% or 70% + / -	50% + / -
50	8	13	14
100	6	9	10
250	4	6	6
500	3	4	4
1,000	2	3	3
2,000	1	2	2
3,000	1	2	2
5,000	1	1	1

To take an example from the table, for a percentage result of 50 per cent on a sample of 1,000 there is a 95 per cent chance that the true result will lie within ± 3 per cent, that is between 47 per cent and 53 per cent. (These confidence limits assume a simple random sample and no adjustment has been made for the effects of clustering. Although such an adjustment would increase the confidence limits slightly, they would not differ notably from those shown on the table and would in most cases still round to the same number of percentage points).

Tests of statistical significance are not detailed in this report. However, whenever the text comments on differences between sub-groups of the sample, these differences have been tested for significance and found to be statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level or above. Similarly, although standard deviations are not presented alongside mean figures in this report, these have been calculated and used to verify the statistical significance of the differences between mean figures which are commented on in the text.

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

- [] to indicate a percentage based on fewer than 50 respondents
- * to indicate a percentage value of less than 0.5 per cent
- to indicate a percentage value of zero.

A glossary is provided in the Technical Report (Appendix A) to explain the meaning of key terms used in the report, such as 'household', 'informal' and 'paid' childcare.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES

2.1 Introduction

Many different types of family were interviewed, and before discussing their use of childcare we describe the key distinguishing features of these families. As is shown elsewhere in this report, these characteristics help to explain variations in the type and amount of childcare used by parents.

The term respondent is used when referring to the person who completed the main, long interview. It is used irrespective of whether the person was a lone parent or part of a couple. Where interviewed we do not refer to the partner as a respondent, instead using the term 'partner'.

This chapter commences by describing the personal and family characteristics of the household members. It then goes on to discuss in some detail the economic activity status of the respondent, and where present, their partner. The geographical dispersion of these families is then shown. The chapter concludes with a summary of these key characteristics.

2.2 Personal and family characteristics

Interviews were achieved with 5,416 families, a quarter (25 per cent) of which were headed by a lone parent. This closely matches comparable data from the 1998 General Household Survey (GHS). Most of the main respondent interviews were conducted with a female respondent (95 per cent). Of the male respondents, just under a third were lone parents (30 per cent).

The criterion used for determining who should be interviewed as the main respondent was that the person had to have main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare. Among couples (where this question was appropriate), just over half of those interviewed (56 per cent) said they were mainly responsible for childcare decisions with the remaining respondents saying they shared that responsibility with their partner⁷.

Age

The average age of the respondent was 35 (Table 2-1). Very few were under the age of 20 (1 per cent) and a similarly small proportion were aged over 50 (2 per cent). There was little difference in the average age of respondents who were lone parents (34) and those who lived with a spouse or partner (36). However, a higher proportion of lone parent respondents were under the age of 30 (30 per cent compared with 16 per cent in households headed by a couple). The average age of the partners was 38.

⁷ Although interviewers were advised to speak to parents with main or shared responsibility for childcare, in some circumstances this was not possible. There were 106 such cases (3 per cent of couple households).

Table 2-1 Age of main respondent, by type of family

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Type of family		All households (%)
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	
Less than 20	2	*	1
20 to less than 30	28	16	19
30 to less than 40	48	55	53
40 to less than 50	19	26	24
50 or older	2	2	2
Average	34	36	35
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households.

Marital status

Lone parents were evenly split between those who were divorced, separated or widowed (49 per cent), and those who classified themselves as single mothers or fathers (49 per cent)⁸. Most couples were married (86 per cent) as opposed to living with a partner (14 per cent).

Ethnicity

Parents were asked to classify themselves into one of nine ethnic groups using 1991 Census categories (see Appendix A). Around one-in-ten of the respondents were of a non-white ethnic origin (11 per cent). This figure was somewhat higher where the main respondent was male (25 per cent). The most common minority ethnic groups among respondents were Indian (2 per cent), Pakistani (2 per cent) and Black Caribbean (1 per cent). A similar proportion of respondents (11 per cent) classified themselves as being from an ethnic minority background in the 1998 General Household Survey (GHS).

Household structure

Amongst families interviewed the average household size was four, with 90 per cent of households having five or fewer members. The maximum household size was 12.

The mean number of children in each household under the age of 14 was two⁹. Two-fifths had just one child (39 per cent) and 17 per cent had three or more¹⁰. Lone parents were more likely to have a single child (49 per cent) than were couples (36

⁸ There were a few minor discrepancies in the classification of marital status among lone parents. One per cent classified themselves as 'living with a partner' although when describing who they lived with failed to mention a partner.

⁹ This excludes children for which the main respondent did not have main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare. The number of households with such a child was small (1 per cent). These children have been excluded from all subsequent analysis.

¹⁰ It was in these households that a selection was made.

per cent), however they were equally as likely to have three or more children (Table 2-2).

Table 2-2 Number of children 14 and under, by type of family

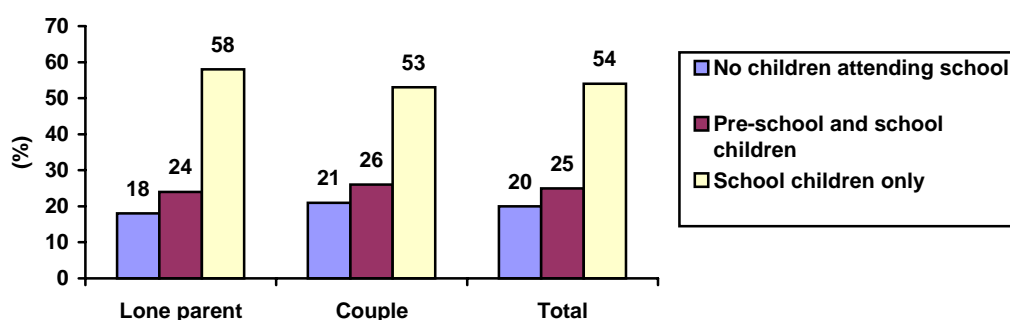
	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Type of family		All households (%)
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	
One child	49	36	39
Two children	34	47	43
Three or more children	17	17	17
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households.

Information was collected about the ages of all children in the household. In 46 per cent of households there was at least one child aged under five and in a third of all households (32 per cent) there was a child aged two to five. Previous research has shown that children in the two to five age bracket are the most likely recipients of childcare. Lone parents (27 per cent) were slightly less likely to have had a child in the latter age bracket than were couples (34 per cent).

Most households contained a child that attended school (Figure 2-1). Four-fifths (80 per cent) had at least one child in school and just over half (54 per cent) only had children attending school. Lone parents were very similar to couples in terms of the age profile of their children.

Figure 2-1 Presence of children attending school, by type of family



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on the responses from 5,416 households.

In a small proportion of households (6 per cent) there was an adult other than the respondent or their partner (if present)¹¹. The presence of another adult was more likely if the respondent was a lone parent (9 per cent), compared with five per cent in 'couple' households. These other adults were most commonly a parent (or parent-in-

¹¹ An adult is defined as anyone over the age of 18 living in the household at the time of interview.

law) of the respondent. In just over half (52 per cent) of households containing another adult, the adult was a grandparent.

Health

All respondents (both main and partner) were asked whether they had a health problem or a disability that was expected to last at least a year. A fifth of lone parents (20 per cent) reported such a condition (Table 2-3) and where they did, the majority (74 per cent) said that they thought this problem would limit the kind of paid work that they might do.

In a fifth of 'couple' households (22 per cent), either the respondent or their partner had a health problem. It was relatively rare (3 per cent) for both to report such a condition. Three out of five respondents (59 per cent) said this health problem would (or did) limit the kind of paid work that they might do, with a similar proportion of partners (59 per cent) responding likewise.

Table 2-3 Health characteristics of families, by type of family

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Type of family		All households (%)
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	
Both have disability	n/a	3	2
Main respondent only has disability	20	10	12
Partner only has disability	n/a	9	7
Neither has disability	80	76	77
Not answered or don't know	*	2	2
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households.

Children's health

Information was also collected about the health of the children. In around a seventh of all households (14 per cent) there was at least one child with a special educational need (SEN) or other special need. Their presence was slightly more common in lone parent households (16 per cent) than those headed by a couple (13 per cent).

In terms of the *number of the children* with a SEN or other special need, around 13 per cent had such a problem¹². Most commonly, the special need was in the form of a difficulty with reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic (39 per cent). Around one-in-seven children with a special need had either an emotional or behavioural problem (15 per cent) with a similar proportion having difficulties with their sight, hearing or speech (15 per cent) and around one-in-eight had some other medical or health problem (12 per cent).

¹² The base here refers to children about which childcare questions were asked, therefore the analysis has been done at the child level. All previous and subsequent data reported in this chapter is at the level of the household.

Few parents of children with special needs (4 per cent) said that their child's special need or disability limited the amount or type of work that they could do. The proportion answering in this way was higher among lone parents (6 per cent) than for couples (3 per cent).

Household income

Previous studies have shown a strong relationship between the level of household income and parents' use of childcare. Respondents were asked to choose from a list of 15 categories that contained ranges of yearly household income. Table 2-4 shows the distribution of this household income. Over half of respondents (54 per cent) said that their annual income was less than £26,000¹³. What is immediately apparent is the considerable variation in household income between lone parent and couple families. Almost two-thirds (60 per cent) of lone parents had an annual income of less than £10,400 compared with just six per cent of households headed by a couple.

Table 2-4 Household income, by type of family

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Type of family		All households
	Lone parent	Couple	
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Up to £5,199	18	1	5
£5,200 to £10,399	41	5	14
£10,400 to £15,599	18	10	12
£15,600 to £20,799	8	13	12
£20,800 to £25,999	4	14	11
£26,000 to £31,199	2	14	11
£31,200 to £41,599	2	14	11
£41,600 to £51,999	1	9	7
£52,000 to £69,999	*	7	5
£70,000 to £99,999	*	3	2
£100,000 or more	*	2	2
Don't know or refused	5	8	7
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households.

Respondents were also asked about the sources from which they derived their household income. Excluding Child Benefit, just under two-fifths of households (37 per cent) were in receipt of a State benefit or tax credit, with lone parents being much more likely to receive such benefits or tax credits than couples (84 per cent compared to 21 per cent respectively). A fifth (19 per cent) of households received Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC), and of these, 18 per cent were childcare tax credit recipients. These figures are comparable with latest estimates from the Inland Revenue¹⁴. Table 2-5 shows how the receipt of WFTC and childcare tax credit varied across different types of families.

¹³ Seven percent of the sample either did not know their household income or refused to give details.

¹⁴ Grossing these figures up to national figures, we estimate that 1.00 million families living in England were receiving WFTC, and of these, approximately 180 thousand also received the childcare tax credit component of WFTC.

Table 2-5 Recipients of Working Families' Tax Credit and childcare tax credit, by type of family

Column percentages

	Type of family		All households
	Lone parent	Couple	
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Receives WFTC with childcare tax credit	10	1	3
Receives WFTC only	20	14	15
Non-recipient	70	84	80
Don't know	*	1	1
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households.

Some of the other sources of income mentioned by parents, were:

- Income support (16 per cent);
- Housing Benefit (14 per cent);
- Interest from savings (11 per cent);
- Child maintenance (8 per cent).

The receipt of each of these varied considerably according to whether the family was headed by a lone parent or a couple. For example, a fifth (20 per cent) of lone parents received child maintenance compared with just 3 per cent of families headed by a couple, and conversely, just 2 per cent of lone parents received income from savings compared with 15 per cent of couples.

Qualifications

Just over half (52 per cent) of main respondents completed their continuous full-time education aged 16 or under with a fifth (19 per cent) remaining in education until after the age of 18. Lone parents were significantly more likely to have left at or before the age of 16, two-thirds (66 per cent) having done so compared with 48 per cent of main respondents in 'couple' households.

In terms of the highest academic qualifications they have achieved, four-fifths of main respondents (79 per cent) had at least one GCSE D-G grade with a quarter (25 per cent) having at least one A-level. Almost a third of lone parents (30 per cent) had no formal academic qualifications compared with 15 per cent of respondents that were part of a couple.

Parents were also asked about any vocational qualifications they had. Two-fifths (41 per cent) of respondents had at least one of these qualifications which was most commonly a level 1 NVQ or its equivalent. Lone parents were less likely to have a vocational qualification (36 per cent) than were respondents in households headed by a couple (42 per cent).

Other characteristics

Two-thirds of parents (63 per cent) with children aged 14 or under were found to be buying their homes through having a mortgage or loan with a further six per cent reporting that they owned their property. Of the remainder, just under a third rented their property (29 per cent) and two per cent lived rent free. The incidence of property rental was significantly higher among lone parents (65 per cent) than couples (16 per cent).

Three quarters of respondents (75 per cent) had a current full licence to drive a car or motorcycle, the majority of whom (93 per cent) had a vehicle that was available for them to use. Lone parents were less likely to drive than were main respondents in 'couple' households (47 per cent compared with 78 per cent).

2.3 Work and economic activity of families

There is strong evidence of a relationship between the work status of a household and the likelihood of that household using childcare¹⁵.

In four-fifths (83 per cent) of the households where an interview was conducted one or more of the parents were found to be in paid employment. This is comparable with other sources of household employment data, for example, the 1998 GHS estimated that 81 per cent of households had at least one parent in employment. With reference to the 1999 baseline survey, this figure has increased from 81 per cent.

Table 2-6 summarises the work patterns of the parents who were interviewed. The most common arrangement was for households to include couples where one parent worked full-time whilst the partner worked part-time (28 per cent of all households). Similar proportions of households included a couple where only one was in full-time employment (22 per cent) compared with both were employed full-time (18 per cent). Around one-in-ten households (11 per cent) contained a lone parent who was in work. Indeed, the majority of lone parents did not work (54 per cent of lone parent households or 14 per cent of all households) and of those that did, these were split evenly between working full and part time¹⁶.

¹⁵ For example, see Dex, S. (2000) *Families and the Labour Market*, Family Policies Studies Centre, London and Finch, H and M. Gloyer (2000) *Lone Parents and Childcare: a further look at evaluation data on the New Deal for Lone Parents*, DSS Research Report 68, Corporate Services, London.

¹⁶ Full-time is defined as working 30 or more hours per week.

Table 2-6 Household activity status, by type of family

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Type of family		All households (%)
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	
<i>Lone parents</i>			
In full-time employment	22	-	5
In part-time employment	24	-	6
Not in paid employment	54	-	14
<i>Couples</i>			
Both in full-time employment	-	24	18
One in full-time employment, one in part-time employment	-	38	28
One in full-time employment, one not working	-	29	22
One or both in part-time employment	-	4	3
Neither in paid employment	-	5	4
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households.

The majority of respondents had recent experience of working. Whilst three-fifths (63 per cent) were currently in work, a further 10 per cent had worked in the two years prior to the interview. Relatively few, just 5 per cent, had never had a paid job.

Information was also collected about the *type* of work parents did. Among respondents who were currently in employment the most common occupations were clerical and secretarial (26 per cent) and personal and protective (17 per cent)¹⁷. Around one-in-ten were self-employed (9 per cent) and of the employees, around a third (32 per cent) had some managerial or supervisory responsibilities. Just one per cent of respondents and a similar proportion of partners¹⁸ were participating on a New Deal programme at the time of interview.

Of the respondents who were currently in work, around a sixth (16 per cent) worked 15 or fewer hours per week, two-fifths (41 per cent) worked between 16 and 29 hours per week and a further two-fifths (42 per cent) worked 30 or more hours per week. Lone parents were less likely to work short hours; less than one in ten (8 per cent) were currently working 15 or fewer hours, compared with a fifth (18 per cent) of main respondents in households headed by a couple. Lone parents were also more likely to have worked 30 or more hours per week (48 per cent did so compared with 41 per cent).

Parents were asked whether they had any “non-standard” working practices such as shift work or home working¹⁹. Having to work shifts was relatively rare among

¹⁷ Personal and protective occupations such as jobs as cleaners, care workers, security staff and police.

¹⁸ The relevant base here is partners that did the full main interview.

¹⁹ These questions only related to parents who were employees in their current job.

respondents, less than a fifth having ever done so in their current job (17 per cent), with around one-in-ten (11 per cent) reporting that they did so on a regular basis. One-in-fourteen respondents (7 per cent) usually worked more than 45 hours per week whilst a fifth (21 per cent) said they sometimes had to work on a weekend. Working from home was also relatively rare, with around one-in-eight (13 per cent) of respondents reporting that they had done so in their current job.

It is also possible to get an overall picture of the households' work patterns by combining the responses of both the respondent and their partner. For example, in under a fifth of all households (16 per cent), the respondent or their partner (where present) did shift work. In a third (33 per cent) of all households, at least one parent worked 45 or more hours per week.

During the course of the interview data were collected about a variety of family-friendly working arrangements that were available to parents. These included being able to work part-time, flexi-time, from home, job sharing and the ability to be able to take time off when children were ill. Table 2-7 shows the proportion of working parents that used these arrangements. Four-fifths of respondents (81 per cent) said they used at least one of these arrangements with a much smaller proportion of partners (48 per cent) recording likewise. This reflects the pattern established in the baseline survey that it is usually the main childcare provider who takes advantage of flexible work patterns so as to combine the demands of work and family.

Table 2-7 Use of family-friendly working arrangements by working parents

	Main respondent who is ..			Partners
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	All (%)	(%)
Works part-time	42	49	48	6
Works flexi-time	18	19	19	15
Works from home	8	10	10	12
Job share	4	7	6	1
Has paid time off when children are ill	22	24	24	20
Has unpaid time off when children are ill	29	27	24	18
None of these	23	18	19	52
Weighted base	504	2,064	2,568	1,399
Unweighted base	629	2,455	3,084	1,667

Base: All households where the main respondent is currently in work (columns 2,3,4) or if partner currently in work (column 5).

+ The columns show all the family-friendly working arrangements used by parents therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Parents were also asked whether their employer made available to them any childcare facilities or helped them with the cost of their childcare. Around a third of respondents who were currently in work (33 per cent) reported that their employer made available to their employees this type of assistance compared with less than a fifth (14 per cent) of partners who were in work. Fewer lone parents (28 per cent)

than couples (35 per cent) had access to this assistance. Even when this support was available to them, not all parents reported using it, indeed, only 60 per cent of respondents said they took up their employer's offer of assistance (which means that just 20 per cent of employees used any of these measures). Table 2-8 shows the type of assistance respondents were offered by their employers as well as the proportion who made use of these arrangements.

Table 2-8 **Types of assistance with childcare made available by employers and taken up by respondents**

	<i>Column percentages +</i>	
	% saying assistance available (%)	% using assistance (%)
Employer covers the full cost of child care	*	*
Employer covers part of the cost of child care	2	1
A work-place nursery or crèche	5	1
A subsidised nursery or crèche nearby	2	*
Before- and after-school child care during school terms	4	2
School holiday play-schemes	8	3
Term-time working ²⁰	15	11
Information about local provision of childcare	5	1
Any other arrangement to help me combine job and childcare	6	4
None of these	67	80
Don't know / not answered	*	*
Weighted base	2,568	2,568
Unweighted base	3,084	3,084

Base: All households where main respondent is in work as an employee.

+ The columns show all the forms of assistance that were available to the respondents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Other activity

Details were also collected about the activities of those parents who did not classify themselves as being in work. A third of respondents (32 per cent) classified their main activity as being to look after the home and family. Relatively few (2 per cent) said they were unemployed, and a similar proportion (2 per cent) classified themselves as long-term sick. In households headed by a couple, unemployment (2 per cent) and long-term sickness (2 per cent) were also relatively rare amongst the partners.

Students

The number of households where either the respondent or their partner (if there was one) classified their main activity as being a student in full-time education was very

²⁰ Of all the parents that had access to term-time working arrangements a majority in the following occupations: educational assistants (16 per cent), teachers in primary (10 per cent) and secondary education (7 per cent) and childcare (8 per cent).

small (1 per cent). However, just over a fifth (21 per cent) of households had at least one parent enrolled in a course that was leading to a qualification. This is the definition of a student household that is used throughout this report. Of the 16 per cent of main respondents who were enrolled on a course, around half (55 per cent) attended a Further Education college, a fifth were in Higher Education (22 per cent) with the remainder going to some other type of institution. Most respondents were studying part-time (88 per cent), with NVQs being the most popular qualification being aimed for.

2.4 Geographical coverage of families

The sample of families for this study was selected at random across 245 postal sectors in England. These sectors were chosen proportionate to their size, that is, proportionate to the number of Child Benefit recipients with children aged 0-14. The final distribution of achieved interviews by Government Office Region (GOR) is shown in Table 2-9.

Measures of local deprivation, as calculated by the Department for the Regions and Environment have been matched to the survey data (see Appendix A for more details). Table 2-9 shows the proportion of families in each GOR that were in the bottom quintile of their Index of Multiple Deprivation. For example, in the North East, 55 per cent of surveyed families live in wards that had a multiple deprivation score that would put them in the bottom 20 per cent of wards in the country. This index is used throughout the report to show whether parents in deprived areas are any different from other parents in terms of their childcare needs.

Table 2-9 **Distribution of families across Government Office Region (GOR) and degree of local deprivation**

	Percent of families in each GOR <i>Column %</i>	Percent of families in bottom quintile <i>Row %</i>
North East	6	55
North West	11	26
Merseyside	3	55
Yorkshire & Humberside	12	30
East Midlands	9	3
West Midlands	11	25
South West	9	6
Eastern	12	12
London	14	23
South East	15	5
Total	100	20

Base: All households.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter we have presented details of the families who participated in the survey interview.

Around quarter (25 per cent) of the families interviewed were headed by a lone parent while just over a tenth (11 per cent) of the main respondents were from a non-white ethnic background. In a fifth of households (22 per cent) either the main respondent or their partner (if present) had a disability that limited their activities. The proportion of households that contained a child with a special educational need or other special need was 14 per cent.

The average size of household was four. Two-fifths of the households contained one child (39 per cent), 43 per cent contained two, and the remaining 17 per cent had three or more children. A large majority (80 per cent) of households had children that went to school, with just over half (54 per cent) having only children of school age.

In just under a fifth (17 per cent) of all households no parent was in work. This was higher in lone parent households (54 per cent) than in those headed by a couple (5 per cent). Few respondents had any atypical work patterns. Of those currently in work as an employee, around one-in-ten (11 per cent) regularly worked shifts, one-in-fourteen (7 per cent) usually worked more than 45 hours per week, a fifth (21 per cent) sometimes had to work on a weekend and around one-in-eight (13 per cent) sometimes worked from home.

Around a third (33 per cent) of respondents who were currently in work reported that their employer made available to them some form of assistance with childcare. A broad definition of assistance was employed here as it covers term time working contracts and the provision of information about childcare as well as the provision of childcare facilities and help with the cost of childcare. Considerably fewer parents (20 per cent) made use of this assistance.

These key defining characteristics of the sample were generally found to match those of other nationally representative surveys²¹ of families with children, therefore ensuring greater confidence in the results presented elsewhere in this report.

²¹ An analysis of the 1998 General Household Survey was undertaken to check the representativeness of these data.

3 PARENTS' USE OF CHILDCARE

3.1 Introduction

In order to make comparisons with the baseline survey conducted in 1999, definitions of childcare have remained unchanged. Parents of children aged 0-14 years old were asked about all the childcare they used 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We were equally interested in both formal (e.g. playgroup, day nursery, out-of-school club) and informal (e.g. grandparents, friends) arrangements, nor did it matter whether the childcare was used on a regular or irregular basis. The only types of 'care' that were excluded were times when a child was at school or when they were being looked after by the respondent or their spouse. Parents were asked a number general questions about their use of childcare in the last year, while more detailed information was collected about the childcare used in the reference week²².

In this chapter we have classified childcare providers into two groups - early years education and other formal childcare providers and informal childcare providers. The former of these covers the following types of providers:

- childminders,
- nannies,
- babysitters,
- crèche / nurseries,
- playgroups,
- out-of-school clubs,
- family centres, and
- nursery and reception classes attached to primary schools.

The 'informal' providers were;

- ex-partners,
- grandparents,
- friends,
- relatives, and
- siblings.

This was the classification used in the baseline report. For a complete set of definitions of childcare and the types of providers covered in the study, the reader is referred to Section 6 of Appendix A.

The chapter is presented in two parts. First, it looks at the relationship between the use of childcare and the socio-economic characteristics of the household. It therefore reports data at the level of the household as a whole. The second part focuses on the relationship between the age of the child and the types and quantity of childcare used and as such reports data at the child level.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the following questions:

²² The reference week was the week beginning Sunday preceding the date of interview. However, if that week was a school holiday for any of the children in the household, the week before that was used.

- Who used childcare?
- What type of childcare was being used?
- When was the childcare being used?
- How much childcare was being used?

Data about the use of childcare was collected exclusively in the main respondent interview. Since the questions referred to the household as a whole rather than to individuals within it, the terms 'parents' and 'households' have been used interchangeably.

It should be noted that the data for the usage of childcare in the last year and the reference week have been collected with reference to up to two selected children in the household. As reported in chapter 1, this selection had to be made in 17 per cent of households that had three or more children aged 0-14. The consequence of such a procedure is that there is likely to be a slight underestimate of the overall incidence of the household's usage of childcare. The effect is likely to be small though, as it would only operate where childcare was not used for the two selected children but was used for a child who was not selected.

3.2 Usage of childcare in the last year and last week

Parents were asked about their use of childcare in the last year and in the reference week. Questions were asked about each child in the household up to a maximum of two for which the respondent had either the main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare. In total 86 per cent of households (or approximately 4.56 million families in England²³) used at least some childcare in the year preceding their interview, with 56 per cent (or 2.97 million families) saying they had used it in the reference week. The difference between these measures provides an indication of the regularity of childcare usage. As about two-thirds of childcare users in the last year also used it in the reference week, it may be concluded that most parents used childcare quite regularly.

Use of childcare by household structure and employment patterns

There was little difference between lone parents and couples in terms of the proportion who use childcare. Lone parents were marginally more likely to have used childcare in the reference week (58 per cent against 55 per cent of couples), however, this gap is reversed when looking at usage in the preceding year (84 per cent against 86 per cent of couples).

Parents' labour market participation was found to be an important determinant of childcare usage (Table 3-1). Households where at least one parent worked were much more likely to use some childcare. Almost nine in ten (88 per cent) used

²³ Grossing to national estimates is based on data of families with children aged 0-14 receiving Child Benefit as at February 2001.

childcare in the past year compared with just under three-quarters (74 per cent) of “workless” households. This difference was even wider in terms of the proportion using childcare in the reference week.

Table 3-1 Use of childcare, by household work status

	Household work status		All households (%)
	One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	
Used childcare in the reference week	59	42	56
Used childcare in the past year	88	74	86
Weighted base	3,829	790	4,619
Unweighted base	4,533	883	5,416

Base: All households.

Among couples, usage of childcare in the past year was highest where both parents were in work, and that work was full-time for at least one of the parents. Nine out of ten households in this situation had used childcare in the past year compared with around four-fifths (82 per cent) where only one parent worked and two-thirds (64 per cent) where neither parent worked (Table 3-2). A similar pattern was evident for lone parents, with those that worked (either full or part-time) significantly more likely to have used childcare in the past year than those who did not work.

In terms of the use of childcare in the reference week the story was much the same as for usage in the past year, and was slightly more pronounced. Lone parents working full-time (78 per cent) and couples where both were in full-time employment (65 per cent) were most likely to have used childcare in the reference week.

It is notable that lone parents were more likely to have used childcare than couples of comparable working status, with 78 per cent of full-time working lone parents using childcare compared with 65 per cent of couples who both worked. The corresponding figures for lone parents and couples not in paid employment were 44 and 33 per cent respectively.

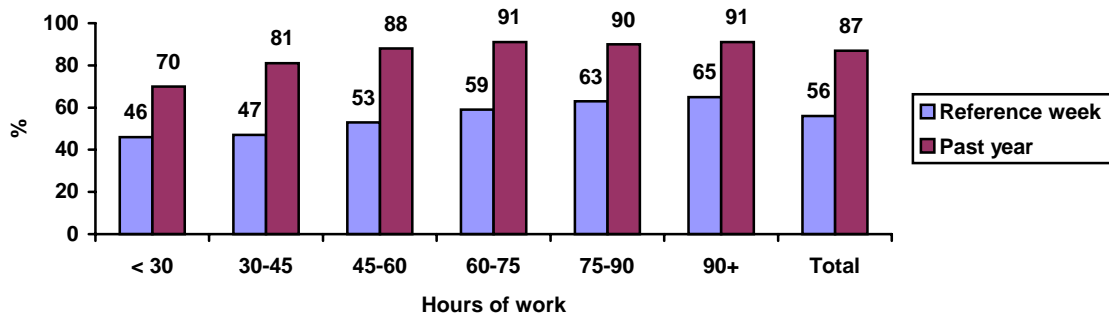
Table 3-2 Use of childcare, by household work status

	Used childcare in the past week (%)	Used childcare in the past year (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
<i>Couples</i>				
Both in full-time work	65	90	835	1,015
One in full-time work, one in part-time work	58	92	1,347	1,579
One in full-time work, one not in work	47	82	963	1,099
One or both in part-time work	46	72	128	148
Neither in paid work	33	64	172	192
All couples	55	86	3,446	4,033
<i>Lone parents</i>				
In full-time work	78	92	254	323
In part-time work	68	94	302	369
Not in paid work	44	76	617	691
All lone parents	58	84	1,173	1,383
Total	56	86	4,619	5,416

Base: All households.

The use of childcare was also closely related to the number of hours worked by the respondent. For instance, 78 per cent of lone parents working 30 or more hours per week used some childcare in the reference week, compared to 65 per cent who worked fewer than 16 hours. In families headed by a couple, a positive association between hours worked and use of childcare was also evident – 63 per cent of respondents who worked more than 30 hours per week used childcare in the reference week compared with 54 per cent who worked 15 or fewer hours. What is also apparent, as illustrated in Figure 3-1, is that the total hours worked by the respondent and their partner, is positively associated with the use of childcare. Where more than 70 hours of work is done by the respondent and their partner, around 90 per cent used childcare in the past year and just under two-thirds (65 per cent) used it in the reference week. This was considerably higher than in households where less than 30 hours of paid work per week takes place.

Figure 3-1 Use of childcare, by total hours worked by respondent and their partner



Base: All households headed by a couple where at least one of the respondent or the partner is in paid work. Figures are weighted and based on responses from 3,841 households.

Atypical work patterns

In Chapter 2 we described how some parents had irregular patterns of work, for example, some work long hours, shifts, and some work from home. Evidence from other studies suggest that these arrangements may impact on their usage of childcare²⁴.

Households where one of the parents worked shifts or where one worked more than 45 hours per week did not appear to be any different from other working households in terms of the use of childcare (Table 3-3). In contrast, usage of childcare by households where a parent worked at home was lower than that of other working households, at 86 per cent in the last year and 51 per cent in the reference week. This may indicate that parents that work from home were more often able to combine their work with care of their children.

Looking at the household as a whole may however hide some of the detail. It is well known that for couples, the responsibility for childcare may not be equally shared. If the analysis is limited to just those parents who report themselves as having main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare, a different story emerges. Where that person works more than 45 hours per week, the household is much more likely to have used childcare in the reference week. Over two-thirds (70 per cent) had done so compared with 58 per cent of all other working households. Similarly if the main childcare provider usually worked shifts, these households were also more likely to have used childcare in the reference week – 66 per cent having done so²⁵. And likewise, if the main provider worked only from home, their use of childcare was much less – around half (53 per cent) used some care in the reference week. On the basis of these results it is possible to conclude that atypical work patterns do have a strong influence on parents’ use of childcare, in particular where these work patterns apply to the main childcare provider in the household.

²⁴ For example see Gottlieb, B. H., Kelloway E. K. and Barham, E. (1998) *Flexible working arrangements: managing the work-family boundary*. Wiley, Chicester.

²⁵ Where the main childcare provider never worked shifts, 62 per cent of these households used childcare in the reference week.

Table 3-3 Usage of childcare in the last week and the last year, by household work patterns

	Atypical work patterns for either parent			Total	Atypical work patterns for neither parent
	Works long hours (>45 hours)	Works shifts	Works at home only		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Used childcare in the reference week	58	59	51	57	60
Used childcare in the past year	89	89	86	89	88
Weighted base	1,537	747	237	2,109	1,719
Unweighted base	1,815	893	276	2,498	2,035

Base: All households where at least one parent is in paid employment.

For lone parents the story was much the same as for the main childcare provider in couple households. Those that had any of the three forms of atypical work patterns described above were considerably more likely than other parents (both lone parents and parents in general) to have used childcare. Four-fifths (82 per cent) had used childcare in the reference week and 94 per cent had used childcare at some stage in the past year²⁶.

Family friendly work practices

Respondents who were in work as an employee were asked about their access to and use of family-friendly working practices. These were the practices outlined in Section 3 of Chapter 2 (see Table 2.7). Where the respondent used any of these they were more likely to have used childcare in the past year (92 per cent) and in the reference week (64 per cent) than were respondents who decided not to use of these practices or for whom they were not available (86 and 56 per cent respectively)²⁷.

Household income

A strong relationship was observed between levels of household income and the use of childcare both in the past year and the past week (Figure 3-2). Of those families with a total household income of more than £31,200 per annum, 91 per cent used some childcare in the past year compared with 78 per cent of those with an annual income under £10,400. In terms of the reference week, the proportions using childcare in the top and bottom income brackets were 61 and 49 per cent respectively.

Just two-fifths (41 per cent) of couples with an annual household income under £10,400 used childcare in the reference week, which was considerably lower than for

²⁶ It was not possible to do a separate analysis of lone parents by type of atypical working arrangement because of insufficient observations apart from those that worked shifts – 85 per cent of these lone parents used childcare in the reference week and 96 per cent used it in the past year.

²⁷ Similarly, we looked at respondents who said that help with childcare was available from their employer (excluding term-time working), examples of which were shown in Table 2.8. Where any of these types of assistance was available, respondents were more likely to have used childcare in the reference week (66 per cent) than were respondents that did not receive such support (62 per cent).

lone parents in the same income range (51 per cent). The pattern was the same in relation to their use of childcare in the past year (69 and 81 per cent respectively).

Figure 3-2 Use of childcare, by household income



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

Not surprisingly, low income households where no parent was in work, were less likely to have used some childcare in either the reference week (43 per cent) or the last year (74 per cent) than households where at least one parent was working (where 60 and 86 per cent used childcare in the respective periods).

Families in receipt of some form of state benefit or tax credit (excluding Child Benefit) were less likely to have used childcare in either the reference week (52 per cent) or at any time in the past year (82 per cent) than were other families (58 and 88 per cent respectively). This is unsurprising given that these would have been households at the lower end of the income distribution. However, this summary measure hides some of the detail in that recipients of Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC) behave somewhat differently from other state benefit or tax credit recipients.

Households that received WFTC were more likely to have used childcare in either the reference week (61 per cent) or in the past year (88 per cent), than were families who received some other state benefit or tax credit (44 and 76 per cent respectively for the reference week and the past year).

Depending on the type of childcare used and the amount paid for that childcare, WFTC recipients could also receive financial assistance to help with their childcare costs – this help is known as the childcare tax credit. Table 3-4 shows how this is related to a parent's use of childcare. As would be expected, proportionately more childcare tax credit recipients used childcare than other families. The fact that less than 100 per cent used childcare was a function of the survey methodology. Since the interview only made reference to up to two children in the household, it may have been that the childcare tax credit was being claimed for the childcare used by a non-selected child²⁸.

²⁸ This accounts for most of the discrepancy. There is also a small amount of measurement error where it appears that respondents incorrectly stated that they were receiving childcare tax credit.

Table 3-4 Use of childcare, by receipt of childcare tax credit or Working Families' Tax Credit

	WFTC status of household				
	Childcare tax credit recipient (%)	Receives WFTC only (%)	Non-recipient (%)	Doesn't know if receives WFTC (%)	All households (%)
Used childcare in the reference week	93	56	54	66	56
Used childcare in the past year	99	86	85	82	86
Weighted base	125	745	3,698	50	4,619
Unweighted base	195	866	4,299	56	5,416

Base: All households.

Ethnicity

In general, respondents from a non-white ethnic background were less likely than white respondents to have used childcare (Table 3-5). Respondents of Asian background were least likely to use childcare, with 68 per cent using it in the last year and less than half (43 per cent) using childcare in the reference week.

Table 3-5 Use of childcare, by ethnic origin of parent

	Ethnicity of respondent				
	White (%)	Black (%)	Asian (%)	Other or missing (%)	All households (%)
Used childcare in the reference week	57	50	43	49	56
Used childcare in the past year	87	79	68	74	86
Weighted base	4,114	129	251	124	4,619
Unweighted base	4,827	163	283	143	5,416

Base: All households.

Disability

Use of childcare was lower than average where either parent had a limiting disability, at 80 per cent in the past year and 46 per cent in the reference week, compared with the average levels for the remainder of the sample of 88 and 59 per cent respectively. In couple households childcare usage was no different according to who it was with the disability, however, if both had a limiting disability or if it was a lone parent household, the use of childcare over either of the reference periods was considerably lower (63 and 32 per cent respectively).

Regional variations

Table 3-6 illustrates regional differences in the proportion of parents using childcare in the past year and in the reference week. The difference between the region with the highest proportion of parents using childcare and the lowest was nine percentage points for both the past year and the reference week. Regions were not ranked consistently in terms of the proportion of parents using childcare in the past year and the past week. For example, whilst parents in Eastern had one of the highest proportions of families using childcare in the past year, this region also had one of the lowest proportions using childcare in the reference week.

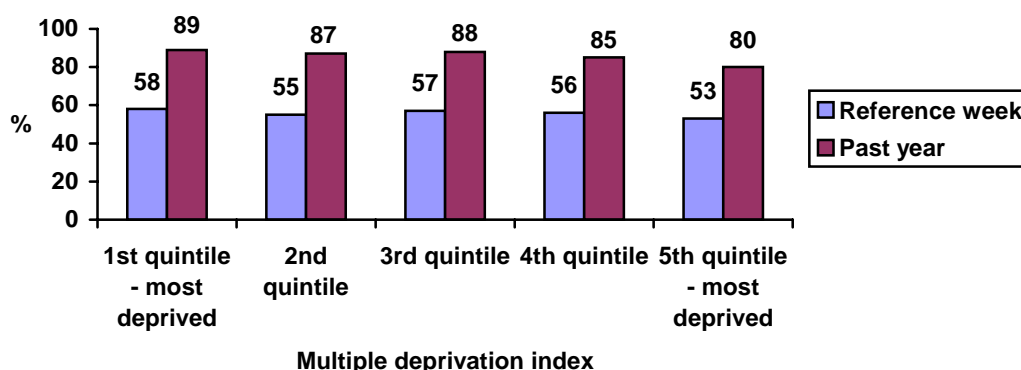
Table 3-6 Use of childcare, by Government Office Region

	Used childcare in the past week (%)	Used childcare in the past year (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Yorkshire & Humberside	60	89	546	636
Eastern	52	89	537	628
South East	54	88	669	786
North East	61	86	272	323
North West	57	85	499	585
East Midlands	57	85	418	497
West Midlands	56	85	527	622
South West	56	85	407	474
London	53	82	628	731
Merseyside	57	80	117	134
Total	56	86	4,619	5,416

Base: All households.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, measures of local deprivation have been linked to the survey data and Figure 3-3 shows how it is related to use of childcare. In terms of the level of childcare use in the past year, there was an nine percentage point difference between the least and most deprived areas, with those in bottom quintile less likely to have used childcare. A similar pattern was evident in terms the proportion of parents that used childcare in the reference week. Whilst the absolute difference was smaller (5 percentage points), the proportionate difference was about the same.

Figure 3-3 Use of childcare, by index of multiple deprivation



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,384 households²⁹.

3.3 Types of provider used

Respondents were asked to classify all providers used in the last year and the last week using 16 categories which were provided on a showcard (see Appendix A, Section 6).

Table 3-7 shows the incidence of usage of different types of providers in the last year and the last week. For both periods it can be seen that childcare was most commonly provided by what we refer to as ‘informal’ providers, such as grandparents and relatives. Over half of the families interviewed said they had used their children’s grandparents (58 percent) to look after their children, with almost two-fifths reporting use of family friends or relatives (37 percent) in the past year. Under a tenth (7 per cent) said that an older sibling had looked after their children in the past year.

Several types of ‘early years education and other formal’ providers were used by a minority of between 9 and 16 per cent of households in the last year: childminders (9 per cent); babysitters (10 per cent); crèche/nurseries (16 per cent); playgroups (11 per cent); nursery or reception classes (12 per cent); and out-of school clubs (14 per cent). Use of nannies/au pairs and family centres was very low, both at around one per cent.

The patterns of childcare use in the reference week by and large replicated those for childcare in the past year. Parents were most likely to have used grandparents, around a quarter (24 per cent) having done so in the reference week, with friends and relatives (10 per cent) being the next most commonly used type of childcare provider.

²⁹ There were 32 cases where it was not possible to attach a deprivation score due to incomplete data regarding the location of the family.

Table 3-7 Household's use of childcare in the reference week and in the past year

Column percentages⁺

	Used childcare in the past week (%)	Used childcare in the past year (%)
No childcare used	44	14
<i>Early years education and formal childcare</i>		
Childminder	5	9
Daily nanny	1	1
Live-in nanny or au-pair	*	1
Babysitter	2	10
Crèche or nursery	10	16
Playgroup	6	11
Nursery / reception class	7	12
Family Centre	*	*
Out-of-school club	6	14
<i>Informal providers</i>		
Ex-partner	4	7
Grandparent	24	58
Older sibling	3	7
Other friend / relative	10	37
Other	2	4
Weighted base	4,619	4,619
Unweighted base	5,416	5,416

Base: All households.

⁺ The columns show all the types of childcare providers that were used by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

In general the differences between usage levels in the reference week and the past year were greater for informal providers than for early years education and other formal childcare providers. This reflects the fact that where latter providers were used, they tended to be used on a more regular basis.

In terms of the types of providers used in the past year, the following relationships were observed with respect to the characteristics of the household (and shown in Table 3-8):

- Childminders were more commonly used by couples who both worked full-time (17 per cent) and by lone parents who worked full-time (17 per cent).
- Around one-in-ten (10 per cent) parents had used a babysitter in the past year, apart from those in households where there was no-one in work where the proportion using a babysitter was closer to one-in-twenty (5 per cent).

- Around one in five households where either the lone parent was working full-time or where both the respondent and their partner was working full-time used an after-school club in the past year. This was a significantly higher proportion than for any other type of family.
- Crèches/nursery classes were used by a similar proportion of households irrespective of their work status.
- Around a quarter (23 per cent) of lone parents had used their ex-partner for childcare in the past year. This is probably an under-estimate of the true proportion as many lone parents may not regard the time their child spent with an ex-partner as childcare even though this was the definition used for this study.
- A majority of households where at least one parent was in work – either full or part-time – used their child’s grandparents for childcare.
- Around two-fifths of working parents had used their friends or relatives as providers of childcare in the past year. This was significantly higher than non-working parents where the proportion was approximately a quarter.

The patterns of use of different childcare providers over the reference week is shown in Table 3-9 with the relationships with household work status being broadly similar to what was evident in respect of the last year.

Table 3-8 Providers used in the past year, by household structure and employment

Column percentages +

	Two-parent family						Lone parent			
	Both work full-time	One works full-time, one part-time	One works full-time	One or both work part-time	Neither works	Total	Parent works full-time	Parent works part-time	Not in work	Total
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
No childcare used	10	8	18	28	36	14	8	6	24	16
Childminder	17	9	4	4	1	9	17	8	2	7
Daily nanny	2	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	*	*
Line-in nanny or au-pair	1	*	*	-	*	1	1	1	*	1
Babysitter	10	14	10	9	3	11	11	10	5	8
Crèche or nursery	17	17	18	14	12	17	14	13	13	13
Playgroup	6	13	18	10	6	12	5	8	7	7
Nursery / reception class	8	13	15	13	11	12	7	9	14	11
Family Centre	*	*	*	1	-	*	*	*	1	1
Out-of-school club	21	14	10	6	7	14	24	15	8	13
Ex-partner	3	2	2	3	3	2	31	29	16	23
Grandparent	61	69	52	42	34	60	55	64	44	52
Older sibling	11	8	4	6	4	7	11	8	4	6
Other friend / relative	37	42	32	29	22	37	46	42	29	36
Other	3	3	5	4	3	4	2	3	3	3
Weighted base	835	1,347	963	128	172	3,446	254	302	617	1,173
Unweighted base	1,015	1,579	1,099	148	192	4,033	323	369	691	1,383

Base: All households

+ The columns show all the types of childcare providers that were used by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Table 3-9 Providers used in the reference week, by household structure and employment

Column percentages +

	Two-parent family						Lone parent			
	Both work full-time (%)	One works full-time, one part-time (%)	One works full-time (%)	One or both work part-time (%)	Neither works (%)	All couples (%)	Parent works full-time (%)	Parent works part-time (%)	Not in work (%)	All lone parents (%)
No childcare used	35	42	53	54	67	45	22	32	56	42
Childminder	11	6	1	1	-	5	9	4	*	3
Daily nanny	2	1	*	-	-	1	*	*	-	*
Line-in nanny or au-pair	1	*	*	-	-	*	1	1	-	*
Babysitter	1	3	2	3	2	2	4	3	1	2
Crèche or nursery	12	11	11	7	6	11	10	9	6	8
Playgroup	3	8	9	5	2	7	2	3	4	4
Nursery / reception class	4	8	10	10	5	7	4	5	9	7
Family Centre	*	-	*	-	-	*	*	-	1	*
Out-of-school club	10	5	4	3	3	5	12	6	3	6
Ex-partner	1	1	1	2	1	1	19	17	6	12
Grandparent	28	29	15	16	14	24	32	31	17	24
Older sibling	5	3	1	1	1	3	5	2	1	2
Other friend / relative	11	10	6	10	6	9	21	17	7	12
Other	1	1	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	1
Weighted base	835	1,347	963	128	172	3,446	253	301	617	1,173
Unweighted base	1,015	1,579	1,099	148	192	4,033	322	368	690	1,383

Base: All households

+ The columns show all the types of childcare providers that were used by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

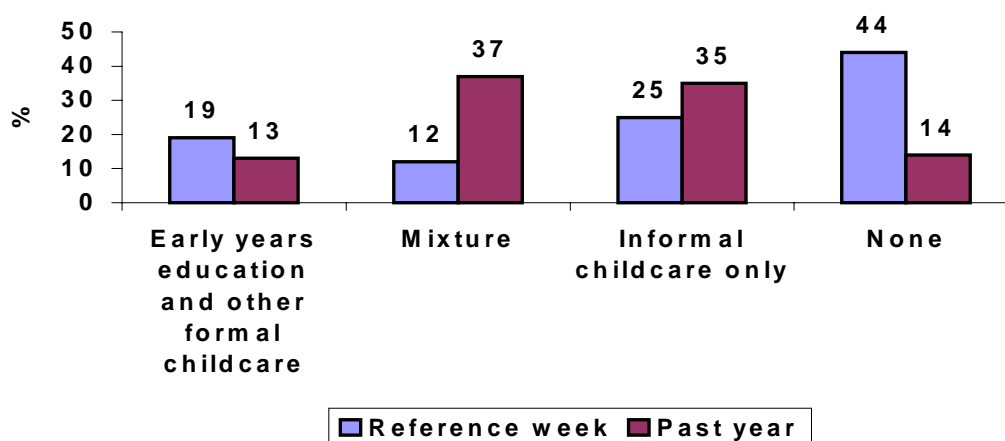
Early years education and formal provision of childcare

Half of all parents (50 per cent) used some type of early years education or formal childcare in the past year, three-quarters (72 per cent) used informal provision and almost two-fifths (37 per cent) used both types (Figure 3-4). Just over a third (35 per cent) of parents' said they had only used informal arrangements, with 13 per cent reported to have used early years education or other formal care arrangements exclusively.

In terms of childcare use in the reference week the pattern is somewhat different. Overall, the proportion of parents using early years education or other formal provision (32 per cent) compared with informal (36 per cent) arrangements was lower than for the past year. It is noticeable, however, that the gap between these two categories of care is greatly reduced. The ratio of parents using informal to formal arrangements was 1.4 to 1 in the past year, but in the reference week it was only 1.1 to 1.

It is also apparent that the overlap between early years education and other formal childcare and informal arrangements was much smaller than for the last year, with only 12 per cent using both types of provision. This, together with the finding about the relative use of these arrangements, shows that although parents did use a range of types of providers over a period of time, they were less likely to use both formal and informal providers on a regular basis.

Figure 3-4 Household's use of childcare in the reference week and in the past year



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

In line with their greater use of childcare overall, parents in the highest income group were most likely to have used early years education and other formal childcare arrangements, both in the reference week and over the past year (Table 3-10). Around two-thirds (65 per cent) of parents in the highest income group had used some early years education or formal childcare in the past compared with two-fifths (39 per cent) with a household income of less than £10,400 per year. In the reference week, high-income households were much more likely to have exclusively used

these formal arrangements than were any other households - 27 per cent having done so compared with 16 per cent of all other households.

Table 3-10 Type of childcare providers used, by household income

Column percentages

	Household income				All households (%)
	Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	
<i>Used childcare in the past week</i>					
Early years education and formal childcare only	16	16	17	27	19
Mixture	8	13	12	14	12
Informal childcare only	25	28	27	21	25
None	51	43	43	39	44
<i>Used childcare in the past year</i>					
Early years education and formal childcare only	13	11	11	16	13
Mixture	27	37	38	48	37
Informal childcare only	39	39	39	27	35
None	22	13	12	9	14
Weighted base	911	1,111	1,018	1,245	4,619
Unweighted base	1,043	1,309	1,191	1,491	5,416

Base: All households

Note: Household income was missing in 382 cases. These cases are included in the final column but have not been reported separately.

Household structure and employment were related to usage of early years education and formal childcare and informal childcare (Table 3-11). Usage of these formal arrangements was higher among couples (53 per cent over the past year and 33 per cent in the reference week) than among lone parents (45 per cent over the past year and 27 per cent in the reference week). There were no differences between couples and lone parents in the proportion using informal childcare in the previous year - across both, it was 73 per cent. However, lone parents were more likely to have used informal childcare in the previous week (42 per cent) than couples (35 per cent). Households containing working parents were much more likely to use both types of care than households containing no working parents.

Table 3-11 Use of childcare, by household work status

	<i>Column percentages</i>									
	Two-parent family						Lone parent			
	Both work full-time	One works full-time, one part-time	One works full-time	One or both work part-time	Neither works	Total	Parent works full-time	Parent works part-time	Not in work	Total
(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<i>Reference week</i>										
Early years education and formal childcare only	23	18	24	19	13	21	17	14	16	16
Mixture	13	15	8	7	4	12	19	15	6	11
Informal only	29	25	16	20	16	23	41	39	22	30
None	35	42	53	54	67	45	22	32	56	42
<i>Past year</i>										
Early years education and formal childcare only	14	10	18	15	17	14	11	9	14	12
Mixture	42	44	35	26	15	39	41	41	25	33
Informal only	34	37	30	30	32	34	40	45	37	40
None	10	8	18	28	36	14	8	6	24	16
Weighted base	835	1,347	963	128	172	3,446	254	302	617	1,173
Unweighted base	1,015	1,579	1,099	148	192	4,033	323	369	691	1,383

Base: All households.

The basic definition of early years education and formal childcare used in this report includes childminders, babysitters and nannies, not all of whom would be registered. Parents indicated that around a sixth (15 per cent) of childminders were unregistered and we have assumed – in the absence of any direct information – that all babysitters and nannies were also unregistered. Around a tenth of parents (13 per cent) used this formal *unregistered* care in the past year compared with just under a half (46 per cent) that used formal *registered* childcare. Table 3-12 shows how the use of these types of childcare differed according to the work status of the household.

Table 3-12 Type of childcare provider used in the past year, by household work status

	Household work status		
	One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	All households (%)
Used formal registered childcare in the past year	48	35	46
Used formal, unregistered childcare in the past year	14	6	13
Used informal childcare in the past year	75	59	73
Weighted base	1,173	3,446	4,619
Unweighted base	1,383	4,033	5,416

Base: All households that used childcare in the past year.

3.4 Times when households use childcare

Parents were asked when they had used childcare in the past year. The year was split into nine periods which were based on school terms and holidays. The same time periods were used for all children, regardless of whether they were of school age.

Most parents used childcare across the year rather than at specific points in time. Table 3-13 summarises this information and shows that four-fifths of parents (79 per cent of those that used childcare in the past year or 68 per cent of all parents) used childcare in both term and holiday times, with about one-in-ten using childcare only in holidays (9 per cent) and a similar proportion (12 per cent) only in term times.

As would be expected there was some variation according to the ages of the children being referred to. Families that only had children of school age were the most likely to have used childcare only in school holidays (13 percent).

Table 3-13 When was childcare used in the past year, by age of children in household

Column percentages

	Pre-school only (%)	Pre-school and school age (%)	School age only (%)	All households (%)
Term-time and holidays	86	82	74	79
Term-time only	12	15	11	12
Holidays only	2	3	13	9
Don't know or refused	*	*	1	1
Weighted base	914	806	2240	3,965
Unweighted base	1,036	941	2,733	4,713

Base: All households that used childcare in the past year.

More detailed information was collected day by day about the timing of childcare in the reference week. In order to summarise this information periods of childcare have been classified into six categories which are:

- *weekday early morning sessions*: any session covering the period between 06:00 and 08.59
- *weekday daytime sessions*: any session covering the period between 09:00 and 15.29
- *weekday late afternoon sessions*: any session covering the period between 15:30 and 17.59
- *weekday evening sessions*: any session covering the period between 18:00 and 21.59
- *weekday night sessions*: any session covering the period between 22:00 and 05.59
- *weekend sessions*: any sessions on a Saturday or a Sunday

These are not exclusive categories and a single extended period of childcare might cover several of them. They have been retained from the baseline survey so as to allow comparisons. Their purpose is to identify periods during the reference week when childcare was used rather than to quantify the number of sessions used which is reported separately in Section 3.4.

The most common time for using childcare was either a weekday daytime session (40 per cent) or a weekday late afternoon session (37 per cent). Around one-in-five parents used a weekday early morning (20 per cent) or weekday evening session (21 per cent). Weekday night (8 per cent) and weekend session (14 per cent) were both less frequently used by parents.

There was considerable variation in the times childcare was used in the day according to the work status of the household and this was particularly true of lone parents. Table 3-14 shows that lone parents in full-time work were much more likely to use childcare on a week-day afternoon than at any other time of day, and that the proportion doing so (69 per cent) was much higher than for those working part-time (46 per cent) or not at all (21 per cent). Couples where both were in work were significantly more likely to have used childcare in weekday sessions that started on or before the evening session (Table 3-15). Particularly noticeable is the relatively

high proportion of parents that used early morning childcare where both parents were in full-time work. Around a third (33 per cent) of these parents used early morning childcare compared with approximately a tenth (9 per cent) of households headed by a couple where only one of the parents was in work.

Table 3-14 When was childcare used in the reference week, by lone parents' employment status

Column percentages +

	In full-time work (%)	In part-time work (%)	Not in paid work (%)	All households (%)
Weekday early morning	42	22	7	19
Weekday daytime	51	42	29	37
Weekday late afternoon	69	46	21	38
Weekday evening	48	38	18	30
Weekday night	19	18	10	14
Weekend	26	30	17	22
Weighted base	254	302	617	1,173
Unweighted base	323	369	691	1,383

Base: All households where there is a lone parent.

+ The columns show the percentage of parents using childcare at these times, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Table 3-15 When was childcare used in the reference week, by couples' employment status

Column percentages +

	Both work full-time (%)	One works full-time, one part-time (%)	One works full-time (%)	One or both work part-time (%)	Neither works (%)	All households (%)
Weekday early morning	33	22	9	12	4	20
Weekday daytime	46	44	37	37	20	41
Weekday late afternoon	56	41	21	22	14	37
Weekday evening	25	19	14	12	9	18
Weekday night	5	5	6	6	5	6
Weekend	10	10	11	8	12	11
Weighted base	835	1,347	963	128	172	3,446
Unweighted base	1,015	1,579	1,0996	148	192	4,033

Base: All households where family is a couple.

+ The columns show the percentage of parents using childcare at these times, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

3.5 Number of providers used by parents

Most parents that used childcare in the past year tended to use a range of providers as opposed to using a single source. Just under three-quarters of families that used childcare in the past year used more than one provider (72 per cent) with a quarter using exactly two (28 per cent). Around three-quarters (77 per cent) used three or fewer providers.

In the reference week, parents were much more likely to have used a single provider, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of families that used childcare having done so. This may be indicative of parents having a single preferred provider but nevertheless, having to rely on other providers throughout the course of a year. Nine-in-ten (90 per cent) used two or fewer with the maximum number of providers being eight.

3.6 Quantity of childcare used in the past week

Parents were asked to provide details of each session of childcare they used in the last week including the time the provision started, the time it ended and the identity of the provider. This information allows two measures of the quantity of childcare used per week to be derived – the number of hours of care and the number of sessions of care. These measures need not be closely related to each other since the term ‘session’ does not imply a fixed period of time, but was simply defined by when a continuous period of childcare started and finished. Thus a ‘session’ could last for as little time as a few minutes or, at the other extreme, for longer than a day if a child was looked after overnight.

As information about childcare usage was obtained about only two children in a household it was necessary to weight the quantities recorded in order to produce an estimate of the total quantity of childcare used for all the children in the household. The following findings include the effects of this weighting.

On average parents used between 4 and 5 sessions of childcare in the reference week. This varied according to the number of children in the household with an average of 4.1 in a single child household, 5.1 in two child households and 4.4 where there were three or more children³⁰. The mean number of sessions per child is reported in Section 3.6.

Table 3-16 shows the total number of hours of childcare used by households in the reference week. It can be seen that most parents used quite small amounts of childcare for their children, typically less than 10 hours. Around three-quarters (77 per cent) used less than 20 hours per week. However, a small minority used quite large amounts, 15 per cent used more than 30 hours per week. The mean number of hours was 11.9, although if the analysis is restricted to households that used any childcare in the reference week, the average would be almost double at 21.4 hours per week.

³⁰ The number of sessions refers to the two selected children and not to the total sessions used by the household.

Not surprisingly households where at least one of the parents was working used more childcare. Just under a fifth of these households (17 per cent) used more than 30 hours of childcare in the reference week compared with 10 per cent of households where neither parent was in work.

Table 3-16 Number of hours of childcare used in the reference week, by household work status

Number of hours of childcare used in reference week	Household work status		
	One or more working parents (%)	No working parent (%)	All households (%)
None	41	58	44
Up to 10 hours	22	17	21
11 to 20 hours	13	11	12
21 to 30 hours	8	4	7
31 to 40 hours	7	6	7
41 to 50 hours	5	2	4
More than 50 hours	5	2	4
Mean number of hours	12.7	8.1	11.9
Weighted base	3,829	790	4,619
Unweighted base	4,533	883	5,416

Base: All households.

Table 3-17 disaggregates the number of hours of childcare used in the reference week even further by looking at how it varies across both family type and according to work status. Lone parents on average used an extra three hours of childcare per week compared with couples. Those lone parents who were working full-time used the highest number of hours – an overall mean of 24.0 (or 30.9 hours if the analysis is restricted to just those parents that had used childcare in the reference week). Couples where both were in full-time employment used an average of 15.9 hours in the reference week which was considerably higher than other couples with different working arrangements. Non-working couples used the smallest number of hours (a mean of 4.9).

There was only small variation in the average number of hours of childcare used according to the degree of deprivation in the areas which parents lived. Parents living in the most deprived areas used on average 10.6 hours of childcare compared to 12.2 hours used by parents in the least deprived areas. The difference is even smaller when the base is limited to users of childcare - 20.0 hours in the most deprived areas and 21.1 in areas that were the least deprived.

The number of hours of childcare used in the reference week was found to be positively correlated with household income³¹.

³¹ Correlation coefficient of 0.64 significant at 99% confidence interval.

Table 3-17 Number of hours of childcare used in the reference week, by household work status

	Used childcare in reference week <i>Mean hours</i>	All households+ <i>Mean hours</i>
<i>Couples</i>		
Both in full-time work	24.6	15.9
One in full-time work one in part-time work	19.4	11.3
One in full-time work one not in work	17.7	8.4
One or both in part-time work	17.8	8.1
Neither in paid work	14.8	4.9
All couples	20.3	11.2
<i>Lone parents</i>		
In full-time work	30.9	24.0
In part-time work	24.4	16.5
Not in paid work	20.1	9.0
All lone parents	24.6	14.2
Total	21.4	12.0

Base: All households.

+ This figure is based on all households, that is, it includes households which were not using childcare in the reference week.

Table 3-18 shows the mean number of hours each provider was used for in the reference week. As would be expected, there was considerable variation across provider types. Where used, ex-partners provided childcare on average for the largest number of hours in the reference week – 26.2 hours³². Other important providers in terms of their hours used included:

- nursery/reception classes (22.6 hours);
- crèche / nursery (19.2 hours);
- childminders (16.7 hours); and,
- grandparents (15.9 hours).

While it is difficult to make comparisons between “working” and “workless” households because of the small number of households in the latter group, difference were generally small. Households with at least one parent in work tended to use early years education and other formal providers for more hours in the reference week, but used informal providers for fewer hours than did “workless” households. In addition, differences were generally small between lone parents and couples.

³² More so than for other types of providers, the estimate of average number of hours an ex-partner was used for in the reference week is affected by outliers. There were a small number of cases where the ex-partner had provided childcare for the majority of the reference week and this has the effect of pushing up the average.

For a few of the provider types it was possible to make comparisons between families that used them who lived in areas with different levels of deprivation³³. For each of the providers there was no statistically significant difference in the number of hours they were used in the reference week according to whether the user was situated in a deprived area or not. Families in deprived areas used other relatives and friends (11.5 hours compared with 9.8 hours) and out of school clubs (9.5 hours compared with 7.1 hours) for more hours in the reference week than families in the least deprived areas.

Table 3-18 Household's use of childcare in the reference week and in the past year

	Household work status		All households (Mean hours)
	One or more working parents (Mean hours)	No working parent (Mean hours)	
Childminder	16.8	[8.1]	16.7
Daily nanny	[23.6]	-	[23.6]
Live-in nanny or au-pair	[35.2]	-	[35.2]
Babysitter	6.9	[8.6]	7.1
Crèche or nursery	19.8	14.1	19.2
Playgroup	8.6	[8.2]	8.6
Nursery / reception class	23.1	20.6	22.6
Family Centre	[3.2]	[7.7]	[5.6]
Out-of-school club	8.2	[4.5]	7.9
Ex-partner	27.9	[20.9]	26.2
Grandparent	15.6	18.0	15.9
Older sibling	7.6	[5.9]	7.4
Other friend / relative	10.8	11.3	10.8
Other	9.3	[11.3]	9.5

Base: All households that used the named provider in the reference week.

An alternative way of presenting these data is to look at the share of the total hours of childcare used by parents in the reference week that can be accounted for by each type of childcare provider. This would show how important each provider type is in terms of the total number of hours of care used by parents in the reference week. From this statements such as the following would be possible ... *“while childminders represented X per cent of all providers, they accounted for Y per cent of the total hours of childcare used by parents in the reference week”*. Figure 3-5 presents these data for lone parents, couples and for all parents.

Several of the childcare providers account for a greater proportion of the total hours of childcare than their share in the total number of providers. These are:

³³ There were sufficient number of cases in the most and least deprived areas (i.e. the 1st and 5th quintiles) to make comparisons regarding the following providers: crèche/nurseries, nursery/reception classes, out-of school clubs, grandparents and other relatives and friends.

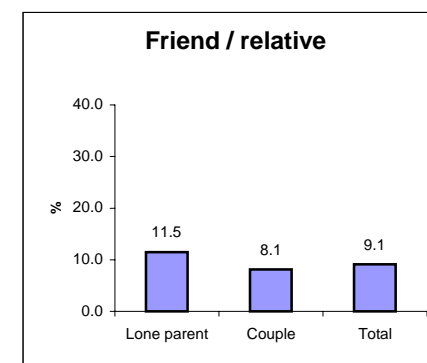
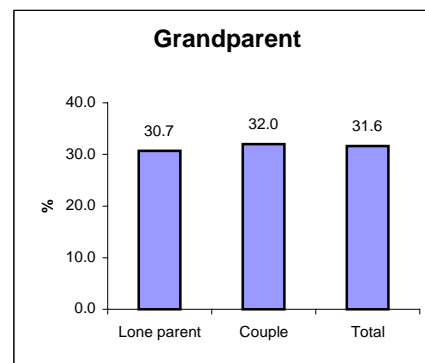
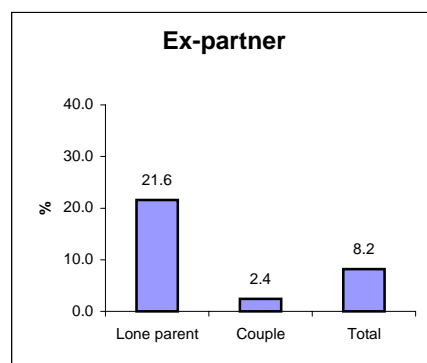
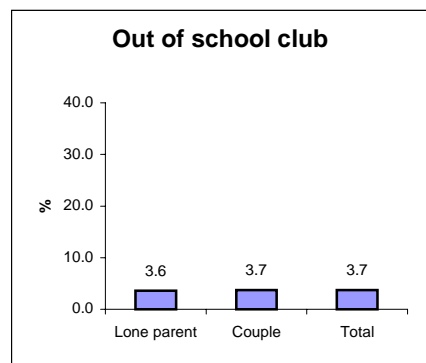
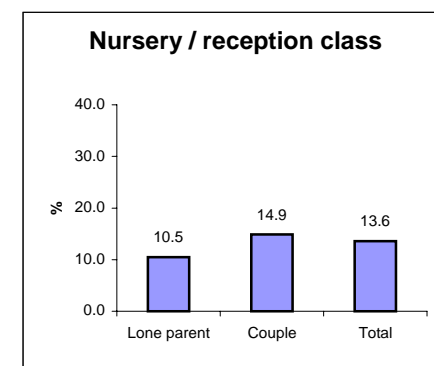
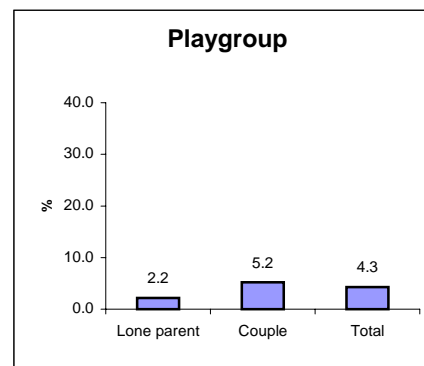
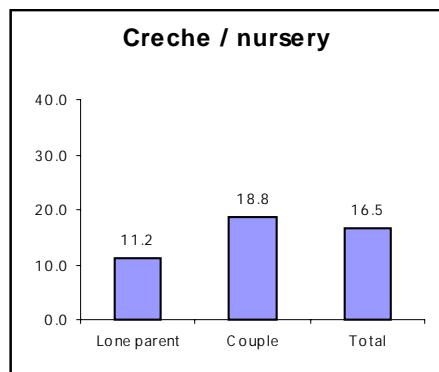
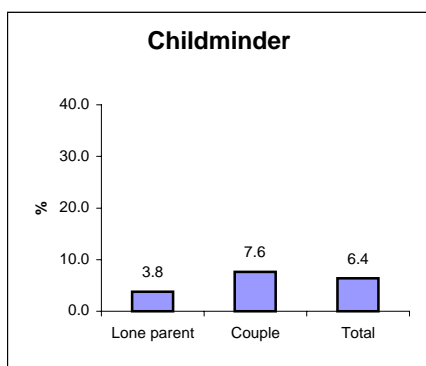
- crèche/nurseries (13 per cent of all providers, 16 per cent of the total hours);
- nursery/reception classes (nine per cent of all providers, 14 per cent of the total hours);
- ex-partners (five per cent of all providers, eight per cent of the total hours);

Providers that were *under represented* include:

- playgroups (seven per cent of all providers, four per cent of the total hours);
- out-of-school clubs (seven per cent of all providers, four per cent of the total hours).

The amount of hours accounted for by the other providers - childminders, nannies, babysitters, family centres, grandparents, siblings and other relatives and friends - was approximately the same as their share in the total number of providers used by parents in the reference week.

Figure 3-5 Share of each provider in the total hours of childcare used in the reference week, by type of family



3.7 Patterns of childcare use among children

In previous sections, this chapter has looked at variations in the usage of childcare according to the characteristics of the family. Attention is now turned to the characteristics of the children.

As outlined in Chapter 1, a maximum of two children were selected from each household and where a household contained more than two children (17 per cent of households) two were selected at random by the CAPI programme about whom questions were asked. Since details of the quantity of childcare used were only collected for the two selected children, it was necessary to weight these data in order to produce an estimate of the total quantity of childcare used by the household. Section A3 in Appendix A includes full details about the weighting procedures. The findings reported in this section include the effect of this weighting.

Information was collected about 8,657 children, which were equally split between males and females.

Childcare was used for just over four-fifths of these children in the past year (81 per cent). In the reference week the proportion using childcare was a half (48 per cent). Both these figures are lower than those reported earlier in this chapter where the household was the base of the analysis. The difference arises because not all children covered by the interview had to have used childcare.

Age of children

No significant differences were found in the use of childcare between boys and girls. Age, however, was an important factor and this is illustrated in Table 3-19. Children aged 3-4 were the most likely to have received childcare in the reference week (80 per cent) as well as the last year (96 per cent). Also the difference between weekly and yearly usage was smaller than for other age groups.

Table 3-19 Levels of childcare usage, by age of child

	Age group of child					All children
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Used childcare in the reference week	54	80	49	42	26	48
Used childcare in the past year	77	96	86	80	69	81
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

Very young children, the 0-2 age group, appear to have used childcare on a more irregular basis (54 per cent in the reference week and 77 per cent in the past year). This may reflect parents' reluctance to leave young children with others. It may also

reflect an absence of suitable childcare for children of this age, something that is investigated in Chapter 6.

The relatively high levels of childcare reported for 3-4 year olds reflect the inclusion of nursery education and reception classes in the definition of childcare, whereas attendance at school by older children was not counted as childcare. As the distinction between provision of education and childcare for pre-school children is not always clear-cut, it was decided that it was preferable to include all forms of provision as childcare. This is consistent with the rules established in the baseline survey and thus ensures that comparisons can be made across the two surveys.

However, when making comparisons with other studies, it was found that the definitions used here had a tendency to underestimate the amount of childcare used. Specifically, some parents do not consider certain types of provision - reception classes, nursery classes, nursery schools, pre-schools or playgroups and day nurseries - to be childcare, whereas in this study we do. To allow for this an additional check question was asked of parents with children aged 3-5. It read .. *“Can I just check, did your child attend a reception class, a nursery class, a nursery school a pre-school or playgroup or a day nursery in the last year?”* The question was asked of 365 parents covering 378 children. Around two-thirds (63 per cent) said they had, which would increase the use of childcare in the past year for 3-4 year olds and 5-7 years to 97 and 86 per cent respectively³⁴.

For primary school children, childcare use would often tend to be irregular during term-time and higher usage in the past year might possibly reflect the concentration of use of childcare during school holidays. Half of 5-7 year olds (49 per cent) and around two-fifths (42 per cent) of 8-11 year olds had some childcare in the reference week, while 86 per cent of the former and 80 per cent of the latter had some provision in the past year.

Just over a quarter (26 per cent) of secondary school children had some provision in the reference week and 69 per cent in the past year. The figures reflect low levels of usage, particularly for older children in this group and also possibly a lack of appropriate provision for this group.

Region

Table 3-20 shows the variation in the use of childcare across the regions. While differences between regions were not large, there was little consistency in terms of the ranking of regions across the two periods. For example, whereas Merseyside had the lowest proportion of children using care in the previous year, it had the highest rate with respect of usage in the reference week. A similar, but opposite pattern, emerges for children in the Eastern region. Part of the variation across regions reflects differences in the employment rates of mothers and differences in household income. Once these differences are adjusted for, regional differences are somewhat less apparent. Section 3.8 highlights this in more detail.

³⁴ Parents were not asked which of these types of provision the child attended, therefore it is not possible to adjust the proportion of children using each type of provider. Only aggregate changes were possible.

Table 3-20 Proportion of children attending childcare, by Government Office Region

	Childcare in the past week (%)	Childcare in the past year (%)	Weighted base Number of cases	Unweighted base Number of cases
North East	49	81	475	500
North West	47	78	912	940
Merseyside	51	74	206	208
Yorkshire & Humber	52	84	954	991
East Midlands	51	82	742	798
West Midlands	49	80	992	1,005
South West	48	81	722	759
Eastern	44	85	978	1,021
London	46	76	1,149	1,164
South East	46	83	1,209	1,271
Total	48	81	8,339	8,657

Base: All children.

Children living in more deprived areas were less likely to have used childcare both in the past year and the reference week. Whereas 86 per cent of children in the least deprived areas used childcare in the past year, around three-quarters (74 per cent) of those in the most deprived areas had done so. The proportions for the reference week were 50 and 44 per cent respectively.

Children with special needs

Children with a special educational need (SEN) or other special need were marginally less likely to have used childcare in either the reference week (44 per cent) or in the past year (80 per cent) than were other children. However, where that special need was stated they were significantly less likely to have used childcare (Table 3-21). This may reflect an absence of childcare that is suitable for these children (this is discussed further in Chapter 5) or may reveal a preference among parents for these children to be looked after by themselves.

Table 3-21 Whether childcare used, by whether child has special needs

	Has SEN or other special need		No special needs (%)	All children (%)
	Stated (%)	Not stated (%)		
Used childcare in the reference week	39	48	48	48
Used childcare in the past year	72	85	81	81
Weighted base	257	384	7,584	8,339
Unweighted base	255	406	7,883	8,657

Base: All children.

Note: Information on SEN and other special needs was missing in 113 cases. These cases are included in the final column but have not been reported separately.

Usage of early years education and other formal childcare

Whether the type childcare used was early years education or some other type of formal childcare or whether it was informal has already been discussed at the level of the household. Here, the analysis is extended to see whether children in different age groups were more or less likely to have used these different types of childcare.

Table 3-22 shows that for most age groups children were more likely to have used informal than early years education or other types of formal arrangements, both in the reference week and in the past year. Children aged 5 or above were considerably more likely to have used informal arrangements. Concentrating on the reference week, just under a third (32 per cent) of 5-7 year olds used informal childcare, whereas a quarter (22 per cent) used early years education or other types of formal arrangements. The difference is greater for older children – only 4 per cent of 12-14 year olds used formal arrangements whereas 23 per cent used informal childcare.

Younger children, in particular, 3-4 year olds were very different. They were much more likely to have used early years education or other types of formal arrangements, with many aged 3-4 using this type of care exclusively. Two-fifths (46 per cent) of 3-4 year olds used only early years education or other types of formal arrangements in the reference week compared with under a fifth (15 per cent) of all children.

Table 3-22 Type of childcare used in the last year and the last week, by age of child

	<i>Column percentages</i>					
	Age group of child					
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	All children
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<i>Last week</i>						
Early years education and formal childcare only	20	46	16	11	3	17
Mixture	9	21	6	4	1	7
Informal only	24	12	26	27	22	23
None	46	20	51	58	74	52
<i>Last year</i>						
Early years education and formal childcare only	12	32	15	8	4	13
Mixture	29	57	36	28	12	31
Informal only	36	8	35	44	53	37
None	23	4	14	20	31	19
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

Children with special needs were slightly less likely to have had only early years education or other types of formal arrangements than children with no special needs (14 per cent compared with 18 per cent). Whether the special need was stated

did not appear to make any difference to the likelihood of that child receiving early years education or other types of formal childcare.

Classification of providers

The providers have been grouped into 14 categories, as presented elsewhere in this Chapter.

The main overall findings from this section confirm the results from the household level analysis of childcare. That is:

- over the past year, 54 per cent of children in all age groups used a grandparent as a carer, 34 per cent used another relative or friend of the family, and 12 per cent went to an out-of school club;
- during the reference week, 20 per cent reported a grandparent as a carer, 8 per cent used another relative or a friend of the family as a carer and 7 per cent of children went to a crèche or nursery;
- informal childcare provision (i.e. ex-partners, relatives, friends) were more widely reported than formal childcare.

Tables 3-23 and 3-24 present the different providers used by the age of the children for both the past year and for childcare used in the reference week.

Starting with 0-2 year olds, 55 per cent had been cared for by their grandparents over the past year and just under a third (31 per cent) received care from a friend or relative of the family. Around a quarter of children in this age group had been to a crèche or nursery in the past year (23 per cent), with one-in-ten being cared for by a childminder or a babysitter. During the reference week a quarter (26 per cent) of 0-2 year olds had been cared for by their grandparents with the second most common source of childcare being a crèche or nursery where a fifth (18 per cent) had been looked after.

A somewhat different story was evident for 3-4 year olds, which largely reflects the fact that many of these children will have entered some kind of formal education by this age. Consequently, 43 per cent of 3-4 year olds had attended a crèche or nursery in the past year, 36 per cent went to a playgroup and 27 per cent attended a nursery or reception class. However, the largest reported source of provision over the past year for 3-4 year olds was again from a grandparent (55 per cent). The picture was much the same in respect of the reference week, albeit, at lower levels of usage. A quarter (27 per cent) attended a crèche or nursery, a fifth (20 per cent) went to a playgroup and the same proportion (20 per cent) attended a nursery or reception class. A quarter (24 per cent) of children aged 3-4 had been cared for by their grandparent during the reference week.

The most commonly used sources of childcare for 5-7 year olds were grandparents and family friends or relatives - these providers cared for 58 and 36 per cent of children in this age group respectively. Out-of-school clubs were an important source of care for this age group, with a fifth (18 per cent) of children aged 5-7 attending an out-of-school club at some time during the past year. Those aged just 5

years olds may have been attending a nursery or reception class in the early part of the past year and this is reflected in 17 per cent of children aged 5-7 being cared for by such a provider. Babysitters and childminders were used respectively by 10 and 13 per cent of children in this age group. Use of all these providers was considerably less in the reference week. Grandparents aside, only friends or other relatives were used by as many as 10 per cent of children.

Table 3-23 Types of providers used in the past year, by age of child

	<i>Column percentages +</i>					
	Age group of child					
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	All children
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
No childcare used	23	4	14	20	31	19
Childminder	9	10	10	8	2	7
Nanny or au-pair	2	3	2	2	1	2
Babysitter	9	12	13	13	8	11
Crèche or nursery	23	43	8	1	*	12
Playgroup	8	36	4	*	*	7
Nursery / reception class	1	27	17	1	*	8
Family Centre	1	1	*	*	-	*
Out-of-school club	*	3	18	21	8	12
Ex-partner	3	5	6	9	8	7
Grandparent	55	55	58	56	47	54
Older sibling	1	2	4	7	13	6
Other friend / relative	31	29	36	39	28	34
Other	*	*	1	1	*	1
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

+ The columns show the percentage of children receiving these types of childcare, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

For 8-11 year olds grandparents and family friends or relatives were also the most commonly used types of providers. Almost three-fifths (56 per cent) of these children had been cared for by their grandparent in the past year whilst two-fifths (39 per cent) had been cared for by a friend or relative. Out-of-school clubs were an important source of childcare with just over a fifth (21 per cent) of children aged 8-11 attending a club at least once in the past year. This was the highest incidence of using an out-of-school club across the five age categories. Babysitters were used for 13 per cent of these children, the same proportion as for 5-7 year olds. In the reference week the pattern of providers used was much the same as for 5-7 year olds. Again it was only grandparents and friends or other relatives that were being used by 10 per cent or more of children aged 8-11.

Not surprisingly the types of childcare used by 12-14 year olds were somewhat different. Grandparents still emerged as the most important source of childcare with almost half (47 per cent) of 12-14 year olds being cared for by their grandparents in the past year. Other relatives and friends were also important, with 28 per cent of children being cared for in this way. More 12-14 year olds (13 per cent) were cared for by their older siblings than any other age group. Use of care during the reference week was rather limited with only grandparents being used by more than 10 per cent of this group. This is not surprising, as children of 12-14 are unlikely to need the extent of supervision that younger children require.

Table 3-24 Types of providers used in the reference week, by age of child

	<i>Column percentages +</i>					
	Age group of child					
	0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	All children (%)
No childcare used	46	20	51	58	74	52
Childminder	6	5	4	4	1	4
Nanny or au-pair	1	1	2	1	-	1
Babysitter	2	3	3	3	1	2
Crèche or nursery	18	27	2	*	-	7
Playgroup	5	20	*	*	-	4
Nursery / reception class	1	20	6	1	-	4
Family Centre	*	*	-	*	-	*
Out-of-school club	*	2	8	8	2	5
Ex-partner	1	3	4	4	4	3
Grandparent	26	24	22	18	14	20
Older sibling	1	1	1	2	4	2
Other friend / relative	9	9	9	10	5	8
Other	*	*	*	*	*	*
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

+ The columns show the percentage of children receiving these types of childcare, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Number of providers

During the reference week, most children either used a single type of childcare provider (35 per cent or 72 per cent of those that used any childcare) or did not receive any childcare (Table 3-25). It was relatively rare for a child to use more than one provider (13 per cent) and rarer still that they used more than two. However, there were some differences across different age groups.

The use of a sole type of provider ranged from 49 per cent of 3-4 year olds to 22 per cent of 12-14 year olds. Furthermore, 24 per cent of 3-4 year olds had two providers and 6 per cent had three, whereas only 4 per cent of 12-14 year olds had two

providers. The higher levels for 3-4 year olds were due to the inclusion of nursery provision as childcare.

Table 3-25 Number of providers used in the reference week, by age of child

Number of providers	Age group of child					All children
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
None	46	20	51	57	74	52
1	38	49	36	33	22	35
2	13	24	11	8	4	11
3	3	6	2	2	1	2
4	*	1	*	*	*	*
5 or more	*	*	-	*	-	*
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

Children with special needs that were 'statemented' and had received some childcare in the reference week were slightly more likely to have a single provider than were other children (Table 3-26). This is probably a reflection of the nature of the childcare required for a child with special needs.

Table 3-26 Number of providers used, by whether child has special needs

Number of providers	Child has SEN or other special need		No special needs	All children
	Statemented	Not statemented		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
None	61	52	51	52
1	28	33	35	35
2	8	13	11	11
3	2	2	2	2
4	*	*	*	*
5 or more	-	-	*	*
Weighted base	257	384	7,584	8,339
Unweighted base	255	406	7,883	8,657

Base: All children.

Note: Information on SEN and other special needs was missing in 113 cases. These cases are included in the final column but have not been reported separately.

Sessions of childcare

Detailed information was collected during the course of the interview about the timing and frequency of sessions of childcare. The regularity of childcare varied considerably according to the age of the child. In terms of the number of days in a week they received childcare, 3-4 years olds usually had five days of childcare as did 5-7 year olds. The very youngest children (0-2 year olds) usually had childcare on three days, whilst those aged 8 or above most commonly received a single day of childcare.

This pattern is also confirmed when looking at the number of individual sessions of childcare³⁵. Table 3-27 illustrates that the quantity of childcare used for 3-4 year olds is considerably higher than for children of other ages. Using the mean as summary measure, children aged 3-4 have on 4.9 sessions per week, compared with the mean for other age groups which ranged from 3.0 to 4.0. A quarter (26 per cent) of 3-4 year old children attended five sessions during the reference week, compared with 10 per cent of 0-2 and 5-7 year olds, 7 per cent of 8-11 year olds and 4 per cent of 12-14 year olds.

Table 3-27 Number of sessions of childcare used in the past week, by age of child

Number of sessions	Age group of child					All children
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-11	12-14	
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
None	46	20	51	58	74	52
1	10	6	10	11	8	9
2	11	8	9	8	6	9
3	12	11	6	6	3	7
4	6	9	4	4	2	5
5	10	26	10	7	4	10
6	2	7	3	2	1	3
7	2	3	1	1	1	1
8	*	3	1	1	*	1
9	*	1	1	1	*	1
10	1	4	2	1	*	2
11 or more	*	3	1	*	*	1
Mean ³⁶	3.3	4.9	4.0	3.5	3.0	3.8
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

The number of sessions of childcare received does not appear to be significantly different according to the degree of deprivation in the area which the child is living. Table 3-28 shows that the mean number of session of childcare for a child living in the most deprived areas was 3.8 compared with an average of 3.6 for a child living in the least deprived areas.

³⁵ For a full definition of how a session was defined see Appendix A.

³⁶ The relevant base here is children that used childcare in the reference week.

Table 3-28 Number of sessions of childcare used in the past week, by degree of local deprivation where child is living

Number of sessions	Index of Multiple Deprivation					
	Least deprived (%)	2 nd quintile (%)	3 rd quintile (%)	4 th quintile (%)	Most deprived (%)	All children (%)
None	50	51	49	53	56	52
1	10	11	9	7	9	9
2	9	8	9	9	8	9
3	9	8	7	7	6	7
4	5	5	5	4	4	5
5	10	9	12	11	10	10
6	2	2	3	3	3	3
7	1	2	1	2	1	1
8	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	*	1	1	1	1	1
10	2	2	1	2	2	2
11 or more	*	1	1	1	1	1
Mean ³⁷	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.8
Weighted base	1,697	1,630	1,545	1,698	1,719	8,289
Unweighted base	1,858	1,741	1,632	1,717	1,655	8,603

Base: All children.

Time of day of sessions

It was also possible to determine from the interview with parents the time of day at which these sessions of childcare were held. Weekday daytime (9am to 3.29pm) and late afternoon (3.30pm to 5.59pm) sessions were the most common with around a third of all children having some childcare in the reference week at these times – both 32 per cent. Around a fifth (19 per cent) of children received some care on a weekday evening (6pm to 9.59pm) and just under that proportion (15 per cent) received early morning childcare (6am to 8.59am). Weekday night sessions (10pm to 5.59am the next day) were relatively rare, with fewer than one-in-ten children (7 per cent) having received care in the reference week at these times. Likewise, the number of children receiving childcare at any time on a weekend was also small with just 12 per cent of children being looked after on a Saturday or Sunday.

The proportion of children receiving childcare at these different times varied considerably across different age groups (Table 3-29). For example, three-quarters (74 per cent) of children aged 3-4 received some childcare between 9am to 3.29pm on a weekday compared with around a half (47 per cent) of children aged 0-2, a third (30 per cent) aged 5-7 and a fifth (18 per cent) aged 8-11. Fewer than one-in-ten children aged 12-14 received any childcare at this time (7 per cent). Across the other time periods differences were less pronounced although still evident. In general younger children were more likely to use daytime sessions than were older children. Older children were more likely to have had a session of childcare in the reference week either in the late afternoon or early evenings than they were at other times of the day.

³⁷ The relevant base here is children that used childcare in the reference week.

Both night and weekend sessions were somewhat atypical in that there was much less variation across the age groups at these times.

Table 3-29 Timing of sessions of childcare, by age group of child

	Age group of child					All children (%)
	0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	
Weekday early morning session	23	25	16	11	5	15
Weekday daytime session	47	74	30	18	7	32
Weekday late afternoon session	34	40	36	32	18	32
Weekday evening session	16	17	22	21	14	19
Weekday night session	5	6	8	8	6	7
Weekend session	13	14	12	12	9	12
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

3.8 Significant predictors of use of childcare

This chapter has shown a range of factors that can influence the use of childcare. Many of these factors are interrelated, consequently assessing the association between these variables (such as household structure, parental employment and child's age) and the use of childcare can be a complex process. More sophisticated statistical tools than those used so far are therefore needed to explore this complex inter-play of factors. In this section logistical regression³⁸ is used to explore relations among variables and identify which factors are most important.

In order to identify the factors associated with whether or not a child received childcare in the reference week, a logistic regression model was fitted to the child-level data. The results are summarised in Table 3-30, where only the variables that were significantly associated with the use of childcare are presented.

The factors significantly associated with the use of childcare are:

- Age of child
- Ethnicity of child
- Work status of the household
- Number of children in the household (0-14 year olds)
- Presence of non-parental adults in the household
- Household income
- Region

³⁸ Logistic regression is a multivariate statistical technique that uses a set of independent variables to predict the probability for an event to occur.

- Presence of a child with special needs in the household

Other factors such as how deprived the area was where the child lived and their parent's social class and qualifications were initially included in the model but were not found to be significantly associated with childcare use³⁹.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this exercise:

- Children aged 3-4 were more likely than other children to have received childcare which is not surprising given that our definition of childcare included early years education. They were 3.4 times more likely to have received childcare than 0-2 year olds (the base group). The odds of each age group beyond 3-4 year olds receiving childcare was significantly lower than both 0-2 and 3-4 year olds. For example, the odds of a 12-14 year old receiving childcare were 95 per cent lower than that of a 3-4 year old.
- The odds of a child with a parent from a non-white ethnic background receiving childcare were significantly lower than for all other children. Children with an Asian parent had odds of receiving childcare that were 43 per cent lower than that of a child from a white ethnic background.
- The organisation of work in households was an important predictor of childcare use. Children of lone parents who worked had the highest odds of using childcare - they were 2.5 times more likely to use childcare where their parent was in full-time employment than couple households where both parents were in work (base group). Where the lone parent was in part-time work, the child was 1.2 times more likely to have used childcare. Children in households where neither parent worked were the least likely to have received childcare, regardless of whether the household was headed by a lone parent or a couple.
- A negative association was found between the likelihood of receiving childcare and the number of children present in the household. Where there was only one child in the household, the odds of them receiving childcare were 1.2 times higher than for children with a brother or a sister.
- The presence of an adult other than the parents of the child increased the odds of that child receiving care in the reference week. The odds were 1.6 times higher for these children.

³⁹ Usually correlated with other factors that were included. Dropped to maximise goodness of fit.

Table 3-30 Logistic estimation of childcare use in the reference week

	Odds ratio	p-value
Age		
0-2	1.00	
3-4	3.40	0.000
5-7	0.64	0.000
8-11	0.44	0.000
12-14	0.17	0.000
Ethnic group		
White	1.00	
Black	0.91	0.618
Asian	0.57	0.000
Other or missing	0.82	0.2000
Household work status		
Couple, both in full-time work	1.00	
Couple, one in f-t work one in p-t work	0.59	0.000
Couple, one in full-time work one not in work	0.25	0.000
Couple, one or both in part-time work	0.30	0.000
Couple, neither in paid work	0.20	0.000
Lone parent in full-time work	2.46	0.000
Lone parent in part-time work	1.24	0.107
Lone parent not in paid work	0.31	0.000
Number of children in the household		
One	1.00	
Two	0.83	0.002
Three or more	0.78	0.001
Non-parental adult in household		
No	1.00	
Yes	1.59	0.000
Household income		
Up to £10,399	1.00	
£10,400 to £20,799	1.12	0.292
£20,800 to £31,199	1.12	0.320
£31,200 or more	1.43	0.002
Missing	0.99	0.914
Government Office Region		
North East	1.00	
North West	0.75	0.031
Merseyside	0.92	0.663
Yorkshire & Humberside	1.03	0.840
East Midlands	0.98	0.884
West Midlands	0.98	0.847
South West	0.85	0.233
Eastern	0.71	0.009
London	0.76	0.049
South East	0.73	0.013
Children with Special needs		
None	1.00	
Some	1.21	0.038

Note: Based on 8,654 observations using child level data.

- The likelihood of a child receiving care were positive associated with household income. The odds were 1.4 times greater for a child in a household where annual income was £31,200 or higher compared with those with a household income of less than £10,400 per year.

A similar exercise was undertaken in order to look at what influences the use of formal as opposed to informal childcare. The results are summarised in Table 3-31, where only the variables that were significantly associated with the dependent variable are associated. Here the relevant base is children that used childcare in the reference week.

The factors significantly associated with the use of formal childcare are:

- Age of child
- Work status of the household
- Number of children in the household (0-14 year olds)
- Presence of non-parental adults in the household
- Household income
- Degree of local deprivation
- Childcare weekday early morning
- Childcare weekday daytimes
- Childcare at weekday nights
- Childcare in the weekend

Other factors such as ethnicity of the child's parent, whether the child had a special need, Government Office Region and the number of hours of childcare in the reference week were initially included in the model but were not found to be significantly associated with the use of formal childcare⁴⁰.

The main conclusions from the modelling exercise are:

- Age of child was an important predictor of the use of formal childcare. In particular, children aged 3-4 had the highest odds of using this type of care. Their odds were at least 5.1 times higher than all other children.
- Children of lone parents who were in full-time employment were the most likely to have used formal childcare in the reference week. The odds were almost twice as high as for children in households headed by a couple where both were in work. Among couples, where one parent worked full-time and the other was not in employment, children in these circumstances had the highest odds of receiving formal childcare relative to other children in two parent families.
- Children in households with an adult other than their parent(s) had lower odds of receiving formal childcare than other children.

⁴⁰ Usually correlated with other factors that were included. Dropped to maximise goodness of fit.

- Children in higher income households were significantly more likely to have received formal childcare in the reference week. Their odds of receiving that care were around 2.6 times greater than for other children⁴¹.
- Children living in areas of greater deprivation were less likely to have received formal childcare in the reference week. They were half as likely to have received formal childcare than children living in the least deprived areas.
- Children that had received some childcare during a weekday daytime session were 2.7 times more likely to have received some formal childcare than children who had received care outside of this time in the reference week.
- Where childcare was received on a weekday night or at a weekend, these children were less likely to have received any formal childcare in the reference week.

⁴¹ The odds of children in households where income was lower was not significantly different from 1.

Table 3-31 Logistic estimation of formal types of childcare used in the reference week.

Variable	Odds ratio	p-value
Age		
0-2	1.00	
3-4	5.13	0.000
5-7	0.94	0.544
8-11	0.77	0.019
12-14	0.30	0.000
Household work status		
Couple, both in full-time work	1.00	
Couple, one in f-t work one in p-t work	0.94	0.513
Couple, one in full-time work one not in work	1.91	0.000
Couple, one or both in part-time work	1.38	0.302
Couple, neither in paid work	1.72	0.089
Lone parent in full-time work	1.86	0.000
Lone parent in part-time work	1.76	0.003
Lone parent not in paid work	1.62	0.015
Non-parental adult in household		
No	1.00	
Yes	0.71	0.028
Household income		
Up to £10,399	1.00	
£10,400 to £20,799	1.18	0.282
£20,800 to £31,199	1.32	0.106
£31,200 or more	2.57	0.000
Missing household income data	1.60	0.026
Local deprivation		
Least deprived	1.00	
2 nd quintile	0.88	0.274
3 rd quintile	0.65	0.000
4 th quintile	0.56	0.000
Most deprived	0.51	0.000
Childcare weekday early morning		
None	1.00	
Some	1.33	0.000
Childcare weekday daytime		
None	1.00	
Some	2.72	0.000
Childcare weekday nights		
None	1.00	
Some	0.45	0.000
Childcare weekends		
None	1.00	
Some	0.65	0.000

Note: Based on 4,362 children who had received some childcare in the reference week.

3.9 Reasons for not using childcare in the past year

A relatively small number of parents said that they did not use any childcare in the past year nor did they have any times when they actually needed some care and could not get it. Just 12 per cent of families fell into this category. These families

were asked why they did not need to use childcare and the results are shown in Table 3-32.

A wide variety of responses were given for not using childcare and they reflected to a certain degree the individual circumstances of the family. A fifth of families (18 per cent or 2 per cent of all families) didn't use childcare because they considered their children were old enough to look after themselves. For a small number of families, the cost of childcare was an off-putting factor (7 per cent or 1 per cent of all families) whilst a similar proportion quoted a lack of trust in childcare providers as their reason for not using childcare (5 per cent or 1 per cent of all families). However, by far the most commonly reported reason for not using childcare was because the family wanted to look after their children themselves. Three-fifths of parents gave this response (61 per cent or 7 per cent of all families). A second large group of parents also reported that they had no need for childcare because they rarely had to be away from their children (41 per cent or 5 per cent of all families). What is apparent from the responses to these questions is that, by and large, for most parents the decision not to use childcare has come about because of a choice they have made rather than because something - such as the cost or quality of care - is stopping them from using it.

There was a small amount of variation in the reasons for not using childcare across different types of families. Lone parents were more likely to have said they wanted to look after their children themselves than were couples (67 per cent and 58 per cent respectively). Cost was marginally more important for lone parents, which reflects a lower than average household income in these families.

Table 3-32 Reason for not using childcare in the past year, by type of family

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Type of family		
	Couple	Lone parent	All households
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Rather look after child(ren) myself	58	67	61
Rarely need to be away from children	43	34	41
Children old enough to look after themselves	19	15	18
I cannot afford childcare	6	9	7
Couldn't trust childcare provider	4	6	5
The quality is not good enough	1	2	1
Child(ren) need special care	1	2	1
Had bad experience in past	1	-	1
Had transport difficulties getting to childcare	1	1	1
No available childcare	1	1	1
Other reason for no childcare	1	*	1
Irrelevant answer	*	-	*
Don't know/ Refused	*	-	*
Weighted base	417	148	565
Unweighted base	452	153	605

Base: All households not using childcare in the past year and no demand for childcare.

+ The columns show all reasons for not using childcare, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

3.10 Summary

The analysis of childcare usage indicates that most parents (86 per cent or approximately 4.56 million families in England) had experience of using childcare at some time in the past year with just over half (56 per cent or 2.97 million families) saying they had done so in the week prior to being interviewed (the reference week). We believe the latter figure represents the proportion of families that use childcare regularly.

The use of childcare was closely related to parental work status. Where at least one parent was in work, almost nine in ten parents (88 per cent) used childcare in the past year compared with just under three-quarters (74 per cent) where no parent was in work. Usage of childcare was greater in higher income households and it was lower where the respondent was from a non-white ethnic background.

Childcare provision was more likely to be of an informal nature. Around half (50 per cent or 2.76 million families) of families had used either early years education or some other formal childcare provider in the past year compared with three-quarters (72 per cent or 3.82 million families) which had used an informal provider. The use of early years education and other formal childcare was positively related to household income. Couples were more likely to have used these types of childcare than were lone parents.

Grandparents were the most commonly used childcare providers – 58 per cent of households had used a grandparent for childcare in the past year and 24 per cent had done so in the reference week.

Parents' using childcare tended to use it across the year rather than at particular times. Relatively few used childcare only in school holidays (9 per cent) or just in term-time (12 per cent). Most parents (79 per cent) used childcare across both these periods. In terms of when during the week parents' used childcare, weekday daytime (40 per cent) and late afternoons (37 per cent) were the most popular times. However, this varied considerably according to the work status of the family. For instance, 69 per cent of lone parents in full-time work and 56 per cent of couples that both worked full-time used a late afternoon session of childcare.

Most parents used more than one childcare provider in the past year. Just under three-quarters of families that used childcare in the past year used more than one provider (72 per cent) with a quarter using exactly two (28 per cent).

Across all parents, the average number of hours of childcare used in the reference week was twelve. However, restricting the estimate to households that used childcare in the reference week increases the average to 21.4 hours per week. This varied significantly according to the work status of a household. Lone parents in full-time work (30.9 hours) and couples where both worked full-time (24.6 hours) used considerably more hours of childcare than did other parents.

The use of childcare was closely related to the age of the child. Children in the 3-4 age category were more likely than other children to have received some childcare. This largely reflects the fact that many of these children will have entered some kind of formal education by this age. Four-fifths (80 per cent) had used childcare in the reference week, with almost three-fifths (58 per cent) attending early years education or some other formal provider. Childcare was less common among other children with fewer than 56 per cent in any of the other age group having received some childcare in the reference week.

Grandparents aside, the type of childcare provider used was closely related to the age of the child. Children aged 0-4 were more likely to attend a crèche, playgroup or nursery than were other children. Out-of-school clubs were much more commonly used by 5-11 than for children of other ages.

The chapter concluded with an analysis of the reasons why some parents don't use childcare. Rather than being because of a problem with the cost or availability of childcare, a majority reported that they did not do so out of choice. This was usually because they had made the decision to look after their children themselves.

4 CHANGES IN PARENTS' USE OF CHILDCARE SINCE 1999

4.1 Introduction

In addition to describing the current state of play with regard to parents' demand for childcare, a secondary objective of this study is to investigate whether there has been any change in the demand for childcare since 1999 when the baseline study was conducted. In making comparisons between the two surveys, it will be possible to make some conclusions about the effect of the *National Childcare Strategy (NCS)* on parents' behaviour with respect to their use of childcare. However, the small period of time over which we are attempting to identify change may mean that we are spotting short-term transitory movements, as opposed to long run trends in the demand for childcare. In addition, it is not possible to isolate the effects of the NCS on parents' behaviour from other changes (both policy and social change) which have occurred over this time period.

Changes in the design of the repeat study, specifically the introduction of a booster sample, have meant that the 2001 data had to be weighted in order to produce nationally representative estimates. As no over-sampling occurred in the baseline survey, data at the household level appears *unweighted*.

It was not possible to make simple comparisons with the data from the baseline survey, as this covered households in both England and Wales, whereas the follow-up survey was limited to England. As a result, the data from the baseline survey had to be re-interrogated. This means it is not possible to make comparisons with the results which appeared in the baseline report⁴²

Tests of significance used in the tables test the null hypothesis that there were no significant differences in results between 1999 and 2001. Small crosses (+ or ++) are used to indicate where the null hypothesis of no change was rejected, thus indicating a significant difference between the years. It is important to note that the length of time between the two studies is small and that changes may be the result of random fluctuations rather than indications of a trend.

4.2 Changes in the usage of childcare

This section compares the main findings at the household level from the baseline report to similar results from the 2001 survey. The results show small increases in parents' demand for childcare among some groups of parents; however, the broad conclusion is that the demand for childcare has, by and large, remained unchanged over the past two years.

At an aggregate level, small changes were evident in the proportion of households that used childcare in either the past week or the past year. As Table 4-1 shows, there has been a small fall, from 58 to 56 per cent of parents using childcare in the

⁴² Ivana La Valle, Steven Finch, Andrea Nove and Charlotte Lewin (2000), *Parents' Demand for Childcare*, DfEE Research report 176.

reference week, and from 87 to 86 per cent of parents using childcare at some time in the past year. Only the former of these changes was significant. With almost nine out of every ten families already using some childcare, it is not surprising that the proportion of parents who used any childcare in the past year has remained stable. However, if we view the proportion of families that use childcare in the reference week as an indicator of families using childcare regularly, it is somewhat surprising that this has not increased given the various initiatives introduced through the *National Childcare Strategy*. In addition, this fall somewhat contradicts expectations given the increase in the number of working families between the two studies (from 81 to 83 per cent). This increase would be expected to push up the overall proportion of families using childcare. It may be that a two year period is not sufficient to identify change. Also, as is shown elsewhere in this chapter, it may be that the NCS has affected parents' behaviour in other ways such as the types of providers and the amount of childcare they use. Both of these are considered elsewhere in this chapter.

Table 4-1 also shows changes according to the employment status of the household. In households without a parent in paid employment, the proportion of families which used childcare in the past year remained unchanged at 43 per cent, while a small, but not significant, increase was evident in terms of childcare use in the past year (from 73 to 74 per cent). Where there was at least one parent in work there was a decrease of two percentage points in the proportion of parents that used childcare in either the reference week (from 61 to 59 per cent) or the past year (from 90 to 88 per cent). The latter of these was significant.

Table 4-1 Use of childcare, by household work status and by year

	Year	Household work status		All households (%)
		One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	
Used childcare in the reference week	2001	59	43	56 ⁺
	1999	61	43	58
Used childcare in the past year	2001	88 ⁺	74	86
	1999	90	73	87
Weighted base	2001	3,446	790	4,619
Unweighted base	2001	4,033	883	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	3,960	906	4,866

Base: All households.

⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

⁺⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

A more detailed presentation of parents' use of childcare according to their employment and household status is shown in Table 4-2. The use of childcare in the reference week among two-parent households increased marginally from 57 to 58 per cent between 1999 and 2001, while it fell, from 57 to 55 per cent, in lone parent households. Neither difference was significant, nor were there any significant changes in terms of either of these groups' use of childcare in the past year. This time the pattern was reversed, with the proportion of two-parent households using childcare in the past year decreasing from 87 to 86 per cent, while for lone parents it increased from 84 to 85 per cent.

Use of childcare among two-parent families where both parents were in work fell by a significant amount, in terms of childcare used both in the reference week and in the past year. Whereas 70 per cent had used childcare in the reference week in 1999, just under two-thirds (65 per cent) were doing likewise in 2001. A smaller fall, but still significant, was recorded in terms of childcare used at any time over the year (from 93 to 90 per cent).

The other significant change reported in Table 4-2 concerns couples where one parent was working full-time while the other was not in paid work. While there was a small but not significant change in the use of childcare in the past year (84 to 82 per cent), a more substantial fall occurred in the use of childcare in the reference week in these households (53 to 48 per cent).

Small, but not significant changes were found in the use of childcare among lone parents with different status of employment.

Table 4-2 Use of childcare, by household work status

	Used childcare in the past week (%)		Used childcare in the past year (%)	
	1999	2001	1999	2001
<i>Couples</i>				
Both in full-time work	70	65+	93	90+
One in full-time work one in part-time work	60	59	92	92
One in full-time work one not in work	53	48+	84	82
One or both in part-time work	42	46	80	72
Neither in paid work	35	33	65	64
All couples	57	58	87	86
<i>Lone parents</i>				
In full-time work	77	78	92	92
In part-time work	67	68	92	94
Not in paid work	46	45	76	77
All lone parents	57	55	84	85
Total	58	56+	87	86

Base: All households. The figures for 1999 are based on 4,866 unweighted observations and the 2001 are based on 5,416 unweighted observations. 2001 data has been weighted.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Household income

Comparisons between the repeat and baseline surveys reveal that the fall in the use of childcare in the reference week appears to be limited to higher income families. While fewer families with an annual income of more than £31,199 used childcare in the reference week in 2001 than did in 1999 (61 compared with 67 per cent), families whose income was somewhat lower showed no significant change in their use of childcare. Indeed, proportionately more families with an annual household income of less than £10,400 used childcare in 2001 than did so in 1999 (from 48 to 49 per cent with respect to the reference week) although this change was not significant. Across all income groups there were no significant changes in the use of childcare over the past year. What might explain these changes? In part they may be due to changes in the composition of the two survey samples. As a result of using the same household income categories in both surveys each income category contains families that are in real terms, worse off than their counterparts in the same band in the 1999 study. We would therefore expect, if nothing had changed between the two years, that the proportion of parents in each of the income bands to have fallen, assuming that childcare is positively related to household income.

Table 4-3 Use of childcare, by household income

	Year	Household income					All households (%)
		Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	DK or Refused (%)	
Used childcare in the reference week	2001	49	57	57	61 ⁺⁺	47	56 ⁺
	1999	48	58	60	67	46	58
Used childcare in the past year	2001	79	87	88	92	76	86
	1999	78	86	91	94	79	87
Weighted base	2001	909	1,110	1,018	1,244	334	4,616
Unweighted base	2001	1,043	1,309	1,191	1,491	382	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	1,217	1,151	1,068	1,183	247	4,866

Base: All households.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Ethnicity

The small number of parents from minority ethnic groups that were interviewed in both studies makes it difficult to pick up statistically significant changes in their use of childcare. With respect to childcare used in the reference week, none of the changes reported in Table 4-4 was significant, although it is noteworthy that the proportion of Asian parents that had used childcare increased from 36 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2001. In terms of this group's use of childcare in the past year, the increase from 57 to 70 per cent is perhaps further evidence of Asian families making greater use of childcare than they had done previously.

Table 4-4 Use of childcare, by ethnic origin of parent

	Year	Ethnicity of respondent				All households (%)
		White (%)	Black (%)	Asian (%)	Other or missing (%)	
Used childcare in the reference week	2001	57	50	45	45	56 ⁺
	1999	59	50	36	46	58
Used childcare in the past year	2001	87 ⁺⁺	81	70 ⁺⁺	71	86
	1999	89	76	57	75	87
Weighted base	2001	4,114	120	212	173	4,619
Unweighted base	2001	4,827	150	242	197	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	4,416	135	202	111	4,864

Base: All households.

⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

⁺⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Changes in the use of childcare among parents in different regions of England were generally small and not significant⁴³. In most respects the same was true regarding differences in childcare use according to the degree of local deprivation. As Table 4-5 shows, families living in the least deprived areas were just as likely to have used childcare in 2001 as they were in 1999. The same was true of all other families apart from those living in the most deprived areas. While 77 per cent of families in these areas used some childcare in 1999, that proportion had increased to 81 per cent in 2001. There was not, however, any significant change in their use of childcare during the reference week.

⁴³ Comparisons were less precise since the 1999 data was classified by Standard region and not Government Office Region. This meant that some of the areas in the 2001 data had to be amalgamated (e.g. Merseyside and the North West) to make the data compatible. Because of these changes we have not reported the data here.

Table 4-5 Use of childcare, by index of multiple deprivation

	Year	Multiple deprivation index					All households
		1st quintile - least deprived (%)	2 nd quintile (%)	3 rd quintile (%)	4 th quintile (%)	5 th quintile - most deprived (%)	
Used childcare in the reference week	2001	58	55	57	56	53	56 ⁺
	1999	60	58	60	58	52	58
Used childcare in the past year	2001	89	87	88	85	81 ⁺	86
	1999	89	90	89	86	77	86
Weighted base	2001	956	915	895	918	909	4,619
Unweighted base	2001	1,133	1,084	1,054	1,064	1,049	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	915	894	959	899	889	4,866

Base: All households.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

There were 310 missing observations on the deprivation index for 1999 and 32 with respect to the 2001 data.

4.3 Changes in the types of provider used

While there were only small changes in the parents' overall use of childcare between 1999 and 2001, there appears to have been considerable change in the types of providers they used.

Starting with providers used in the past year, as was the case in the baseline survey, grandparents were again found to be the most commonly used childcare provider. Over half the families interviewed in both 1999 and 2001 (57 and 58 per cent respectively) said they had used their child(ren)'s grandparents at some time in the preceding year. Family or friends were the next most commonly used provider, with 37 per cent of families using them for childcare in 2001, down 3 percentage points from the 1999 figure (40 per cent). Likewise, there was a significant fall in the reported use of older siblings for childcare - from 11 to 7 per cent.

In terms of the types of formal childcare providers used in the past year, parents appear to have been substituting one type of provider for another (given the overall stability in the proportion using childcare). The following statistically significant changes were evident:

- more parents used: crèches/nurseries (from 14 to 16 per cent), nursery/reception classes (from 9 to 12 per cent), and; out-of-school clubs (11 to 14 per cent).
- fewer parents used babysitters (from 14 to 10 per cent) or playgroups (from 14 to 11 per cent).

In terms of childcare use in the reference week the differences between the 1999 and 2001 surveys are by and large the same as for childcare use in the past year, although fewer were significant. The following statistically significant changes were evident:

- more parents were using nursery/reception classes (from 5 to 7 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (from 4 to 6 per cent);
- fewer parents were using childminders (from 6 to 5 per cent) and playgroups (from 7 to 6 per cent)

Table 4-6 Household's use of childcare in the reference week and in the past year

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Used childcare in the past year (%)		Used childcare in the reference week (%)	
	1999	2001	1999	2001
No childcare used	13	14	42 ⁺	44
Childminder	10	9	6	5 ⁺
Daily nanny	1	1	1	1
Live-in nanny or au-pair	1	1	*	*
Babysitter	14	10 ⁺⁺	3	2
Crèche or nursery	14	16 ⁺⁺	9	10
Playgroup	14	11 ⁺⁺	7	6 ⁺
Nursery / reception class	9	12 ⁺⁺	5	7 ⁺⁺
Family centre	*	*	*	*
Out-of-school club	11	14 ⁺⁺	4	6 ⁺⁺
Ex-partner	8	7	4	4
Grandparent	57	58	24	24
Older sibling	11	7 ⁺⁺	4	3
Other friend / relative	40	37 ⁺⁺	10	10
Other	-	4	-	2
Weighted base	N/A	4,619	N/A	4,619
Unweighted base	4,855	5,416	4,855	5,416

Base: All households.

* = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

These data were explored further to see whether sub-groups of parents were more or less likely to use these childcare providers. The main findings⁴⁴ with reference to use in the past year were as follows (categorised by provider type):

Crèches or nurseries

⁴⁴ These were where there were significant changes at least at a 95% confidence level.

- three per cent more lone parents used a crèche/nursery in 2001 (13 per cent) than did in 1999.

Playgroups

- lone parents who were not in work reduced their use of this provider between the two surveys. One-in-ten (10 per cent) had used a playgroup in 1999 and this fell to 7 per cent in 2001;
- fewer two-parent families were using playgroups in 2001 than in 1999, the proportion having fallen from 15 to 12 per cent. This fall was also significant in families where both parents worked full-time (from 11 to 6 per cent) and where one parent worked full-time and the other part-time (from 16 to 13 per cent).

Nurseries / reception classes

- the proportion of lone parents that used a nursery/reception class increased from 10 to 14 per cent. Where the lone parent was not in work their use of this provider increased from 6 to 8 per cent;
- more two parent families were using a nursery/reception class in 2001 than in 1999, the proportion having increased from 10 to 12 per cent. This change was also significant in families where one parent worked full-time and the other part-time (from 9 to 13 per cent).

Out-of-school clubs

- the proportion of lone parents that used an out-of school club increased from 9 to 13 per cent. Lone parents who were in work were most likely to have recorded an increase in the use of this provider. Among those in full-time employment, the proportion increased from 19 to 24 per cent and among part-time workers the increase was from 9 to 15 per cent;
- two-parent families were also more likely to have used an out-of-school club in 2001 than in 1999 – an increase from 11 to 14 per cent of these families. Where both parents were in full-time employment this change was most evident – 14 per cent of these parents had used an out-of-school club in 1999 compared with just over one-in-five (21 per cent) in 2001;

Early years education and other formal childcare

It appears from the results presented in the previous section that there has been an increase in the use of early years education and formal childcare provision, and this is confirmed when we carry out analysis at aggregate provider level. Table 4-7 shows that the use of these childcare providers increased between 1999 and 2001 from 28 to 32 per cent in terms of the reference week and from 49 to 52 per cent in terms of the past year. This has been matched by an almost equal sized reduction in the proportion of families that used an informal childcare provider. The use of informal providers fell between 1999 and 2001 from 41 to 36 per cent in terms of the reference week and from 74 to 72 per cent in terms of the past year.

It appears that parents have been moving away from using only informal providers to now using early years education and other formal childcare providers exclusively. For example, in terms of the reference week, the decrease in use of informal only

provision (from 29 to 24 per cent) is almost exactly offset by an increase in the proportion of parents that only used some form of early years education or other formal provision (from 16 to 20 per cent). However, we can not be sure that the process of changing providers was so simple. It may have been that some parents who previously used a mixture of formal and informal providers were now only using formal provision, and this was matched by parents who switched from using just informal providers to using a mixture of both provider types. Other factors such as the changing behaviour of parents with differing household incomes (see below) are likely to have impacted on this change. Nevertheless, what we can say with certainty is that a higher percentage of parents used formal childcare provision in 2001 than did in 1999.

Table 4-7 Household's use of childcare in the reference week and the past year

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Used childcare in the reference week (%)		Used childcare in the past year (%)	
	1999	2001	1999	2001
Early years education and other formal childcare only	16	20 ⁺⁺	12	14 ⁺⁺
Early years education and other formal childcare <i>and</i> informal childcare	12	12	37	38
Informal childcare only	29	24 ⁺⁺	37	34 ⁺⁺
None	42	44 ⁺	13	14
Weighted base	N/A	4,619	N/A	4,619
Unweighted base	4,866	5,416	4,866	5,416

Base: All households.

⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

⁺⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Which parents were using more formal childcare? There is strong evidence that suggests low income families were using more formal childcare while higher income families remained unmoved in terms of their use of this type of provider. Table 4-8 shows that more families with an annual income of less than £10,400 used a formal childcare provider in 2001 than in 1999. In terms of the reference week, around a quarter (24 per cent) in this income group used a formal provider in 2001 compared with just under a fifth (19 per cent) in 1999. A similar type of change occurred with respect to their use of formal childcare in the past year (an increase from 37 to 40 per cent). Families in the next income bracket (£10,400 to £20,799) experienced a similar change in their use of formal childcare but beyond this income group no significant changes were evident in the use of formal childcare.

Across all income groups a fall was recorded in the proportion that used informal providers in the reference week. The fall, however, was strongest among higher income families. Whereas just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of families with an annual income of £31,200 or more had used an informal provider in the reference week in 1999, a third (33 per cent) were doing likewise in 2001.

Table 4-8 Type of childcare providers used, by household income

	Year	Up to £10,399 (%)	Household income			Don't know or refused (%)
			£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	
<i>Used childcare in the past week</i>						
Early years education and other formal childcare	2001	24 ⁺⁺	30+	30	41	27 ⁺⁺
	1999	19	27	30	41	17
Informal	2001	33	40 ⁺	39 ⁺	33 ⁺⁺	27
	1999	36	44	44	43	33
<i>Used childcare in the past year</i>						
Early years education and other formal childcare	2001	40	49	50	65	43
	1999	37	46	51	66	36
Informal	2001	65	75	76 ⁺⁺	75	58
	1999	66	75	81	78	64
Weighted base	2001	911	1,111	1,018	1,245	334
Unweighted base	2001	1,043	1,309	1,191	1,491	382
Unweighted base	1999	1,217	1,151	1,068	1,183	247

Base: All households

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

The results in terms of changes in the use of childcare across families with different household structures and work status is as would be expected given the above. From Table 4-9 it is clear that:

- a higher proportion of lone parent families were using a formal childcare provider in 2001 than in 1999. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) had used one in the reference week in the repeat survey compared with 23 per cent in the baseline survey. This was matched by a fall in the proportion using an informal provider (from 46 to 42 per cent).
- lone parents that were working part-time were particularly likely to have increased their use of formal providers – a fifth (19 per cent) had used a formal provider in 1999 compared with 29 per cent in 2001;
- lone parents as a group decreased their use of informal providers – 46 per cent had used an informal provider in 1999 compared with just over two-fifths (42 per cent) in 2001;
- with respect to two-parent families there were no significant changes in their use of formal providers between the two surveys. There was however, a fall in their use of informal providers – two-fifths (40 per cent) of two-parent families had used an informal provider in the reference week in 1999 and that proportion had fallen to 35 per cent in 2001;
- the fall in use of informal provision among couples was particularly evident where at least one of the parents was in full-time employment.

Table 4-9 Use of childcare, by household work status

	Year	Two-parent family					Total (%)	Lone parent			Total (%)
		Both work full-time (%)	One works full-time, one part-time (%)	One works full-time (%)	One or both work part-time (%)	Neither works (%)		Parent works full-time (%)	Parent works part-time (%)	Not in work (%)	
<i>Reference week</i>											
Used early years education and other formal childcare	2001	36	33	32	26	17	33	36	29 ⁺⁺	22	27 ⁺
	1999	36	30	32	17	17	31	32	22	20	23
Used informal childcare	2001	42 ⁺⁺	40 ⁺⁺	24 ⁺⁺	27	20	35 ⁺⁺	60	54	28 ⁺	42 ⁺
	1999	49	45	32	31	20	40	60	61	34	46
<i>Past year</i>											
Used early years education and other formal childcare	2001	56	54	53	41	32	53	52	50 ⁺	39	45
	1999	55	52	54	42	31	51	52	41	38	42
Used informal childcare	2001	76 ⁺	81	65	56	48	73 ⁺	81	86	63	73
	1999	80	82	68	65	53	75	80	85	65	73
Weighted base	2001	835	1,347	963	128	172	3,446	254	302	617	1,173
Unweighted base	2001	1,015	1,579	1,099	148	192	4,033	323	369	691	1,383
Unweighted base	1999	787	1,446	1,041	142	245	3,661	241	303	661	1,205

Base: All households.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Fewer families living in the most deprived areas were found to be using formal childcare in 2001 than in 1999 (Table 4-10). While the fall across this period was significant in terms of childcare used over the longer reference period (46 per cent had used childcare in the past year in 1999 and 41 had done likewise in 2001), the difference was not significant in terms of childcare used in the past week (28 per cent had used childcare in the past year in 1999 and 26 had done likewise in 2001).

Table 4-10 Use of childcare, by index of multiple deprivation

	Year	Multiple deprivation index					All households
		1st quintile - least deprived (%)	2 nd quintile (%)	3 rd quintile (%)	4 th quintile (%)	5 th quintile - most deprived (%)	
Used Early years education and other formal childcare in the reference week	2001	35	33 ⁺	32	29	26	32 ⁺⁺
	1999	31	28	31	27	28	28
Early years education and other formal childcare in the past year	2001	58	55	53	45	41 ⁺	52 ⁺
	1999	56	51	50	43	46	49
Weighted base	2001	956	915	895	918	909	4,619
Unweighted base	2001	1,133	1,084	1,054	1,064	1,049	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	915	894	959	899	889	4,866

Base: All households.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

There were 310 missing observations on the deprivation index for 1999 and 32 with respect to the 2001 data.

4.4 Changes in the quantity of childcare used

In this section we turn our attention to the amount of childcare parents used and, as in chapter three, this is measured in terms of the number of hours of childcare used in the reference week.

Between 1999 and 2001 the mean number of hours of childcare used by parents in the reference week increased from 11.4 to 12.0 (or from 19.9 to 21.4 if the analysis is restricted to parents that used childcare in this period). While the mean had increased the distribution of hours of childcare used was fairly similar in both years. Marginally fewer parents in the more recent survey used less than 10 hours of childcare in the reference week (21 per cent compared with 23 per cent in 1999) while slightly more parents were reported to have used between 31 and 40 hours of childcare in 2001 than in 1999 (7 per cent compared with 5 per cent).

Table 4-11 **Number of hours of childcare used in the reference week, by household work status**

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	All households	
	(%)	
	1999	2001
None	44	44
Up to 10 hours	23	21+
11 to 20 hours	11	12
21 to 30 hours	8	7
31 to 40 hours	5	7+
41 to 50 hours	4	4
More than 50 hours	5	4
Mean number of hours	11.4	12.0+
Weighted base	N/A	4,619
Unweighted base	4,866	5,416

Base: All households.

There was an overall increase in the number of hours of childcare used by lone parents from 13.8 to 14.2 hours. Among this group, those that were in full-time employment recorded a small decrease in their hours of childcare from 24.7 to 24 hours per week, while those in part-time employment increased their childcare hours from 15 to 16.5 hours per week.

Two-parent families also increased their childcare hours between 1999 and 2001. In the baseline survey they were reported to have used on average 10.7 hours per week and this had increased to 11.2 in 2001. As with lone parents, there was some variation according to the parents' work status. Where both parents were in full-time work, the number of hours of childcare used by these parents had fallen between 1999 and 2001, from 17.4 to 15.9 hours per week. This group aside, two-parent households either showed no change or a small increase between 1999 and 2001 in the number of hours of childcare they had used in the reference week.

Excluding households that had not used childcare in the reference week alters the picture described above only slightly.

Table 4-12 Number of hours of childcare used in the reference week, by household work status

	Used childcare in reference week		All households		Unweighted base	
	<i>Mean hours</i>		<i>Mean hours</i>		1999	2001
	1999	2001	1999	2001		
<i>Couples</i>						
Both in full-time work	24.8	24.6	17.4	15.9 ⁺⁺	787	1,015
One in full-time work one in part-time work	17.3	19.4	10.3	11.3 ⁺⁺	1,446	1,579
One in full-time work one not in work	15.1	17.7	7.9	8.4 ⁺⁺	1,041	1,099
One or both in part-time work	17.3	17.8	7.2	8.1 ⁺⁺	142	148
Neither in paid work	13.7	14.8	4.8	4.9	245	192
All couples	18.5	20.3	10.7	11.2 ⁺⁺	3,661	4,033
<i>Lone parents</i>						
In full-time work	32.2	30.9	24.7	24.0 ⁺	241	323
In part-time work	22.3	24.4	15.0	16.5 ⁺⁺	303	369
Not in paid work	20.1	20.1	9.2	9.0	658	691
All lone parents	24.0	24.6	13.8	14.2 ⁺⁺	1,202	1,383
Total	19.9	21.4 ⁺	11.4	12.0 ⁺	4,863	5,416

Base: All households.

4.5 Changes in the patterns of childcare use among children

As reported in chapter three, the design of this study was such that the interview data could be analysed at 'child' and 'household' level, the latter being the focus of the previous sections in this chapter. We now turn to the 'child' level data to look at how the use of childcare has changed for children in different age groups. We also compare the use of childcare according to whether the child has a special need. In general it is shown that the regular use of childcare has increased for children in most age groups, although the number of children experiencing at least some childcare has remained stable.

Table 4-13 shows that in terms of childcare used in the reference week, children aged 11 or under were more likely to have received some childcare in 2001 than was reported in the 1999 baseline survey. The increase in the percentage receiving some childcare was greatest for 0-2 and 5-7 year olds. For both these groups there was a seven percentage point increase - in 1999 47 per cent of 0-2 year olds received some childcare compared with 54 per cent in 2001, and for 5-7 year olds the increase was from 42 to 49 per cent. Children aged 3-4 were also more likely to have received childcare (from 76 per cent in 1999 to 80 per cent in 2001) as were 8-11 year olds (from 41 to 42 per cent), however, this latter change was not significant. Only 12-14 year olds showed no increase in the proportion receiving childcare, indeed, 4 percent fewer 12-14 year olds were reported to have received childcare in 2001 than did in 1999.

Table 4-13 Levels of usage, by age of child

	Year	Age group of child					All children (%)
		0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	
Childcare used in the reference week	2001	54 ⁺⁺	80 ⁺	49 ⁺⁺	42	26 ⁺	48 ⁺⁺
	1999	47	76	42	41	30	45
Childcare used in the past year	2001	77 ⁺⁺	96	86	80	69	81 ⁺⁺
	1999	89	96	86	83	73	84
Weighted base	2001	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	2001	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657
Weighted base	1999	1,646	1,146	1,918	2,433	1,620	8,761
Unweighted base	1999	1,490	1,013	1,643	2,105	1,442	7,693

Base: All children.

Overall childcare participation rates in the last year were not significantly higher in 2001 than in 1999. The only age group for which participation was significantly different in 2001 was the 0-2 year olds where a fall from 89 per cent to 77 per cent receiving childcare was recorded.

Children with special needs

The overall increase in the proportion of children receiving childcare in 2001 compared with 1999 was not present among children with special needs (Table 4-14). Although the proportion of children with a special need that received childcare in the reference week did increase (from 41 to 44 per cent), this change was not significant.

Table 4-14 Levels of usage, by whether child had a special need

	Year	Child with	Child has no	All children
		special needs (%)	special needs (%)	
Childcare used in the reference week	2001	44	48 ⁺⁺	48 ⁺⁺
	1999	41	45	45
Childcare used in the past year	2001	79	81 ⁺⁺	81 ⁺⁺
	1999	82	85	84
Weighted base	2001	732	7,584	8,339
Unweighted base	2001	751	7,883	8,657
Weighted base	1999	806	7,946	8,752
Unweighted base	1999	673	7,011	7,684

Base: All children.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter we have looked at how parents' use of childcare has changed since the baseline survey was conducted in 1999. A slight fall was recorded, from 58 to 56 per cent, of parents using childcare in the reference week, and from 87 to 86 per cent of parents using childcare at some time in the past year. Only the first of these changes was significant. Given the short period of time between the baseline survey and the current study, it seems reasonable to interpret these figures as indicating no real change.

The analysis presented in the chapter looked for possible trends in childcare patterns for specific sub-groups of parents, such as those in work and not working, those in couples and lone parents: there were differences, some of which were significant, but on the whole the differences were minor.

Although there were only small changes in the parents' overall use of childcare between 1999 and 2001, there appeared to have been greater changes in the types of providers they used. In terms of informal provision, there was a similar level of use of grandparents, but a slight fall in the usage of friends or older siblings.

More distinguishable were changes in the use of early years education and other types of formal provision. Overall, the use of these childcare providers increased between 1999 and 2001 from 49 to 52 per cent, and there were signs that parents had substituted one type of provider for another. There was a slight increase in use of crèches/nurseries (from 14 to 16 per cent), nursery/reception classes (from 9 to 12 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (11 to 14 per cent), while fewer parents used babysitters (from 14 to 10 per cent) or playgroups (from 14 to 11 per cent).

The changes in the reference week were similar: slightly more parents were using nursery/reception classes (from 5 to 7 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (from 4 to 6 per cent); slightly fewer parents were using childminders (from 6 to 5 per cent) and playgroups (from 7 to 6 per cent). Overall, the use of early years education and other types of formal childcare provision in the reference week increased between 1999 and 2001 from 28 to 32 per cent. This was matched by a similar fall in the level of use of informal childcare in the reference week.

The survey's evidence suggests that low income families were using more early years education and other formal childcare while higher income families' usage of these providers was unchanged.

More lone parent families were using early years education and other types of formal childcare in 2001 than in 1999. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) had used one of these providers in the reference week in the repeat survey compared with 23 per cent in the baseline survey. This was matched by a fall in the proportion using an informal provider (from 46 to 42 per cent). Lone parents working part-time markedly increased their use of formal providers - 19 per cent had used some early years education or other formal provision in 1999 compared with 29 per cent in 2001.

In terms of changes in the quantity of childcare used we found that the mean number of hours of childcare used by parents in the reference week increased from 19.9 to 21.4 (among families that used childcare in the past week). This was associated with

a slight increase in the proportion of families that used larger amounts (over 30 hours per week) of childcare.

In the final section of the chapter data was presented on the use of childcare among children. Children aged 11 or under were all more likely to have received some childcare in 2001 than was reported in the 1999 baseline survey, particularly for those aged 0-2 and 5-7. There was a small reduction in the level of childcare use for those children aged 12 to 14.

5 Parents' use of formal childcare and the national childcare strategy

5.1 Introduction

The National Childcare Strategy (NCS) was launched in 1998 with the Green Paper "Meeting the Childcare Challenge" to expand childcare services. It aims to ensure that affordable, accessible and quality childcare is available in every neighbourhood and complements early education, schools and other family services. Specifically it aims to: increase the availability of affordable, accessible and quality childcare in every neighbourhood, with a particular focus on extending provision in disadvantaged areas; and to help increase employment and decrease unemployment with the childcare provision that parents, particularly lone parents need.

To achieve this, 150 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) were established, one in each English local authority area (LEA). They are convened by LEAs and bring together all the local parties (including schools and other providers, parents, employers and colleges) to map and develop local childcare.

Between April 1997 and June 2001, over 482,000 new childcare places have been created for almost 880,000 children. Childcare funding has trebled from £66m in 2000-01 to over £200m in 2003-04, with an additional £155m from the New Opportunities Fund to increase provision in disadvantaged areas

A particularly important focus of the childcare strategy is provision in areas of deprivation. For the next three years from 2001, much of the increased childcare funding will be directed at expanding provision in the most disadvantaged areas.

NCS providers

While Early Years policies focus their attention on nursery education providers (nursery/reception classes and playgroups) and are primarily used by parents for reasons related to child development, the NCS has been directed at expanding the provision of formal registered childcare (registered childminders, day nurseries, out-of-school clubs and holiday schemes). Formal care, as defined by the NCS, includes registered care for school age as well as pre-school children. For pre-school children it includes only care provided for more than 3.5 hours, as provision open for a shorter time than this does not ensure sufficient support for parents who want to take up work.

Since it is these providers which have benefited from the NCS, these are the providers which we turn our attention to in this chapter, looking specifically at the impact of the Strategy.

It should be noted that since the coverage of the National Childcare Strategy is England only, this is the geographical area within which the survey was carried out. Therefore, in this chapter, as in the rest of the report, findings refer to England only.

Definition of formal childcare used in this chapter and comparison with previous chapters

It is important to stress that the definition of formal care used throughout this chapter refers to the four providers named above: registered childminders; day nurseries; out-of-school clubs and holiday schemes. Due to limitations of the baseline survey data (see paragraph on comparisons with the baseline survey below) it also covers crèches and nursery schools.

In order to keep categories distinct, the rest of the report looks at what we call “early years education and other formal childcare”. For people who are comparing this report with the Baseline Survey of Parents’ Demand for Childcare (2000) it should be noted that this category of “early years education and other formal childcare” is directly comparable to the category of “formal care” as used in the Baseline Survey report.

Problems of comparison with the baseline survey

Learning from our experiences of analysing the baseline survey, we asked parents in the Repeat Survey to separate crèches, day nurseries and nursery schools. While the Repeat Survey therefore contains information about use of these three providers individually, the Baseline Survey does not. When it comes to comparing the two surveys, this means that we have had to use the broader category and have not been able to separate nurseries, crèches and nursery schools.

The chapter commences by describing patterns of use of formal childcare provision with respect to the 2001 survey. Evidence is then reported on the extent to which there have been changes in the use of formal providers since the baseline survey. This is then followed by an attempt to gauge how many parents would like to be using a formal provider but who were not doing so at the time of the most recent survey.

5.2 Parents’ use of formal childcare

In total 32 per cent of households used a formal childcare provider in the past year and just under a fifth (18 per cent) reported some use in the reference week. Formal providers were more likely to have been used by couples than lone parents. A third of two-parent households (33 per cent) had used a formal provider in the past year compared with 29 per cent of lone parent families. This gap remained with respect to the reference week (19 and 16 per cent respectively).

The use of formal childcare was related to parents’ labour market participation (Table 5-1). Households with at least one parent in work were significantly more likely than those with no parent in work to use formal childcare. Just over a third (35 per cent) used formal childcare in the past year compared with a fifth (21 per cent) of “workless” households. This difference was similar in terms of the proportion using formal childcare in the reference week.

Table 5-1 Use of formal childcare, by household work status

	Household work status		All households (%)
	One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	20	9	18
Used formal childcare in the past year	35	21	32
Weighted base	3,829	790	4,619
Unweighted base	4,533	883	5,416

Base: All households.

The absence of a parent in either work *or* study was associated with a very low likelihood of using formal childcare. Fewer than a fifth (17 per cent) of these households used a formal provider in the past year and just seven percent had done so in the reference week.

Among couples, usage of formal childcare in the past year was highest where both parents were in full-time work. Over two-fifths (44 per cent) of households in this situation had used formal childcare in the past year compared with less than a third (29 per cent) where only one parent worked and a fifth (18 per cent) where neither parent worked (Table 5-2). A similar pattern was evident for lone parents, with those that worked full-time (44 per cent) significantly more likely to have used formal childcare in the past year than those who worked part-time (33 per cent) or who did not work (21 per cent).

In terms of the use of childcare in the reference week the story was much the same as for usage in the past year. Lone parents working full-time (28 per cent) and couples where both were in full-time employment (28 per cent) were most likely to have used formal childcare in the reference week.

Table 5-2 Use of formal childcare, by household work status

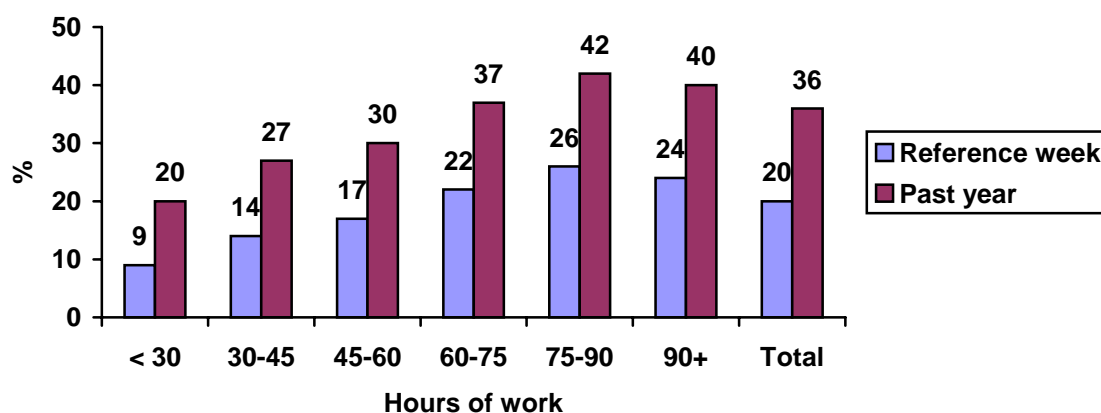
	Used formal childcare in the past week (%)	Used formal childcare in the past year (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
<i>Couples</i>				
Both in full-time work	28	44	835	1,015
One in full-time work, one in part-time work	20	34	1,347	1,579
One in full-time work, one not in work	15	29	963	1,099
One or both in part-time work	9	20	128	148
Neither in paid work	9	18	172	192
All couples	19	16	3,446	4,033
<i>Lone parents</i>				
In full-time work	28	44	254	323
In part-time work	18	33	302	369
Not in paid work	9	21	617	691
All lone parents	33	29	1,173	1,383
Total	18	32	4,619	5,416

Base: All households.

The use of formal childcare was also related to the number of hours worked by the respondent. Over a quarter (27 per cent) of respondents that were working 30 or more hours per week used formal childcare in the reference week, compared to 14 per cent who worked fewer than 16 hours. A similar relationship was evident in families headed by a couple – 27 per cent of respondents who worked more than 30 hours per week used childcare in the reference week compared with 15 per cent who worked 15 or fewer hours.

In two parent families, the total hours worked by the respondent and their partner was found to be positively associated with the use of formal childcare (Figure 5-1). Where more than 75 hours of work was done by the respondent and their partner, around 40 per cent used formal childcare in the past year which was double the proportion of couples working less than 30 hours per week. This association was repeated with respect to formal childcare used in the reference week.

Figure 5-1 Use of formal childcare, by total hours worked by respondent and their partner



Base: All households headed by a couple where at least the respondent or the partner, is in paid work. Figures are weighted and based on responses from 3,841 households.

Atypical work patterns

The presence of a parent working non-standard hours or some other atypical form of working did not appear to be associated with the likelihood of a household using formal childcare (Table 5-3). Regardless of whether there was a parent working long hours, shift work or who usually worked from home, these households were no more or less likely than other families to have used formal childcare.

Table 5-3 Usage of childcare in the last week and the last year by household work patterns

	Atypical work patterns for either parent				Atypical work patterns for neither parent (%)
	Works long hours (>45 hours) (%)	Works shifts (%)	Works at home only (%)	Total (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	21	16	16	19	22
Used formal childcare in the past year	36	29	35	34	35
Weighted base	1,537	747	237	2,109	1,719
Unweighted base	1,815	893	276	2,498	2,035

Base: All households where at least one parent is in paid employment.

In chapter 3 we concluded that if the *main childcare provider* had some atypical pattern of work, these families were more likely to use childcare. This relationship was not evident with respect to formal childcare arrangements, indeed, they were less likely to have used formal childcare in the past year if they usually worked shifts - 30 per cent of main childcare providers used a formal provider in the past year compared with 38 per cent who never worked shifts. What this suggests is that families with

atypical working arrangements have to rely on informal childcare to meet their childcare needs. Formal arrangements may not be suitable (e.g. in terms of opening hours) and therefore parents working these atypical patterns have instead to rely on informal arrangements such as with grandparents or friends.

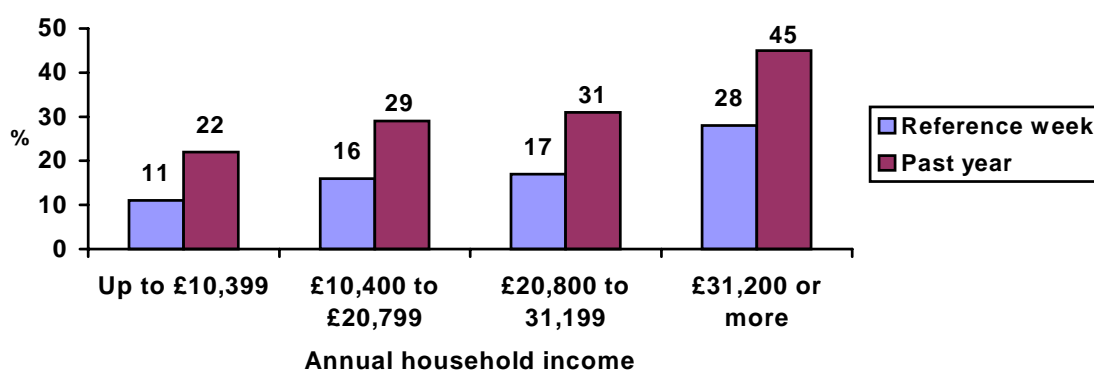
Family-friendly working

Respondents whose employer offered help with childcare – for example, through the provision of a workplace nursery or helping with the cost of childcare⁴⁵ – were more likely to have used formal childcare than were other working parents. Almost a third (31 per cent) had used formal arrangements in the reference week and half (51 per cent) had done so in the past year. In contrast, only a fifth (20 per cent) of respondents whose employer did not offer such support had used childcare in the reference week and a third (34 per cent) did likewise in the past year.

Household income

A strong relationship was observed between levels of household income and the use of formal childcare both in the past year and the past week (Figure 5-2). Of those families with a total household income of more than £31,200 per annum, 45 per cent used some formal childcare in the past year compared with 22 per cent of those with an annual income under £10,400. In terms of the reference week, the proportions using formal childcare in the top and bottom income brackets were 28 and 11 per cent respectively.

Figure 5-2 Use of formal childcare, by household income



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

Lone parents were more likely than couples to have used formal childcare in either the reference week or the past year for all but the highest levels of income. For example, almost a fifth (23 per cent) of lone parents with an annual income of between £10,400 and £20,799 used formal childcare in the reference week, compared with 13 per cent of couples. Couples in these income bands often only had one parent

⁴⁵ The full list of types of childcare assistance is shown in Table 2-8, however, we have excluded term-time working from this analysis.

in full-time work, hence the need for formal arrangements is somewhat less than for lone parents with a similar household income, most of whom are working full-time.

Families in receipt of some form of state benefit or tax credit (excluding Child Benefit) were less likely to have used formal childcare in either the reference week (14 per cent) or at any time in the past year (26 per cent) than were other families (21 and 36 per cent respectively). This is unsurprising given that these would have been households at the lower end of the income distribution. However, this summary measure hides some of the detail in that recipients of Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC) behave somewhat differently from other state benefit or tax credit recipients.

Households that received WFTC were more likely to have used formal childcare in either the reference week (19 per cent) or in the past year (31 per cent), than were families who received some other state benefit or tax credit (10 and 22 per cent respectively for the reference week and the past year). They were, however, no different from other families (i.e. those not receiving WFTC) in terms of their use of these providers.

Parents in receipt of childcare tax credit were significantly more likely than were other parents to have used a formal childcare provider (Table 5-4). Almost 90 per cent with this tax credit used childcare in the past year, while 70 per cent used a formal provider in the reference week⁴⁶.

Table 5-4 Use of childcare, by receipt of childcare tax credit or Working Families' Tax Credit

	WFTC status of household				All households (%)
	Childcare tax credit recipient (%)	Receives WFTC only (%)	Non-recipient (%)	Doesn't know if receives WFTC (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	70	10	18	23	18
Used formal childcare in the past year	89	21	33	29	32
Weighted base	125	745	3,698	50	4,619
Unweighted base	195	866	4,299	56	5,416

Base: All households.

Ethnicity

Table 5-5 shows the use of formal childcare among respondents from different ethnic backgrounds. A higher proportion of black respondents used formal childcare in both the reference week and over the past year than did respondents from other

⁴⁶ By definition, we would have expected the proportion of families in receipt of the childcare tax credit to be using formal childcare to have been 100 per cent. However, families may have been claiming the tax credit for a child other than one of the two selected for the interview. This though probably explains only a small part of the shortfall. A more likely explanation is that parents were confusing the childcare tax credit with other forms of assistance such as the Children's Tax Credit.

ethnic backgrounds. Asian respondents were significantly less likely to have reported using formal arrangements over the past year than were other parents.

Table 5-5 Use of formal childcare, by ethnic origin of respondent

	Ethnicity of respondent				All households (%)
	White (%)	Black (%)	Asian (%)	Other or missing (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	19	22	16	18	18
Used formal childcare in the past year	33	46	22	31	32
Weighted base	4,114	129	251	124	4,619
Unweighted base	4,827	163	283	143	5,416

Base: All households.

Disability

Use of formal childcare was lower than average where either parent had a limiting disability, at 27 per cent in the past year and 15 per cent in the reference week, compared with the average levels for the remainder of the sample of 34 and 19 per cent respectively.

Qualifications

The use of formal childcare arrangements was strongly correlated with the qualifications of the main respondent (Table 5-6). Half (52 per cent) of the respondents with a first degree or higher used formal childcare in the past year compared with 31 per cent of respondents who had a GCSE (or its equivalent) as their highest qualification, and 16 per cent who had no qualifications. The relationship was even more pronounced with respect to formal childcare used in the reference week.

Table 5-6 Use of formal childcare, by highest qualification of respondent

	Ethnicity of respondent				No qual's	All households (%)
	First degree or higher (%)	A-level or equivalent (%)	GCSE or equivalent (%)	Other qual's (%)		
Used formal childcare in the reference week	33	26	16	26	8	18
Used formal childcare in the past year	52	41	31	39	16	32
Weighted base	641	575	2,441	74	862	4,619
Unweighted base	787	704	2,847	92	953	5,416

Base: All households.

There were 33 cases where the highest qualifications were not reported.

Regional variations

Table 5-7 illustrates regional differences in the proportion of parents using formal childcare in the past year and in the reference week. In terms of the reference week there was very little regional variation. Differences were more pronounced in terms of childcare used in the past year. Families in the North-East, Merseyside and Eastern regions were less likely to have used some formal childcare than were families in the East Midlands, London and the South East.

Table 5-7 Use of childcare, by government office region

	Used formal childcare in the past week (%)	Used formal childcare in the past year (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
East Midlands	19	37	418	497
London	18	35	628	731
South East	19	35	669	786
West Midlands	20	34	527	622
North West	19	31	499	585
Yorkshire & Humber	19	31	546	636
South West	18	31	407	474
Eastern	16	29	537	628
Merseyside	18	28	117	134
North East	16	26	272	323
Total	18	32	4,619	5,416

Base: All households.

Families living in areas with a high degree of relative deprivation were approximately one and a half times less likely to have used formal childcare in the reference week or the past year than were families living in the least deprived areas (Table 5-8). Just over a seventh (14 per cent) of families in deprived areas reported use of formal childcare in the reference week compared with almost a quarter (23 per cent) in the least deprived areas.

Table 5-8 Use of formal childcare, by index of multiple deprivation

	Multiple deprivation index					All households (%)
	1st quintile - least deprived (%)	2nd quintile (%)	3rd quintile (%)	4th quintile (%)	5th quintile - most deprived (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	23	20	18	16	15	18
Used formal childcare in the past year	40	36	33	28	25	32
Weighted base	956	915	895	918	909	4,619
Unweighted base	1,133	1,084	1,054	1,064	1,049	5,416

Base: All households.

There were 32 cases with insufficient address details which meant it was not possible to attach a deprivation score.

Age of child

The use of formal childcare was found to be closely related to the age of the child (Table 5-9). Children aged 3-4 were the most likely to have received formal childcare in the reference week (32 per cent) as well as the last year (43 per cent). The next highest incidence of formal childcare use was among children aged 0-2, among whom around a quarter used a formal provider in these two periods (23 and 26 per cent respectively). The small gap between the proportion using formal childcare in the reference week and in the past year shows that for very young children, most parents that decide to use this type of care, use it regularly rather than on an ad hoc basis.

Children aged 5-7 or 8-11 were similar in respect of the proportion receiving formal childcare. Around one-in-seven 5-7 year olds (14 per cent) and one-in-eight (12 per cent) of 8-11 year olds had some formal childcare in the reference week, while 21 per cent of the former and 17 per cent of the latter had some provision in the past year.

Very few children aged 12 to 14 received formal childcare in either the reference week or over the past year – less than one in ten used this type of childcare in either period. The figures reflect low levels of usage of childcare in general for children in this age group, but may also point to a lack of appropriate provision for older children.

Table 5-9 Levels of formal childcare usage, by age of child

	Age group of child					All children (%)
	0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	23	32	14	12	3	15
Used formal childcare in the past year	26	43	21	17	5	21
Weighted base	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657

Base: All children.

Quantity of formal childcare used by parents

Parents used an average of 16.7 hours of formal childcare per week with one-in-ten using 39 or more hours. Table 5-10 shows how this varied across some of the main characteristics of the families that participated in the study. There were only small differences between lone parents and couples in terms of the number of hours of formal provision used. Differences were more pronounced in terms of the work status of the household. In “workless” households formal providers were used for around 11 hours in the reference week compared with just over 17 where at least one parent was in work.

Among couples, households where both parents were in full-time work had the highest average use of formal childcare. They used formal providers for an average of 22 hours compared with almost 13 hours where only one parent was working full-time and around 15 hours where one parent was working full-time and the other

part-time. A similar pattern was evident for lone parents. Those that worked full-time used formal providers on average for 21 hours compared with under 14 hours where the lone parent was either in part-time employment or was not in work.

Families living in the most deprived areas used an average of 17 hours of formal childcare in the reference week, which was no different from families in the least deprived areas. So although the proportion of families using formal childcare was lower in deprived areas than elsewhere, the families that did use formal care in deprived areas used it for as many hours as did other families.

Table 5-10 Mean number of hours of formal childcare used in the reference week, by main household characteristics

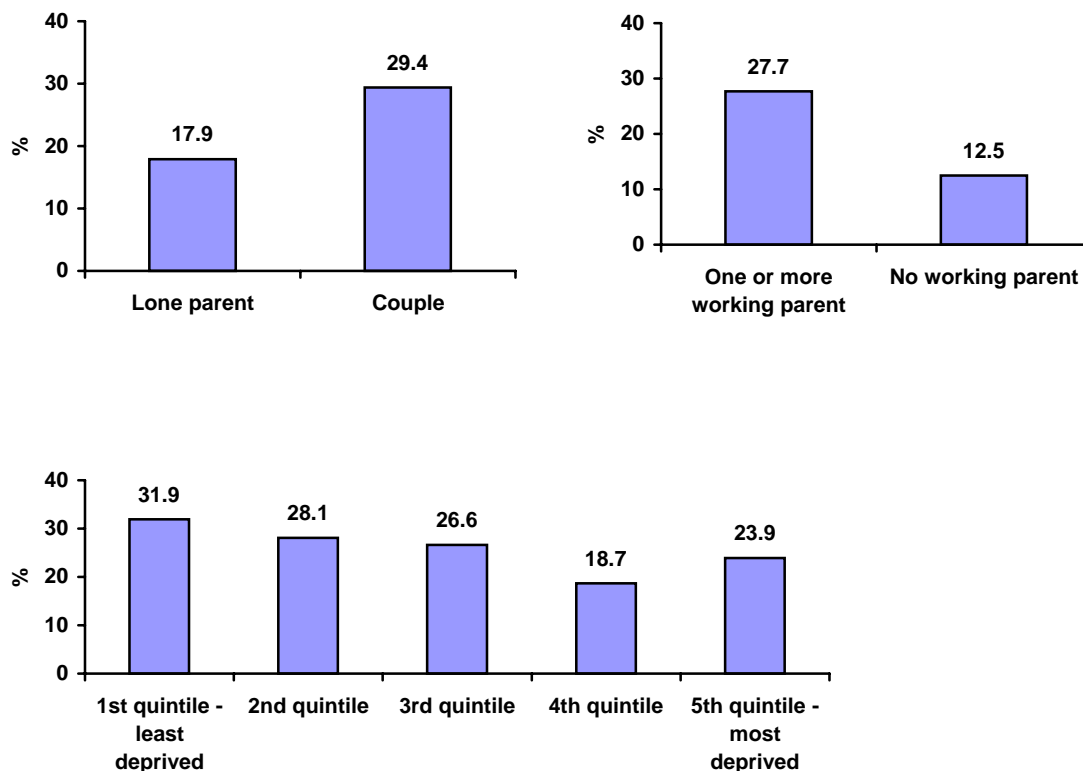
	Used formal childcare in the past week (Mean hours)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Lone parents	16.1	184	259
Couples	16.9	668	846
One or more working parent	17.2	780	1,101
No working parent	11.1	72	94
1st quintile - least deprived	17.1	217	277
2 nd quintile	16.5	186	240
3 rd quintile	17.8	165	216
4 th quintile	14.8	146	188
5th quintile - most deprived	17.1	134	179
Total	16.7	852	1,105

Base: All households that used a formal childcare provider in the reference week.

In total, formal childcare represented around 26 per cent of the total hours of childcare used by parents. This proportion varied considerably across different groups of families as illustrated in Figure 5-3. Formal childcare made up less than a fifth of the total hours of childcare used by lone parents compared with 29 per cent for couples. Households with no working parent relied on formal childcare for only a small part (12 per cent) of their total childcare. In contrast, formal childcare was a much larger share (28 per cent) of total childcare in households with a working parent.

Families living in deprived areas relied on formal childcare arrangements for approximately a quarter of their total childcare (24 per cent). This was about a third less than families living in the least deprived areas.

Figure 5-3 Share of formal childcare in total childcare used in the reference week, by main household characteristics



Base: All households that used a formal childcare provider in the reference week. Figures are weighted and based on responses from 3,841 households.

5.3 Changes in the use of formal childcare

At an aggregate level, small changes were evident in the proportion of households that used formal childcare in either the past week or the past year. Table 5-10 shows that there has been an increase, from 16 to 18 per cent of parents using formal childcare in the reference week, and from 29 to 32 per cent of parents using formal childcare at some time in the past year. Both of these changes are significant. In the light of the evidence reported in the previous chapter, it therefore appears that with the overall proportion of parents reporting to have used childcare remaining unchanged (or falling slightly), parents must have been substituting informal types of provision.

The increase in the use of formal childcare appears to have cut across most groups of parents; however, the size of the increase is not uniform. Starting with the work status of households, Table 5-11 shows a general increase in the use of formal childcare in both “workless” households and households where at least one parent was in paid employment. Just over a fifth (21 per cent) of ‘workless’ households were using formal childcare in the past year compared with 17 per cent in the 1999 survey. An increase of a similar magnitude - from 32 to 35 per cent - occurred in households where at least one parent was in work. In terms of formal childcare used

in the reference week, the proportion of households using this type of childcare had increased from 18 to 20 per cent among “working” households, and from 8 to 9 per cent in “workless” households.

Table 5-11 Use of formal childcare, by household work status and by year

	Year	Household work status		All
		One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	households (%)
Used formal childcare in the reference week	2001	20 ⁺⁺	9	18 ⁺⁺
	1999	18	8	16
Used formal childcare in the past year	2001	35 ⁺⁺	21 ⁺	32 ⁺⁺
	1999	32	17	29
Weighted base	2001	3,446	790	4,619
Unweighted base	2001	4,033	883	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	3,960	906	4,866

Base: All households.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

A more detailed presentation of parents’ use of childcare according to their employment and household status is shown in Table 5-12. The use of formal childcare in the reference week among two-parent households increased from 17 to 19 per cent between 1999 and 2001, with a larger increase – from 12 to 16 per cent – being reported by lone parents. A similar pattern was evident with respect to formal childcare used in the past year. One-in-three (33 per cent) two-parent households had used some formal childcare in the past year in 2001 compared with 31 per cent in 1999. For lone parents there was a similar story. Whereas just under quarter (24 per cent) had used some formal childcare in the 1999 survey, 29 per cent reported using this type of childcare in 2001.

Sub-dividing two-parent families according to their work status, we find an increase in the use of formal childcare for most groups. Where both parents were working full-time, 28 per cent had used some formal childcare in the reference week in 2001 compared with 26 per cent in 1999. A slightly larger increase, from 17 to 20 per cent, was recorded in circumstances where both parents were employed, but only one was in full-time work. Only households where one parent was in full-time employment while the other was not in work failed to record an increase in the proportion using formal childcare in the reference week. For this group there was no change. The results were similar with respect to formal childcare used in the past year. Where both parents were in full-time employment there was a five percent increase in the proportion which had used formal childcare (from 39 to 44 per cent). An increase of the same size was reported in households where neither parent was in paid employment (from 13 to 18 per cent).

Among lone parents there was a large increase in the proportion using formal childcare where the parent was working full-time. In 1999 just over a fifth (21 per cent) had used a formal provider in the reference week compared with 28 per cent in

the most recent survey. A similar change (from 12 to 18 per cent) occurred among lone parents in part-time employment. Lone parents who were not in work showed no change in their use of formal providers with respect to the reference week. The results were similar with respect to formal childcare used in the past year. A seven percent increase was reported among lone parents in full-time (from 37 to 44 per cent) and part-time (from 26 to 33 per cent) employment. A smaller increase (from 18 to 21 per cent) had also occurred for lone parents not in work.

Table 5-12 Use of formal childcare, by household work status

	Used formal childcare in the past week		Used formal childcare in the past year	
	1999 (%)	2001 (%)	1999 (%)	2001 (%)
<i>Couples</i>				
Both in full-time work	26	28	39	44 ⁺
One in full-time work one in part-time work	17	20	31	34
One in full-time work one not in work	15	15	29	29
One or both in part-time work	8	9	22	20
Neither in paid work	6	9	13	18
All couples	17	19 ⁺	31	33 ⁺⁺
<i>Lone parents</i>				
In full-time work	21	28 ⁺	37	44
In part-time work	12	18 ⁺	26	33 ⁺
Not in paid work	9	9	18	21
All lone parents	12	16 ⁺	24	29 ⁺⁺
Total	16	18 ⁺⁺	29	32 ⁺⁺

Base: All households. The figures for 1999 are based on 4,866 unweighted observations and the 2001 are based on 5,416 unweighted observations. 2001 data has been weighted.

⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

⁺⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Household income

Comparisons between the repeat and baseline surveys reveal an increase in the use of formal childcare confined mainly to lower income households (Table 5-13). Starting with data for the reference week, only families with an annual income of less than £20,800 recorded an increase in the use of formal childcare. There was no change in the proportion of families with a higher income that had used formal care in the reference week. A three percent increase was recorded for families with an income of less than £10,400 (from 8 to 11 per cent) and for those with an income of between £10,400 and £20,800 (from 13 to 16 per cent).

The story was much the same with respect to the use of childcare over the last year. Only households in the lower two income bands recorded an increase in their use of formal childcare.

Table 5-13 Use of formal childcare, by household income

	Year	Household income				All households (%)
		Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	
Used formal childcare in the reference week	2001	11 ⁺	16 ⁺	17	28	18 ⁺⁺
	1999	8	13	18	28	16
Used formal childcare in the past year	2001	22 ⁺	29 ⁺⁺	31	45	32 ⁺⁺
	1999	18	24	31	45	29
Weighted base	2001	909	1,110	1,018	1,244	4,616
Unweighted base	2001	1,043	1,309	1,191	1,491	5,416
Unweighted base	1999	1,217	1,151	1,068	1,183	4,866

Base: All households.

⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

⁺⁺ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

Changes in the patterns of formal childcare use among children

Analysis of the use of formal childcare was also undertaken at the level of the child (as opposed to household level). In aggregate, the proportion of children using formal childcare in the reference week increased from 11 to 17 per cent between 1999 and 2001. However, this increase was not matched in terms of the proportion using formal childcare over the past year. Indeed, a small but not significant fall was recorded, from 25 to 24 per cent. These changes suggest that while there has been no change in the overall proportion of children receiving formal childcare, those that do are doing so more regularly. The implication is that the *National Childcare Strategy* is having a greater impact on children already using formal childcare than on other children.

Use of formal childcare in the reference week increased for all age groups between the two surveys, and this increase was significant for all except children aged 12-14. For children aged 5-7 and 8-11 the change is particularly large, with almost twice as many children in both of these age groups now using some type of formal care on what is interpreted to be a regular basis. The increase was somewhat less for younger children, however, the change was still of the order of 1.2 to 1.4 times as many children attending formal childcare on a regular basis.

The picture is somewhat different in terms of the use of formal childcare over the past year. Aside from children in the youngest age category, no significant change was recorded in the proportion of children using formal childcare over the past year between 1999 and 2001. For 0-2 year olds a significant decrease – from 35 to 28 per cent – was reported, and this against expectations. There is little to suggest why this might be. Parents of younger children were not found to differ in their attitudes towards formal childcare across the two surveys, nor is there any external evidence which sheds light on this change.

Table 5-14 Levels of usage, by age of child

	Year	Age group of child					All children
		0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	(%)
Used formal childcare in the reference week	2001	23 ⁺⁺	32	14 ⁺⁺	12 ⁺⁺	3	15 ⁺⁺
	1999	17	29	9	8	2	11
Used formal childcare in the past year	2001	26 ⁺⁺	43	21 ⁺⁺	17 ⁺⁺	5	21 ⁺⁺
	1999	35	47	26	21	7	25
Weighted base	2001	1,523	1,150	1,776	2,359	1,531	8,339
Unweighted base	2001	1,548	1,184	1,866	2,454	1,605	8,657
Weighted base	1999	1,646	1,146	1,918	2,433	1,620	8,761
Unweighted base	1999	1,490	1,013	1,643	2,105	1,442	7,693

Base: All children.

Quantity of formal childcare used by parents

Some basic analysis⁴⁷ was also undertaken on changes in the amount of formal childcare used by parents. In terms of the total number of hours of formal childcare used by parents, this had increased from 15.4 to 16.7 hours per week, which represents an increase of 8.4 per cent over the two years.

Formal childcare's share in the total childcare used by parents also increased between 1999 and 2001. Whereas it accounted for around 24 per cent of all the childcare used by parents in the reference week in 1999, this had increased to 26 per cent in 2001.

5.4 Ideal childcare provision

While the above analysis is encouraging in the sense that it shows an increase in the proportion of families using formal childcare, it doesn't tell us much about the demand for formal care. How many parents would like to use formal childcare if it were available? Elsewhere in the report (Chapter 8) we look at parents' perceptions of availability. What this analysis shows is that many parents are concerned about the amount of childcare available. To try and gauge the level of demand for formal childcare in a more specific manner, parents were asked to tell the interviewer what their ideal childcare arrangements would be if money, not availability, restricted their choice. They were shown a list of provider types (see Appendix A) and could choose as many or as few as they wanted⁴⁸.

Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of parents chose one or a combination of providers which we have been describing as formal - childminders, nurseries or crèches and out-of-school clubs. Selecting a formal provider as ideal did not appear to be related to the respondent's characteristics. For instance, lone parents were just

⁴⁷ Only very aggregate level analysis was possible because of the way in which the data from the baseline survey was stored.

⁴⁸ They were first of all asked to describe what their ideal working arrangements were. Given these arrangements. They were then asked to list their ideal childcare providers.

as likely to choose a formal provider as ideal childcare, as were couples. The same was true of low and high income families, working and non-working families and so on.

However, we did find considerable variation across these characteristics in terms of whether the family actually used a formal provider. Around two-fifths (39 per cent) of all parents that said they would ideally use a formal provider had actually done so in the past year. Therefore, three-fifths of the parents that wanted to use a formal provider had not in the past year. This probably over-estimates the extent to which there is unmet demand for formal childcare; however, it is at least indicative of the fact that if more formal childcare were available, it would be used by parents⁴⁹.

Some of the main groups of families that wanted to use formal childcare but did not were as follows (and summarised in Table 5-15):

- Lone parents - 66 per cent of those that ideally wanted to use a formal provider had not done so in the past year compared with 60 per cent of couples;
- “Workless” households - 75 per cent of those that ideally wanted to use a formal provider had not done so in the past year compared with 59 per cent of households where at least one parent was in work;
- low income families - of those that ideally wanted to use a formal provider 75 per cent had not done so in the past year compared with 48 per cent of families with an annual income of £31,200 or more;
- families living in deprived areas - around 70 per cent of those that ideally wanted to use a formal provider had not done so in the past year compared with around half (52 per cent) of families that lived in the least deprived areas.

⁴⁹ Unfortunately, data on ideal childcare arrangements was collected differently in 1999 therefore it is not possible to estimate whether the proportion of families not using their ideally arrangement had dropped.

Table 5-15 Proportion of families wanting to use formal childcare but which did not in the past year, by household characteristics

	Ideally wanted to use formal childcare but hadn't in past year (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Lone parents	66	864	1,040
Couples	60	2475	2,940
One or more working parent	59	2,789	3,355
No working parent	75	550	625
Up to £10,399	75	667	775
£10,400 to £20,799	64	812	978
£20,800 to £31,199	62	729	862
£31,200 or more	48	927	1,125
1st quintile - least deprived	52	698	840
2nd quintile	56	643	774
3rd quintile	61	655	781
4th quintile	68	681	799
5th quintile - most deprived	69	644	761
Total	61	3,339	3980

Base: All households that ideally wanted to use a formal childcare provider.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter we have presented an alternative analysis of the childcare use data focussing on the use of formal childcare. Formal childcare was defined as being care coming from one of the following three provider types: registered childminders, crèche/nursery providers, out-of-school clubs and holiday schemes. This definition matches that used in the *National Childcare Strategy*.

Under a fifth (18 per cent) of parents reported using one of these providers in the reference week, while a third (32 per cent) had used one in the past year. The household characteristic that most strongly influenced the use of formal childcare was parental work status. Usage in the reference week was highest for lone parents in full-time jobs and for couples who both worked full-time (both 28 per cent). Usage was also higher among parents in higher income groups. Least likely to have used a formal provider in the reference week were households where no parent was in a paid job. These characteristics also tended to explain variations in the quantity of formal childcare used by parents.

In terms of changes in the use of formal childcare since the baseline survey in 1999, the general picture is one of more parents using this type of care. Lone parents in paid work and low income families appear to have made the biggest change in terms of their use of formal childcare. Whereas a fifth (21 per cent) of lone parents were using a formal provider in 1999 (in the reference week), 28 per cent were doing so in 2001. Given that the overall use of childcare appears to have remained unchanged, it

therefore seems likely that parents have been substituting formal provision for other types of informal arrangements. It is estimated that formal provision now accounts for around 26 per cent of the total childcare regularly used by parents (in terms of the number of hours of childcare used), whereas it represented 24 per cent in 1999.

In the concluding section of the chapter an estimate is made of the gap between actual and potential use of formal childcare. Using parents' views on their ideal childcare provision we estimated that around three-quarters of parents would like to use some type of formal childcare. Of the parents that expressed this desire, less than two-fifths had actually used a formal provider in the past year. This gives an indication of the potential to increase the use of formal childcare.

6 DIFFICULTIES WITH CHILDCARE

6.1 Introduction

During the course of the interview, parents were asked about various difficulties they may have experienced with their childcare arrangements in the past year. Specifically, they were asked:

- whether they had experienced any unmet demand;
- whether their arrangements had broken down at short notice;
- if they had any difficulties organising their childcare arrangements; and
- how working arrangements impact on childcare.

This chapter reports the results of these questions.

6.2 Unmet demand for childcare

All parents were asked whether there were any occasions over the past year when they had wanted or needed childcare for their child(ren), but had been unable to get it. This excluded occasions when existing arrangements had become unavailable at short notice, which were asked about separately (and the results of which are reported in Section 6.3). Parents were asked to “... *think about work and non-work situations where you might have wanted or needed childcare*”.

The question was different from that used in the baseline survey⁵⁰. Therefore the results are not directly comparable between the two studies and hence changes should be viewed with some caution. Another change was to ask this question of all parents. In the baseline survey only parents that had used childcare in the previous year were asked about their unmet demand.

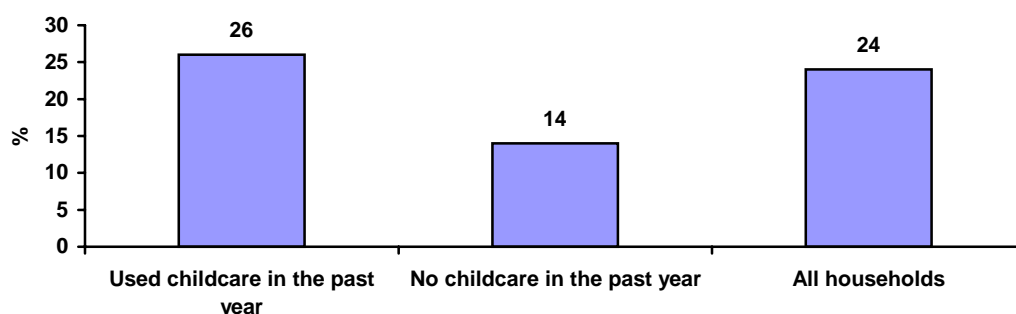
A quarter (24 per cent or approximately 1.3 million) of all families experienced some form of unmet demand in the past year (Figure 6-1). Where the family had used some childcare in the past year, they were almost twice as likely as non-users to have experienced some unmet demand - 26 per cent having done so compared with 14 per cent of non-users.

The number of parents that reported experiencing some unmet demand was somewhat higher in the baseline survey. Just under a third (31 per cent) said they had done so although, as mentioned above, this change should be viewed with some caution.

Lone parents were significantly more likely than couples to have had some unmet demand. Just under a third (29 per cent) had experienced such a difficulty compared with a fifth of couples (22 per cent). The difference was similar when only looking at those parents who had used childcare in the past year - 31 per cent and 24 per cent respectively.

⁵⁰ The question was altered after a cognitive testing exercise.

Figure 6-1 Proportion of households with any unmet demand for childcare, by use of childcare in the past year



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

The work status of lone parents did not appear to be related to the incidence of any unmet demand. Those in work were just as likely to have experienced unmet demand (30 per cent) as those currently out of work (28 per cent). A slightly different story can be told regarding couples and is shown in Table 6-1. Couple households where both parents were in full-time employment, were only marginally more likely to have had some unmet demand (23 per cent) than those where only one parent was working full-time (20 per cent). Families with a mixture of full and part-time working arrangements were the most likely to have had some unmet demand (25 per cent). Couple households where neither parent worked were the least likely to have had some unmet demand (14 per cent), which is considerably lower than for non-working lone parents.

Table 6-1 Proportion of households with any unmet demand for childcare in couple households, by household work status

	Both in full-time employment (%)	One in f/t employment one in p/t employment (%)	One in f/t employment one not in employment (%)	One or both in p/t employment (%)	Neither in paid employment (%)	All households (%)
Unmet demand for childcare in the past year	23	25	20	21	14	22
Weighted base	835	1,347	963	128	172	3,446
Unweighted base	1,015	1,579	1,099	148	192	4,033

Base: All households headed by a couple.

Parents whose children were all attending school, were marginally less likely to have experienced some unmet demand than other parents. Just over a fifth (22 per cent) had some unmet demand in the past year compared with 28 per cent of parents with only pre-school aged children and 26 per cent of parents with a mixture of the two⁵¹.

⁵¹ However, if the analysis is restricted to households that used childcare in the previous year, these differences were no longer significant.

There was considerable variation in the level of unmet demand across the regions of England (Table 6-2). The highest proportion of parents reporting unmet demand was in London (30 per cent) with the lowest being in the North East (17 per cent). No association was found between the level of relative deprivation and the incidence of unmet demand – those in the most deprived areas were just as likely to have experienced some unmet demand for childcare (27 per cent) as families in the least deprived areas (26 per cent).

Table 6-2 Proportion of households with any unmet demand, by Government Office Region and by use of childcare in the past year

	Used childcare in the past year (%)	No childcare in the past year (%)	All households (%)
North East	19	7	17
North West	24	17	23
Merseyside	30	16	27
Yorkshire & Humber	23	15	22
East Midlands	29	10	26
West Midlands	24	9	22
South West	29	6	26
Eastern	25	11	24
London	31	25	30
South East	26	11	24
Total	26	14	24
Weighted base	3,962	657	4,619
Unweighted base	4,709	707	5,416

Base: All households

Frequent spells of unmet demand were reported by a small number of parents (Table 6-3). Under a tenth (6 per cent) said that unmet demand had occurred once a month or more regularly. More lone parents (9 per cent) than couples (6 per cent) reported this frequency of unmet demand.

Unlike in the baseline survey, the frequency of unmet demand was not found to be related to household income. In 1999, low income households were found to be around twice as likely to have reported unmet demand occurring at least once a month as were high income couples. In the repeat survey, the differences were less pronounced and were not significant.

Table 6-3 Frequency of unmet demand, by type of family

	Family status		All households (%)
	Couple (%)	Lone parent (%)	
At least once a week	2	4	2
At least once every other week	1	1	1
At least once a month	3	4	3
At least once ever two months	5	6	5
Less often	12	13	12
Never	78	71	76
Weighted base	3,446	1,173	4,619
Unweighted base	4,033	1,833	5,416

Base: All households

Parents were asked about the circumstances around which this unmet demand had occurred. Here the analysis has been restricted to parents that used childcare in the past 12 months as the number of non-users who had some unmet demand is too small to analyse separately.

A mixture of work and non-work situations were reported by parents as the occasions when they experienced some unmet demand (Table 6-4). The most common occasion was when parents wanted to go to a social event, with around a third (37 per cent) attributing this as the type of occasion when they had unmet demand⁵². Just over a quarter (29 per cent) said their unmet demand was work related and this was usually when they wanted or needed to work additional hours. A fifth of parents (19 per cent) linked it to occasions when they had an appointment. There was also a large group of parents who said that their unmet demand was related to times when they wanted to take up employment (26 per cent). This was particularly high among lone parents (30 per cent). Similarly, a number of lone parents said they had experienced unmet demand when they had wanted to take up study (10 per cent).

Understandably the responses were closely related to the family's work status. Where there was at least one parent in work, they were most likely to report the need to work extra hours (34 per cent), having a social engagement (37 per cent) or when they've wanted to take a new job (27 per cent) as the reason for their unmet demand. In non-working households social engagements (42 per cent) and appointments (32 per cent) were the most commonly reported reasons. However, there was also a significant number that said that their unmet demand arose when they had a job interview (3 per cent) or when they wanted to start studying (8 per cent).

⁵² Excluding households that have had unmet demand for reasons exclusively related to a social event reduces the aggregate level of unmet demand from 24 to 21 per cent of all families and from 26 to 22 per cent of families that had used childcare in the past year.

Table 6-4 **Circumstances under which parents experienced unmet demand for childcare, by type of family**

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Type of family		All
	Couple (%)	Lone parent (%)	households (%)
When wanted to go to a social event	38	37	37
When wanted/needed to work extra hours	33	22	29
When wanted to take new job	24	30	26
When had an appointment	18	21	19
When wanted/needed to study extra hours	7	10	8
When wanted to start studying	7	10	8
When wanted/needed to do shopping	7	9	7
When had to care for a friend or relative	4	5	5
When had a job interview	2	5	3
When been ill	2	2	2
Other specific answer	4	4	4
Other irrelevant answer	2	2	2
Don't know / Refused	-	1	*
Weighted base	718	309	1,027
Unweighted base	879	393	1,272

Base: Households using childcare in the past year that had experienced some unmet demand.

+ The columns show all the reasons for unmet demand, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Parents were asked if the unmet demand had occurred at any particular time of day, with the expectation being that the hours immediately before and after school would be problematic, particularly for working parents. Weekdays were broken into 6 periods (shown in Table 6-5) whilst we were only concerned to see if unmet demand had occurred at any time on a Saturday or a Sunday. More than one response could be given.

Table 6-5 shows that unmet demand most commonly occurred between the hours 9am and 6pm on weekdays, with around two-in-five parents reporting some unmet demand at these times. Differences between the proportions of parents experiencing such difficulties in the morning (42 per cent), afternoon (39 per cent) or after school (39 per cent) were negligible. This was also true when comparing working and non-working households. However, if we just look at the work status of the respondent – the person with main or shared responsibility for childcare – the pattern is somewhat different. Respondents working full-time were more likely to have had some unmet demand before school (23 per cent) and after school (45 per cent) than those that worked part-time (16 and 37 per cent respectively) and those not in work (11 and 35 per cent respectively).

A quarter (28 per cent) of parents who had experienced some unmet demand said they experienced problems in the evenings (after 8pm). Weekends were less problematic, particularly Sundays.

Table 6-5 When did the unmet demand occur, by household work status

	Column percentages ⁺		
	Household work status		All households
	One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	
6am to 9am (Before school)	18	11	17
9am to 12pm (Weekday mornings)	44	35	42
12pm to 3.30pm (Weekday afternoons)	39	39	39
3.30pm to 6pm (After school)	39	38	39
6pm to 8pm (Weekday early evenings)	25	27	26
After 8pm (Weekday late evenings / over night)	27	31	28
Any time Saturday	18	21	18
Anytime Sunday	11	12	11
Don't know	1	3	2
Weighted base	861	165	1,027
Unweighted base	1,073	199	1,272

Base: All households that used childcare in the past year and had experienced some unmet demand.

⁺ The columns show all the times at which unmet demand occurred, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Most parents (70 per cent) when faced with a situation of needing additional childcare asked one of their usual providers to look after their children. Far fewer (34 per cent) tried to get this extra childcare from a different provider.

Table 6-6 shows the most common reasons given for unmet demand. The absence of someone suitable to look after their children (46 per cent or 10 per cent of all parents) or their usual arrangements not being open to them (44 per cent), were the main reasons given for not being able to satisfy their demand for childcare. Cost was also important, particularly among parents that did not work. Half of these non-working parents said affordability was a reason for not being able to get the childcare they wanted. Low income households (annual income of less than £10,400) were also more likely to mention cost, just under half (47 per cent) doing so compared with a tenth of households with an income of more than £31,200 per year.

Only 9 per cent of parents that had had some unmet demand (or 2 per cent of all parents) selected the phrase 'there are not enough childcare places' as an answer. However, this should not be interpreted as an indication that parents regarded the level of local provision as adequate. Several of the answers indicated a lack of the *right* type of provision in that parents could not find a provider that was suitable (46 per cent), affordable (29 per cent), accessible (7 per cent) or which was appropriate for the age of child (7 per cent). In fact, when parents were asked a direct question about the number of childcare places in their local area just under a half (47 per cent) said that they thought there were too few (see Chapter 9).

Table 6-6 Why have you not always been able to get all the childcare you wanted or needed, by household status

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Household work status		All
	One or more working parent (%)	No working parent (%)	households (%)
No one suitable to do it	45	48	46
Usual arrangement not available	46	35	44
Could not afford it	25	50	29
Usual provider not open at time childcare was needed	30	17	28
My children were too ill	13	5	12
Not enough childcare places	9	7	9
I had transport difficulties	7	9	7
Children too young for available care	4	9	5
Children too old for available care	4	2	4
Short term need so impossible to plan for	4	2	3
Lack of information about childcare	1	1	1
Other specific answer	*	1	*
Other irrelevant answer	*	-	*
Don't know / Refused	-	-	-
Weighted base	857	169	1,027
Unweighted base	1,068	204	1,272

Base: All households that used childcare in the past year and which has some unmet demand.

+ The columns show all reasons for not getting childcare, therefore percentages sum to more than 100.

Around three-quarters (73 per cent) of parents who experienced some unmet demand said that not getting this childcare caused them some difficulties, of which a fifth (22 per cent or 13 per cent of all parents) said that these problems were serious. Lone parents were marginally more likely to have said they had problems (75 per cent) than couples (72 per cent), as were working households (74 per cent) compared with non-working households (68 per cent).

What problems did this unmet demand cause? For most parents it meant that the respondent or their partner (if present) had to take time off from their work or study. Almost half (45 per cent) of the families mentioned this as a consequence. Table 6.7 shows some of the other consequences mentioned by parents and these include cancelling appointments (27 per cent) and having to take their child(ren) with them (either to their work or to the engagement). Just over a tenth (14 per cent) of the parents who suffered a problem as a result of the unmet demand said they were unable to commence a job. However, placed in the context of all families, these represent about 2 per cent of all households.

Table 6-7 What problems did the unmet demand for childcare cause, by use of childcare in the past year

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Used childcare in the past year (%)	No childcare in the past year (%)	All households (%)
Respondent (or partner) took time off work (study)	46	25	45
Cancelled or postponed appointment	27	20	27
Unable to take job/start studying	13	19	14
Had to take children with them	8	7	7
Affected career development	2	4	2
Other specific answer	11	23	11
Irrelevant answer	2	7	3
Weighted base	749	60	808
Unweighted base	942	67	1009

Base: All households that experienced some problems as a result of unmet demand for childcare.

+ The columns show all consequences of unmet demand, therefore percentages sum to more than 100.

6.3 Breakdown of childcare arrangements

Parents who had used any childcare in the past year were asked whether their usual arrangements had broken down at short notice during that period. The overall picture was of parents who used childcare having access to generally reliable providers.

Just over a quarter (29 per cent or approximately 1.3 million families) of parents said that their childcare arrangements had broken down at short notice in the past year. This is higher than the proportion of parents in the baseline survey who reported a breakdown in their arrangements (24 per cent).

A further fifth (20 per cent) said their usual arrangements broke down only infrequently (less often than every two months); and only 9 per cent reported more frequent problems, generally once every two months (3 per cent) or once a month (3 per cent).

Lone parents in full-time employment (34 per cent) and couples where both worked full-time (33 per cent) were the most likely to report a breakdown in their childcare arrangements. However, even amongst these groups, the frequency of this was small, usually less often than once every two months.

There were only small differences in the likelihood of arrangements breaking down according to the type of childcare used. Table 6-8 shows that parents who relied exclusively on early years education or other types of formal arrangements (21 per cent) were less likely to have experienced a breakdown in their arrangements, than those relying exclusively on informal arrangements (26 per cent); however, the differences were small.

Table 6-8 Frequency of childcare arrangements breaking down, by type of childcare used

	Type of childcare used in the past year			Column percentages
	Early years education and formal childcare only (%)	Mixture (%)	Informal only (%)	All households (%)
At least once a week	2	2	2	2
At least once every other week	1	1	1	1
At least once a month	1	3	3	3
At least once every two months	2	3	3	3
Less often	15	24	17	20
Never	79	67	74	71
Don't know	-	*	*	*
Weighted base	773	2,194	1,740	4,715
Unweighted base	640	1,739	1,581	3,967

Base: All households using childcare in the past year.

6.4 Organising childcare arrangements

As reported in Chapter 3, around 28 per cent of parents reported using more than one childcare provider in the reference week. Also a large number of parents reported using childcare before 9.00am and after 3.30pm, times immediately before and after the school day. Each of these circumstances has been identified in the past as having caused difficulties for parents. Being able to get a child from one provider to another or from a provider to school and vice versa can be problematic. It can impact on a parent's ability to work as well as causing considerable stress and anxiety for both parent and child. In this section we report results from a series of questions which asked how parents dealt with these circumstances.

Consecutive sessions of childcare

Relatively few parents (5 per cent) reported that they had a child who had received consecutive sessions of childcare with different providers in the reference week. Because of the small number of cases involved, it is not possible to look in detail at the types of providers in question. However, in general this situation arose where a mixture of informal and formal providers was used (e.g. a grandparent and a nursery or crèche). Where it did occur, parents were asked how they managed the situation, whether it had caused them any difficulties, and whether an appropriate solution would have been for one of the providers to look after the child for longer hours.

In most cases (84 per cent) it was the providers who were responsible for getting the child from one to the other. However, in 14 per cent of cases either the respondent or their partner (including ex-partners) had to collect the child and take them to the other childcare. In three per cent of cases the child took themselves to the other childcare provider.

Parents were asked whether this was their usual arrangement and in almost all cases it was – only 4 per cent said it wasn't. Where it was the usual arrangement, they were asked whether it had ever caused any problems and around nine-in-ten said it hadn't (88 per cent). Of the remainder, 10 per cent said it had caused some problems, with 2 per cent reporting that they had experienced serious problems because of this arrangement. Lone parents were more likely to have reported problems (21 per cent) than couples (9 per cent).

Whilst a majority of parents had not experienced any problems with their arrangements, this did not necessarily mean they would not express a desire to change the way they organise their childcare. Around a third of parents (34 per cent) expressed a preference to stop using one of the providers if the other was able to offer longer hours of childcare. The proportion wishing to make this change was higher for those that had experienced some problems (51 per cent) and those that hadn't (32 per cent).

Before school childcare

A similar set of questions was asked of parents that had used sessions of childcare immediately before the start of the school day. This applied to around 10 per cent of the families interviewed, or approximately 12 per cent of those that had used childcare in the reference week. Of the providers used before school around a third were grandparents (35 per cent), a fifth were childminders (18 per cent), and one-in-ten were friends or relations of the parents (12 per cent). Before school clubs accounted for a similar proportion of the childcare used at this time (9 per cent). The remaining providers were a mix of formal and informal.

Table 6-9 shows how the child went from the provider to school. In a majority of cases the provider took the child (64 per cent) and in just under a fifth the respondent or their partner (ex-partner in the case of lone parents) took the child, whilst in 14 per cent of cases, the child was able to take themselves. Understandably, it was older children, generally 12 and over, who were most likely to have taken themselves to school from the provider. Informal providers were more likely to have taken the child to school than were formal providers – the proportions having done so were 67 and 59 per cent respectively. Children were more likely to have taken themselves to school from an informal provider, a fifth (21 per cent) having done so, than they were if they were at a formal provider before school (8 per cent).

Most parents (98 per cent) said that this was their usual arrangement for getting their child to school.

In cases where the provider took the child to school, or where the respondent and/or their partner took the child, the parent was asked if this arrangement had caused any problems. The reporting of problems was very rare – only 6 per cent of parents said they had any problem with the arrangements they had used to get their child to school in the morning. There was no significant difference in the reporting of problems amongst lone parents and couples, nor did it make any difference whether the childcare provider was formal or informal.

Table 6-9 Means of child getting from childcare provider to school, by type of family

	Column percentages ⁺		
	Type of family		All households
	Couple (%)	Lone parent (%)	(%)
Provider takes child to school	67	57	64
Respondent takes child to school	14	19	16
Child goes themselves	10	24	14
Childcare is situated at school	6	3	5
Partner (or ex-partner) takes child to school	3	1	2
Another provider took child	3	1	2
Other answer	*	2	1
Don't know / not answered	1	1	1
Weighted base	287	133	420
Unweighted base	355	169	524

Base: All households that used childcare immediately before 9.00am for a child attending school.

⁺ The columns show all methods of getting to school, therefore percentages sum to more than 100.

After school childcare

Around three-fifths (62 per cent) of the parents that had used childcare in the reference week for a child of school age, reported that they had used it immediately after the end of the school day. This translates into around a quarter (24 per cent) of all parents with children aged 0-14. A mix of different providers was used with the spread being generally in line with the findings reported in chapter 3 regarding the types of childcare used by 4-14 year olds attending school. The types of providers used were as follows:

- 40 per cent were grandparents;
- 20 per cent were other friends or relatives;
- 16 per cent were after-school clubs;
- 8 per cent were childminders;
- 7 per cent were ex-partners.

Table 6-10 shows how the child went from school to the childcare provider. In half of the cases the provider collected the child from school (52 per cent) and in just under a fifth (18 per cent) the respondent or their partner (ex-partner in the case of lone parents) collected the child. Children were more likely to take themselves to the provider when the childcare was after school than if it was before school – a quarter (24 per cent) having done so in the former situation. Again this was more common the older the child – around a half of children aged 12 or over took themselves to their after school care. Informal providers were more likely to have picked the child up after school than were formal providers – the proportions having done so were 55 and 47 per cent respectively. Children were more likely to have taken themselves to an informal provider than a formal provider, the proportions having done so were 28 and 14 per cent respectively.

Most parents (95 per cent) said that this was their usual arrangement for getting their child to the provider after school had finished.

Table 6-10 Means of child getting from school to childcare provide, by type of family

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Type of family		All
	Couple (%)	Lone parent (%)	households (%)
Provider collected child from school	53	50	52
Respondent took child from school to provider	15	18	16
Child goes themselves	22	27	24
Childcare is situated at school	11	6	10
Partner (or ex-partner) took child from school to provider	2	1	2
Another provider took child	2	1	2
Other answer	1	1	1
Don't know / not answered	1	1	1
Weighted base	798	335	1,133
Unweighted base	1,000	424	1,424

Base: All households that used childcare immediately after 3.30pm for a child attending school.

+ The columns show all means of getting from school to childcare provider, therefore percentages sum to more than 100.

Where the provider picked the child up from school, or where the respondent (and/or) their partner took the child to the provider, the parent was asked if this arrangement had caused any problems. Only 11 per cent of parents reported a problem. There was no significant difference in the reporting of problems amongst lone parents and couples, nor did it make any difference whether the childcare provider was formal or informal.

6.5 Difficulties arising from working arrangements

Parents who were currently in work as an employee were asked whether they usually had to start work before 8.00am or work beyond 6.00pm. Respondents that usually did the former (11 per cent) were asked whether this caused them (or their partner if there was one) any particular problems in terms of their childcare arrangements - a quarter (24 per cent) said it did⁵³. Respondents with younger children were more likely to have said they experienced problems - 27 per cent with any children of pre-school age reported problems compared with 21 per cent of families that only had children that were attending school. In addition, respondents that had used some formal childcare in the past year (30 per cent) were more likely to have reported experiencing problems than those who had exclusively used informal arrangements (17 per cent).

⁵³ Partners were also asked these questions. Proportionately more said they usually started work before 8.00am (36 per cent compared with 11 per cent of respondents), but relatively fewer (11 per cent) said it affected their families childcare arrangements.

The patterns were very similar with work after 6pm. Around a fifth of respondents who were currently in work (19 per cent or 12 per cent of all respondents) said they usually had to work past 6pm. Of these, a quarter (24 per cent) said this had caused difficulties with their childcare arrangements. Again difficulties were more widely reported among families with younger children – 26 per cent of respondents with any children of pre-school reported experiencing a problem compared with 23 per cent that only had children at school. As with those that started work before 8am, respondents that had used some formal childcare in the past year (29 per cent) were more likely to have reported experiencing problems than those who had exclusively used informal arrangements (18 per cent).

The same questions were asked of parents who had to work on Saturdays or Sundays and the findings again were broadly similar. Around one-in-five respondents (21 per cent) who had to work these hours said they had experienced some difficulties with their childcare as a result of these working arrangements.

Across all of these different arrangements we looked to see how the reporting of problems was related to an employer's provision of family-friendly working practices. Family friendly policies may include flexible ways of working or some type of employer led childcare provision. Parents that had access to some form of family-friendly arrangement, were as likely to have reported problems with their childcare arrangements as a result of working unsociable hours, as parents without access to this type of assistance. However, those parents (46 per cent) who were satisfied with the provision of leave for childcare were less likely to have recorded difficulties as a result of working unsociable hours, than parents who were dissatisfied with their employer in this regard.

6.6 Summary

In this chapter we have presented a number of findings in relation to the types of difficulties faced by parents with respect to their childcare arrangements.

The chapter commenced by estimating the incidence of parents' unmet demand for childcare. Unmet demand was defined as occasions when the parent wanted or needed childcare for their child(ren), but had been unable to get it. This excluded occasions when existing arrangements had become unavailable at short notice. A quarter (24 per cent or approximately 1.3 million) of all families experienced some form of unmet demand in the past year. However, the incidence of unmet demand was considerably higher among families that had used some childcare in the past year. They were twice as likely as non-users to have experienced some unmet demand - 26 per cent having done so compared with 14 per cent. No association was found between the level of relative deprivation and the incidence of unmet demand - those in the most deprived areas were just as likely to have experienced some unmet demand for childcare (27 per cent) as families in the least deprived areas (26 per cent).

Where a parent experienced some unmet demand they reported that it occurred relatively infrequently. Just over a tenth (11 per cent) said that it had occurred at least once every two months. A mixture of work and non-work situations were reported by parents as the occasions when they experienced some unmet demand.

Just over a quarter (29 per cent) said their unmet demand was work related and this was usually when they wanted or needed to work additional hours. Another quarter said that their unmet demand was related to times when they wanted to take up employment (26 per cent). This was particularly high among lone parents (30 per cent).

Around three-quarters (73 per cent) of parents who experienced some unmet demand said that not getting this childcare caused them some difficulties, of which a fifth (22 per cent or 13 per cent of all parents) said that these problems were serious. For most parents these problems usually meant that the respondent or their partner (if present) had to take time off from their work or study. Almost half (45 per cent) of the families mentioned this as a consequence.

The chapter then looked at the difficulties parents' had experienced with their existing childcare arrangements. Just over a quarter (29 per cent or approximately 1.3 million families) of parents said that their childcare arrangements had broken down at short notice in the past year. When it did happen, childcare arrangements broke down relatively infrequently, usually less than once a month. The proportion of parents reporting that their arrangements had broken down was somewhat higher than that was recorded in the baseline survey (24 per cent).

We also reported findings about the difficulties faced by parents when organising their childcare arrangements. Relatively few parents (5 per cent) reported that they had a child who had received consecutive sessions of childcare with different providers in the reference week. Of those that did around a third (34 per cent) said that they would prefer it if one of the providers could look after their child for longer hours. They expressed this view even though most (88 per cent) said that having to manage these childcare arrangements had not caused them many problems.

Details of both before and after school childcare were also reported in the chapter. Around 10 per cent of families used some childcare immediately prior to the start of the school day. Very few of these families (6 per cent) had ever experienced difficulties with such arrangements. Considerably more families (62 per cent of those with children attending school and who had used childcare in the reference week) used childcare immediately after the end of the school day. Few parents reported a problem with these arrangements - 11 per cent of parents said they had experienced a problem with the arrangements they had used to get their child from school to their after-school provider.

Finally, we looked at childcare difficulties associated with working arrangements. Around a quarter of respondents that either started work before 8am or continued to work after 6pm said that these arrangements caused them (or their partner if there was one) any some problems. Respondents with younger children were more likely to have said they experienced problems, as were those that were using some type of formal childcare including early years education.

7 PARENTAL EVALUATION OF CHILDCARE PROVISION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents information on the childcare providers used by parents in the past year. The chapter explores:

- further details about these providers such as their accreditation and registration;
- the factors which influenced the choice of different types of providers and, if providers were no longer used, why parents had stopped using them;
- parents' ratings of the quality of childcare services;
- parents' suggestions on how childcare providers could improve their performance; and
- the accessibility of different types of providers.

Two different bases are included in the tables depending on whether questions referred to providers used in the past year (a total of 12,446) or the smaller number of providers used in the reference week (4,686).

7.2 Characteristics of childcare providers

Table 7-1 shows the distribution of providers used by parents in the reference week and the past year. Of those used in the past year around a third (31 per cent) were grandparents, one in eight were friends or relatives (12 and 14 per cent respectively), with all other providers being referred to less frequently.

Parents were asked a number of questions about each of their providers, such as whether the providers came to their home, when they first started using them and whether they were accredited. The results of these questions are presented below.

This section also contains results from the separate telephone survey which took place shortly after the completion of the main interview with parents. The purpose was to contact all formal childcare providers (excluding nannies or au pairs and babysitters) used in the past year to check some details, primarily with regard to their status as childcare providers. These questions were more directly relevant to the providers themselves than to the parents. Specifically, providers were asked:

- when they began operating;
- whether there had been a change in the number of childcare places in the past two years;
- what the ratio of children to staff was;
- whether they received a Nursery Education Grant or funding from the New Opportunities Fund if they were an out-of-school club;
- whether parents could claim childcare tax credit, and,

- what activities were provided for children if the provider was an out-of-school club⁵⁴.

Table 7-1 Childcare providers used in the reference week and in the past year

Column percentages

	Providers used in the reference week (%)	Providers used in the past year (%)
Childminder	6	4
Nanny / au pair	1	1
Babysitter	3	5
Crèche / nursery	13	8
Playgroup	7	5
Nursery / reception class	9	6
Family centre	*	*
Out of school club	7	8
Ex-spouse	5	3
Grandparents	30	31
Other relatives	9	14
Friends	7	12
Other	2	2
Weighted base	3,833	10,162
Unweighted base	4,686	12,446

Base: All providers.

It should be noted that only half (51 per cent) of the formal providers used in the past year were contacted. There were a number of reasons behind the high level of non-contact but it was usually because parents were unwilling to give contact details to the *National Centre*, or where they did give them, they were incorrect (See Appendix A section 4 for a full description of the telephone survey). A basic analysis of the telephone interviews with providers suggests that its sample was representative of all formal childcare providers; however, the results should be viewed with some caution.

When was the provider first used?

If a childcare provider had been used in the reference week, parents were asked when they had first started using that provider for *any* of their children. This covered not only the children that the interview was focusing on (i.e. the selected children), but also any other children in their family.

The average length of time a parent had been using a provider was three and a half years. As would be expected, this varied considerably according to the type of provider. For formal providers such as crèches, nursery schools or playgroups, the number of years since they were first used was usually between one and two years. In contrast, informal providers such as grandparents or relatives were reported to have been used for an average of four to five years. A majority of parents (72 per

⁵⁴ They were also asked about the fees they charge. These data are reported in Chapter 8.

cent) reported that they had used their child's grandparents to look after their children since the birth of their eldest child.

When did the provider open for business?

Half (51 per cent) of the providers that were contacted in the telephone survey had been operating for ten or more years. As would be expected, reception and nursery classes attached to primary schools were more likely to have been operating for this length of time than other providers. Four-fifths (79 per cent) of reception and nursery classes were opened prior to 1991, whereas only two-fifths of crèches and nurseries (38 per cent), a similar proportion of childminders (38 per cent) and a quarter (27 per cent) of out-of school clubs had been operating for ten years or more.

Around one-in-ten (11 per cent) providers began operating in the past two years. This was most likely to have happened if the provider was an out-of-school club (22 per cent) or a childminder (16 per cent).

Childcare places and the number of staff

Providers were asked in the telephone interview to estimate the number of children who would normally be in a group that a child of a selected age⁵⁵ could attend. Not surprisingly, this figure varied considerably according to the type of provider. The median was three for childminders; 15 for crèches/nurseries; 20 for out-of-school clubs, 24 for playgroups and 28 for nursery/reception classes attached to a primary school.

There was a similar level of variation in the number of staff looking after these children. The majority of childminders operated alone. The median number of staff was two for nursery/reception classes attached to a primary school; three for out-of-school clubs and crèches/nurseries and four for playgroups.

With these two pieces of information it was possible to derive a children to staff ratio:

- Childminders - 3:1
- Crèche/nursery - 5:1
- Playgroup - 5:1
- Out-of school club - 7:1
- Nursery / reception class - 13:1
- Other non specified provider - 8:1

These figures appear broadly in line with other nationally representative sources⁵⁶.

Changes in the number of childcare places

One-in-three (31 per cent) providers which participated in the telephone survey reported an increase in the number of childcare places they provided in the past two years. Only 6 per cent reported a decrease while 63 per cent said the number of children had stayed the same. Out-of-school clubs were the most likely to have recorded an increase (49 per cent), followed by crèches/nurseries (35 per cent). In contrast only 15 per cent of nursery/reception classes attached to primary schools

⁵⁵ The selected age was taken from the main interview with the parent.

⁵⁶ See, "5th Survey of Three and Four Year Old Children and their use of Early Years Services."

had recorded an increase in the number of children they cared for, with most saying that their numbers had remained constant (77 per cent). Childminders were similarly less likely to have recorded an increase, just one-in-five (19 per cent) having done so, and they were the most likely to have recorded a fall in the number of children they look after (12 per cent reported a decrease).

Did provider come to the home?

Where a parent had used a provider in the reference week, they were asked whether the provider had given the childcare in the respondent's home⁵⁷. Around one-in-seven (14 per cent) had done so. Understandably, this varied considerably according to the type of provider:

- three-fifths (59 per cent) of babysitters came to the respondent's home;
- one-in-eight (12 per cent) grandparents usually came to the respondent's home when providing childcare and one-in-five (20 per cent) relatives did likewise.
- just over a third (36 per cent) of ex-spouses looked after their children in the respondent's home.

Accreditation and registration

Parents were asked about the registration status of childminders, grandparents, relatives and friends that had provided childcare in the past year. Table 7-2 reports the results of this question and shows that a majority of childminders (85 per cent) were registered. For the other providers, registration was rare. With the advent of childcare tax credit which requires the childcare provider to be registered for the parent to be eligible to receive this tax credit, it was thought that the incidence of registration among these groups may have increased. However, this does not appear to have occurred when comparisons are made with the baseline survey.

Table 7-2 Whether childcare providers are registered

	Per cent of named providers who were registered (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
Childminder	85	415	511
Grandparent	1	3,113	3,689
Older sibling	*	357	424
Other relative	1	1,101	1,311
Other friend or neighbour	3	1,206	1,477

Base: Main survey. All providers of the types mentioned that were used in the past year.

A large majority (63 per cent) of the providers used in the past year were thought not to have been accredited with a quality assurance scheme (Table 7-3). However, such a high proportion was mainly explained by parents not knowing whether the provider was accredited (50 per cent answered in this way) as opposed to claiming they were not (12 per cent).

⁵⁷ This excluded providers that may have lived in the same house as the family being interviewed about.

Among formal providers, crèches and nurseries were most commonly thought to have been accredited, the proportion being almost half (45 per cent). Under two-fifths of out-of-school clubs (38 per cent) and playgroups (36 per cent) were thought to have had an accreditation.

Table 7-3 Accreditation of childcare providers

	<i>Was provider accredited with a quality assurance scheme?</i>			<i>Row percentages</i>	
	Yes	No	Don't know	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Crèche / nursery	45	9	45	494	601
Playgroup	36	11	53	280	322
Nursery / reception class	28	15	58	335	382
Family centre	[53]	[24]	[24]	7	8
Out of school club	38	15	47	281	431
Other	[26]	[18]	[57]	50	65
Total	37	12	50	1,446	1,809

Base: Main survey. All providers of the types mentioned that were used in the past year.

Where a parent said their provider was accredited with a quality assurance scheme, the parent was asked whether the accreditation had influenced their decision to send their child(ren) to the provider. For just over two-fifths (44 per cent) of the providers accreditation was a factor in their choice. There was little variation in the reporting of this across different types of providers.

In the separate telephone interview, providers were asked whether parents could receive childcare tax credit if they were used. Three-quarters (76 per cent) of the providers who were contacted said they could, 9 per cent said they couldn't and the remaining 15 per cent reported that they did not know. A relatively large proportion of childminders (87 per cent) and crèche/nurseries (88 per cent) were eligible childcare tax credit providers; somewhat fewer out-of-school clubs (70 per cent) and playgroups (68 per cent) were similarly characterised. Playgroups were the most likely provider to have reported that they were unaware whether a parent could receive childcare tax credit if their child attended the playgroup - 29 per cent of these providers said they did not know.

Availability of alternative childcare providers

Parents that had used a formal childcare provider in the reference week were asked the following:

"Apart from [name of provider currently being used], do you know of any other similar providers that are situated in your local area?"

The intention of this question was twofold: to see whether parents were choosing between a number of different providers which offered them the same or similar

services as their current provider, while also assessing the degree of competition in the local market for childcare.

For two-thirds (65 per cent) of providers there was an alternative that was situated in the local area (Table 7-4). The availability of an alternative arrangement was more common for some providers than others. Similar providers existed in the local area for around three-quarters of the crèche/nurseries and playgroups (76 per cent for both) whilst two-thirds (66 per cent) of nursery/reception classes were in competition with other providers. What does stand out, however, is the lack of alternatives to out-of-school clubs. In just 36 per cent of the cases where an out-of-school club was being used, a parent knew of another similar provider situated in their local area.

Table 7-4 Presence of other similar childcare providers in the local area

	<i>And apart from this type of provider, are there any other similar providers situated in your local area?</i>			<i>Row percentages</i>	
				Weighted base	Unweighted base
	Yes	No	Don't know		
	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Crèche / nursery	76	23	1	494	601
Playgroup	76	23	-	280	322
Nursery / reception class	66	34	*	335	382
Family centre	[24]	[76]	-	7	8
Out of school club	36	57	7	281	431
Other	[53]	[47]	-	50	65
Total	65	33	2	1449	1814

Base: Providers of the type listed that were used in the reference week.

7.3 Influences on choice of provider

Parents were asked about the factors which influenced their choice of provider. They were shown a list of possible factors that were known to cover most circumstances and, in addition, they could also suggest other reasons which may have been specific to their situation. A wide range of responses was given which varied according to the type of provider being referred to and other factors such as the age of the children, household income and so on.

The data are presented in two tables. Table 7-5 is a summary of each provider type whereas Table 7-6 aggregates the provider classification into three groups: formal registered childcare, formal unregistered childcare (i.e. unregistered childminders, nannies, au pairs etc.) and informal providers.

The base for this analysis is all childcare providers used in the past year.

Trust

Trust was the factor most likely to be mentioned as an influence on the choice of provider. Overall, two-thirds (67 per cent) of providers used in the previous year were chosen by parents because they could be trusted. However, this was more important when the childcare was provided by a person rather than a service. Eighty-six per cent of baby-sitters, 68 per cent of childminders and 66 per cent of nannies/au-pairs were chosen because they were considered to be trustworthy; the corresponding figure was over 80 per cent when looking at relatives and friends. Where it was a formal registered provider, trust was generally less important – 37 per cent were chosen for this reason. Trust was mentioned as influencing the choice of 37 per cent of crèches, 36 per cent of out-of-school clubs and 34 per cent of playgroups. It is noticeable that unregistered formal providers (e.g. childminders, nannies etc.) were more trusted than formal registered providers and nearly as trusted as informal providers.

Affection

Around two-fifths (36 per cent) of providers were chosen by parents because they would show their child affection, but predictably this varied considerably across different types of providers. A small proportion (12 per cent) of formal registered providers were chosen for this reason: 15 per cent of crèches, 10 per cent of playgroups and 5 per cent of both out-of-school clubs and nurseries/reception classes. Affection was a much more common reason where an individual was looking after the child: 59 per cent of grandparents, 48 per cent of nannies/au pairs, 45 per cent of other relatives, 35 per cent of childminders and 33 per cent of friends were chosen for this reason.

Similar attitudes towards child upbringing

One-in-four (27 per cent) providers were used because they looked after a child in the same way as the parents would. Again there was considerable variation in the incidence of this reason across different types of providers. This was much more likely to have been a reason for choosing an informal provider (37 per cent) than a formal registered (11 per cent) or unregistered (16 per cent) provider.

Reliability

Reliability was also mentioned as a reason for choosing approximately a quarter (27 per cent) of the providers parents had used in the previous year. There was less variation here across providers in terms of how they were classified. Formal unregistered providers (31 per cent) were most likely to be used for this reason, followed by formal registered (28 per cent) and then informal providers (25 per cent). Of all providers, the most likely to have been chosen because of their reliability were nannies/au pairs (53 per cent) and childminders (48 per cent).

Convenient location and hours

Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of providers were chosen because they were in a convenient location. Convenience was more likely to be a factor in the choice of formal registered providers (38 per cent) than for other provider types: 12 per cent of formal unregistered and 16 per cent of informal providers were chosen for this reason. These differences probably reflect the fact that many unregistered carers would have looked after children in the parent's home and therefore convenience was not an issue. Variation in the incidence of this reason amongst different formal providers was small: around two-fifths of crèches/nurseries (41 per cent),

playgroups (41 per cent) and nursery/reception classes (40 per cent) were chosen because of their convenience.

In almost a fifth (18 per cent) of cases, providers were chosen because parents wanted their children to be looked after in their own home. It was not surprising that this was most commonly given as a reason for using nannies/au pairs (67 per cent) and baby-sitters (59 per cent).

Thirteen per cent of providers were chosen because the hours they were available fitted with the parent's working hours. However, once again considerable variations emerged between providers. More formal registered providers were used for this reason (17 per cent) than either formal unregistered or informal providers (both 12 per cent).

Mixing with other children

Formal registered childcare providers were considerably more likely than other providers to have been chosen because they offered children the chance to mix with other children. Overall a fifth (19 per cent) of all providers were chosen for this reason, made up of 46 per cent of formal registered providers, 5 per cent of formal unregistered providers and 7 per cent of informal providers.

Reputation

A good reputation was an important selection criterion for many formal registered childcare providers: two-fifths (39 per cent) of these providers were chosen for this reason. One-in-ten formal unregistered providers (11 per cent) and just two per cent of informal providers were chosen because of their reputation. Almost half (47 per cent) of playgroups and nursery/reception classes were also chosen for this reason.

Nine per cent of providers were chosen because they had been previously used for other children in the family. This factor was less likely to be mentioned for informal providers (7 per cent) and unregistered formal providers (4 per cent) compared with other formal registered providers (15 per cent).

Nine per cent of providers were used because they had been recommended, but again the overall figure masks considerable variations. This was an important factor when choosing formal registered providers: a quarter (25 per cent) of these were chosen on the basis of a recommendation. Two-fifths (39 per cent or 32 per cent of all childminders) of registered childminders and a third of playgroups (33 per cent) were chosen for this reason. Understandably, few (1 per cent) informal providers were chosen on the basis of a recommendation.

Childcare staff

The need for the provider to have been properly trained was an important factor for 14 per cent of parents. There was however, a sharp divide between formal registered providers and all other providers in terms of whether this was an important factor. Almost two-fifths (37 per cent) of formal registered providers were chosen because their staff were trained compared with one-in-ten formal unregistered providers (10 per cent) and just one per cent of informal providers. Half (49 per cent) of crèches/nurseries, 41 per cent of registered childminders (or 28 per cent of all childminders), 35 per cent of playgroups and 32 per cent of out-of-school clubs were chosen for this reason.

Educational opportunities

Given the inclusion in the analysis of a wide range of formal and informal providers, the overall proportion of providers who were chosen because they offered educational opportunities (12 per cent) is not very meaningful. The distribution is very skewed, with a high proportion of formal registered providers (32 per cent) being chosen for this reason, while this was unlikely to be seen as relevant for informal and unregistered formal providers. Crèches/nurseries and nurseries /reception classes were most likely to have been chosen for the educational opportunities offered (45 per cent for both of these).

Cost

The choice of providers was influenced by affordability in approximately a fifth of cases: 11 per cent were chosen because parents could not afford paid childcare and 10 per cent because they were low cost. Around one-in-seven (15 per cent) of informal providers were chosen because parents could not afford paid childcare. The corresponding figures for formal registered (4 per cent) and unregistered (9 per cent) care were considerably lower. Grandparents (17 per cent) and other relatives (15 per cent) were most likely to have been chosen for this reason, reflecting the fact that most of these providers are unpaid or only receive some form of payment in kind.

The fact that the provider was of a type that entitled the parent to claim childcare tax credit if it were used, was rarely mentioned as a reason for using a provider. Just 2 per cent of formal registered providers (for which this reason was applicable) were selected on this basis.

Lack of suitable alternatives

Almost one-in-ten (9 per cent) of providers were chosen because no other suitable alternatives were available. There was little variation between providers in relation to this factor.

Table 7-5 Factors influencing choice of childcare provider

	<i>Column percentages +</i>												
	Child- minder	Nanny, au pair	Baby- sitter	Crèche, nursery	Play- group	Nursery, reception class	Out of school club	Ex- spouse	Grand- parents	Other relatives	Friends	Other	All providers
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Trust	68	66	86	37	34	19	36	43	86	83	87	30	67
Showed affection for child	35	48	28	15	10	5	5	30	59	45	33	7	36
Look after child the same way as parent would	31	27	13	12	7	7	6	19	45	32	26	10	27
Reliable	48	53	26	32	18	15	34	14	29	20	24	16	27
Conveniently located	35	6	10	41	41	40	34	4	15	12	26	25	23
Child to mix with other children	32	5	2	55	65	35	40	1	2	7	21	36	19
Wanted child looked after at home	14	67	59	*	*	*	*	9	24	28	15	3	18
Good reputation	28	16	10	44	47	47	32	*	3	1	4	30	15
Properly trained staff	42	40	5	49	35	26	32	1	2	1	2	26	14
It fitted with working hours	26	32	8	24	6	4	24	12	13	9	12	8	13
Educational opportunities	5	9	1	45	37	45	18	*	2	1	1	37	12
Couldn't afford paid childcare	3	2	9	5	5	5	3	7	17	15	13	3	11
Low cost	11	15	13	9	11	5	13	4	12	9	8	8	10
Used provider for other children	13	4	3	15	17	23	11	4	8	6	5	10	9
It was recommended	32	14	11	28	33	16	19	-	*	*	1	26	9
No other choice available	8	12	7	9	5	6	10	13	8	9	10	6	9
Because it is parent/grandparent	1	-	1	*	-	-	*	43	9	6	*	-	5
Child wanted this type of care	*	-	1	1	1	1	12	*	1	1	2	9	2
Employer subsidises this childcare	1	-	*	3	*	*	2	*	*	-	-	1	1
Could get childcare tax credit	5	-	-	3	1	*	3	*	*	*	-	*	1
Unrelated reason	1	-	1	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	*	2	*
Other specific reason	*	-	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	-	*
Don't know	*	-	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	-	*
Weighted base	422	87	544	828	541	617	793	350	3,111	1,454	1,200	156	10,122
Unweighted base	520	102	675	1,006	628	713	1,215	424	3,687	1,731	1,469	201	12,394

Base: All providers used in the past year. + The columns show all the types of childcare providers that were used by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Table 7-6 Factors influencing choice of childcare provider, by provider classification

	Type of childcare provider used in the last year				Column percentages +
	Formal, registered (%)	Formal unregistered (%)	Informal (%)	Don't know (%)	All Providers (%)
I could trust this provider	37	82	83	26	67
Wanted someone who would show my child affection	12	32	49	9	36
Wanted reliable arrangements	28	31	25	12	27
Knew they would bring my children up as I would	11	16	37	7	27
Easy to get to	38	12	16	11	23
Wanted child(ren) to mix with others	46	5	7	20	19
Wanted child(ren) looked after at home	2	58	22	8	18
It had good reputation	39	11	2	27	15
Wanted someone properly trained	37	10	1	22	14
Fits in with work	17	12	12	6	13
Wanted child to be educated	32	2	1	27	12
I could not afford to pay for formal childcare	4	9	15	4	11
It was low cost	10	14	10	2	10
It was recommended	25	11	1	27	9
No choice	8	8	9	8	9
Other children went there	15	4	7	5	9
Because it is parent/grandparent	*	1	8	-	5
Child wanted this type of childcare	4	1	1	7	2
My employer subsidises this childcare	1	*	*	-	1
Could get childcare tax credit	2	-	*	-	1
Reason not related to specific type of childcare	1	1	*	4	*
Other specific reason	*	-	*	-	*
Don't know	*	-	*	-	*
Weighted base	3,315	692	6,054	67	10,127
Unweighted base	4,228	856	7,236	82	12,402

Base: All providers used in the past year.

+ The columns show all the reasons for using the different types of childcare providers, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

7.4 Reasons for no longer using a childcare provider

Just over one-in-seven (15 per cent) childcare providers that had been used at some time in the previous year were no longer being used by parents. Where this had happened, parents were asked why the provider was no longer being used. As shown in Table 7-7, in 41 per cent of cases this decision was linked to the child's age, while in 17 per cent of cases the provider was no longer available. A further 13 per cent of providers were no longer being used because there had been some change in the parent's circumstances which meant the provider's services were no longer required. All other factors were mentioned by a small proportion of parents (5 per cent or less). It is noticeable, however, that just 3 per cent of providers were no

longer being used because the parent could not receive Childcare Tax Credit (presumably because the provider was not registered) if they used this provider.

Very few of the reasons given for not continuing to use a provider were related to some form of dissatisfaction with the provider. This confirms the general impression from the interviews that parents were satisfied with their providers.

Table 7-7 Reasons for no longer using a provider

	<i>Column percentages +</i>
	(%)
My child grew too old for this provider	41
The provider could no longer look after my child / provider closed	17
Circumstances changed and no longer needed this provider	13
It was too expensive	5
I/we moved house	5
It was not available all the hours I needed	4
It was not appropriate for all my children	3
It was only open during the holidays	3
Provider was only used temporarily	3
Child did not like going to provider	3
I was not sure if I could trust the provider	2
My child did not get enough individual attention	2
I could not receive childcare tax credit using this provider	2
I was worried that my child was too far away	1
My child did not mix well with the other children	1
The provider was not formally trained	1
There was no/insufficient educational element	1
It did not give me enough flexibility	1
It was not reliable	1
The provider did not bring my child up the same way as I would	1
I was worried my child would get too attached to the provider	*
Some other reason	1
Don't know	1
Weighted base	1,530
Unweighted base	1,906

Base: All providers used in the past year but no longer used.

+ The columns show all the reasons for stopping using a childcare providers, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

7.5 Ratings of childcare providers

Formal providers used in the reference week were rated by parents on the standard of the childcare provided. The findings in Table 7-8 show that the overwhelming majority of parents were satisfied with the providers they had used in the previous week: three-quarters (76 per cent) were rated as 'very good' and a fifth as 'fairly good' (21 per cent). Only one per cent were considered very or fairly poor.

With such high levels of satisfaction, it is difficult to look at variations between providers. The highest proportion of parents recording a very good rating was for

those that used a childminder in the reference week, 84 per cent of whom gave this rating. There were no significant differences between the ratings of formal registered and unregistered providers. Similarly, local authority controlled providers were just as likely to be rated 'very good' as privately run establishments (both voluntary and for profit).

Table 7-8 Ratings of the standard of childcare

	<i>How would you rate the standard of childcare provided by this provider?</i>				<i>Row percentages</i>	
					Weighted base	Unweighted base
	Very good (%)	Fairly good (%)	Fairly poor (%)	Very poor (%)		
Childminder	83	15	1	*	220	273
Nanny / au pair	[73]	[26]	[1]	-	44	50
Crèche / nursery	76	21	1	*	498	606
Playgroup	77	21	1	-	284	327
Nursery / reception class	77	20	1	*	338	386
Family centre	[76]	[24]	-	-	7	8
Out of school club	67	26	*	*	286	438
Other	[81]	[15]	[1]	-	53	69
All providers	76	21	1	*	1,730	2,157

Base: Providers in the above list that were used in the reference week.

Where a respondent answered "don't know", these cases have been omitted from the table therefore some of the rows do not sum to 100. However, the responses have been included in the calculation of the relevant bases.

Changes in the ratings of providers from 1999 survey

Little appears to have changed from the baseline survey in terms of parental ratings of formal childcare providers. Whilst a marginally smaller proportion of providers were given a 'very good' rating (76 per cent compared with 81 per cent in 1999), the per cent that rated their provider 'fairly good' or better remained unchanged (97 per cent compared with 99 per cent in 1999).

7.6 Ways of improving childcare provision

When designing the follow-up to the baseline survey it was considered necessary to include an alternative to the above measure of parental satisfaction with their childcare provider. The general opinion was that the 'ratings' variable did not accurately capture what parents thought about their provider. Understandably, it is difficult for a parent to say that the person who cared their child was not doing a good job. As an alternative we decided to ask parents which areas of their childcare provision needed improving. They were shown a list of nine items (see Table 7-9) and were asked to say whether they needed to be improved a lot, a little or were not in need of improving. Considerably more providers had some aspect of their provision in need of improvement than could be implied from the 'ratings' question:

- parents suggested that just under half (49 per cent) of providers could improve at least some aspects of their provision.

Table 7-9 What do parents think needs improving?

	<i>Column percentages +</i>							
	Child- minder	Nanny, au pair	Crèche, nursery	Play- group	Nursery, reception class	Out of school club	Other	All providers
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
the reliability of this child care	2	[4]	2	1	1	1	-	2
its hygiene and safety	1	[2]	4	2	4	3	-	3
the number of children for each member of staff	4	-	11	5	25	7	[13]	11
the qualifications or training of the provider	2	[7]	3	2	2	3	[3]	3
the relationship between the provider and respondent's child	2	[5]	3	2	5	5	[1]	3
the quality of buildings	1	-	16	26	13	15	[11]	14
the quality of equipment	1	-	8	11	8	11	[10]	8
the amount of information parents receive about their child	4	[5]	19	15	22	12	[12]	15
the range of hours that the provider is open	5	[6]	19	22	11	19	[15]	16
None of these	83	[78]	45	44	42	47	[55]	51
Don't know	*	-	1	-	1	6	[2]	2
Opportunities offered by provider for child to mix with other children	2	11	2	4	3	2	1	3
Opportunities to improve child's learning skills	9	18	14	16	23	14	9	15
Opportunities for child to learn new activities	13	8	15	14	21	19	11	16
None of these	80	74	72	73	63	67	83	71
Don't know	*	-	1	-	1	5	2	2
Weighted base	220	44	498	284	338	286	53	1,730
Unweighted base	273	50	606	327	386	438	69	2,157

Base: All the listed providers that were used in the reference week.

+ The columns show all the items parents thought needed to be improved, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- parents were split over what needed improving. Most common responses were the range of hours a provider was open for (16 per cent), communications between providers and parents (15 per cent) and the quality of the buildings (14 per cent).
- a little over a tenth (11 per cent) wanted to see an improvement in the ratio of carers to children.

Table 7-9 shows that there was considerable variation in the reported need for improvement across different types of providers. Childminders were considerably less likely than other providers to have been thought of as needing improvements: just 17 per cent recorded any of these areas. This is not surprising given that most of the areas shown to parents were more relevant to conditions associated with organisations rather than individuals that looked after children.

- 26 per cent of playgroups could improve their buildings;
- 25 per cent of nurseries/reception classes attached to primary schools needed to improve the child to staff ratio;
- 22 per cent of nurseries/reception classes attached to primary schools, 19 per cent of crèches/nurseries and 15 per cent of playgroups were thought not to have communicated sufficient information to parents about their children;
- one-in-five crèches/nurseries (19 per cent) , playgroups (22 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (19 per cent) could improve the hours which they are open for.
- privately run childcare providers were just as likely to have been in need of improvement as were local authority or voluntarily run providers. Forty-six per cent of privately run (for-profit) childcare providers needed to improve at least one aspect of their childcare; 43 per cent of Local Authority controlled providers and 42 per cent of church based or voluntarily run facilities needed to do likewise.

Parents were also asked whether improvements were needed in a number of aspects relating to the education a child received while in childcare. This included the following three areas:

- opportunities offered by provider for child to mix with other children;
- opportunities to improve child's learning skills; and
- opportunities for child to learn new activities.

The bottom panel of Table 7-9 shows that for just over two-thirds of providers (71 per cent) parents said that none of these elements of childcare provision needed to be improved. Around one-in-six (15 per cent) providers needed to increase the opportunities they gave for children to improve their learning skills and a similar proportion (16 per cent) needed to increase the opportunities they gave for children to learn new activities. There was less variation across different provider types in terms of these educational aspects in need of improvement. Not surprisingly,

parents were most critical of nursery and reception classes where education is seen as a core part of this provision.

Complaints about providers

In the past year one-in-seven (14 per cent) of childcare providers that had been used in the reference week had a complaint made against them by the parent:

- relatively few childminders (4 per cent) and playgroups (6 per cent) were complained about
- just under a quarter of crèches and day nurseries (23 per cent) had complaints against them.
- complaints were most commonly about hygiene and safety (19 per cent), the behaviour of other children (16 per cent) or where there had been some problem with the relationship between the staff at the provider and the child (14 per cent).

Children with SEN and other special needs and their providers

A separate set of questions relating to the quality of childcare was asked of parents that had any children with special educational needs (SEN) or any other special needs. As reported in Chapter 2, 13 per cent of families had a child with a SEN. These families were no different from other families in terms of whether they used childcare. Over four-fifths (85 per cent) had used some childcare in the past year, which was the same as for all other families.

It was unusual for a provider to be chosen because of a child's SEN. Just under a third (29 per cent) of the families that had used some childcare said they had chosen their provider(s) because of the type of care they offered and the experience they had with children with a SEN⁵⁸.

Parents of children with a SEN were asked whether the providers they used could improve the attention they gave to their child's SEN. Around a quarter (23 per cent) thought they could.

7.7 Accessibility of childcare providers

Parents who used childcare in the reference week were asked how easy or difficult it was to get to the provider⁵⁹. Table 7-10 shows that an overwhelming majority of providers were thought to have been in easy reach of parents:

- 53 per cent of providers were very easily accessible;
- 24 per cent were fairly easily accessible;
- one-in-ten (10 per cent) providers were reported as being fairly or very difficult to access;

⁵⁸ Because of the way this data was collected, it is not possible to identify which provider was chosen for this reason.

⁵⁹ The base excluded all providers that lived with the parents being interviewed.

- 12 per cent of providers went to the respondent's home when they were providing childcare.

Generally speaking, fewer informal providers were thought to have been easily accessible to parents than formal providers: parents found two-thirds (64 per cent) of formal registered providers to be very easily accessible compared with half of all informal providers (48 per cent) and 30 per cent of formal unregistered providers. On the face of it, it appears that parents are less willing to choose a formal provider that is difficult to access but are prepared to use informal providers such as relatives and friends regardless of the fact that they may be harder to access. In all likelihood, there is a trade-off between childcare that you have to pay for that is easily accessible and free childcare that is a little more difficult to reach.

Table 7-10 **How easy/difficult was it to get to the provider from home?**

	Very easy	Fairly easy	Fairly difficult	Very difficult	Provider goes to parents' home	Row percentages	
						Weighted base	Unweighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Childminder	67	23	5	2	3	339	424
Nanny / au pair ⁶⁰	[14]	[5]	[2]	[7]	[71]	54	63
Babysitter	28	11	1	2	59	381	476
Crèche / nursery	57	32	8	2	1	722	883
Playgroup	71	23	3	1	1	459	534
Nursery / reception class	72	22	3	1	1	515	597
Family centre	[38]	[43]	[19]	-	-	14	17
Out of school club	59	31	7	2	1	590	906
Ex-spouse	27	22	8	7	36	269	329
Grandparents	46	26	10	7	12	2,058	2,475
Other relatives	44	23	8	5	20	823	1,004
Friends	66	20	3	1	10	810	1,015
Other	51	27	8	5	7	128	166
Total	53	24	6	4	12	7,163	8,889

Base: All providers used in the reference week excluding those that lived with the respondent. Where a respondent answered "don't know", these cases have been omitted from the table although the responses have been included in the calculation of the relevant bases.

The proportion of providers that were either 'very' or 'fairly' easy to get to had fallen slightly when compared with the number that were classified similarly in the baseline survey. Excluding providers that went to the respondent's home, 88 per cent were classified in such a way in 2001 compared with 93 per cent of providers in 1999.

⁶⁰ A small number of parents reported that their nanny/au pair was not working from their home. This was somewhat surprising and may be attributable to respondent/interviewer error.

Respondents who had to go to and/or from the childcare provider to work were also asked about the convenience of this journey. Most providers were fairly accessible from the respondent's workplace (Table 7-11):

- 51 per cent of providers were very easy to get to from work;
- a further 36 per cent were fairly easy to reach;
- 13 per cent of providers were reported as being fairly or very difficult to access from work.

No differences were found between formal and informal providers in terms of how easy they were to get to from work. In addition, there was no discernible change in the pattern of responses from those given in the baseline survey.

Table 7-11 How easy/difficult was it to get to the provider from work?

	<i>Row percentages</i>						
	Very easy	Fairly easy	Fairly difficult	Very difficult	Respondent never goes to provider from work	Weighted base	Un-weighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Childminder	52	35	10	3	-	238	299
Nanny / au pair	[64]	[36]	-	-	-	4	5
Babysitter	[55]	[36]	[3]	[3]	[4]	25	32
Crèche / nursery	48	35	14	4	-	279	348
Playgroup	[60]	[27]	[12]	[1]	-	72	88
Nursery / reception class	52	30	14	4	1	131	162
Family centre	[67]	[33]	-	-	-	2	3
Out of school club	46	39	10	4	*	304	468
Ex-spouse	[46]	[44]	[4]	[6]	-	35	42
Grandparents	48	37	10	3	1	771	935
Other relatives	50	38	7	3	1	249	310
Friends	60	31	8	1	*	324	415
Other	[47]	[26]	[22]	[5]	-	32	44
Total	51	36	10	3	*	2,464	3,151

Base: All providers used in the reference week to which the respondent had gone directly to from work.

7.8 Summary

In this chapter we have presented information on the childcare providers used by parents in the past year. It relied on information from the main interview conducted with parents as well as the follow-up telephone interview with providers.

The chapter started by describing some of the important characteristics of the providers. While most formal providers (including early years education) had been operating for 10 or more years, around one-in-ten (11 per cent) had opened for

business in the past two years. This was most likely to have happened if the provider was an out-of-school club (22 per cent) or a childminder (16 per cent).

In the past two years a third (31 per cent) of formal childcare providers (including early years education) increased the number of childcare places at their establishment. Out-of-school clubs and crèche/nurseries were more likely to have reported an increase than were other providers.

While a large majority of childminders (85 per cent) were registered, considerably fewer formal childcare providers (37 per cent) were accredited with a quality assurance scheme. Among formal providers, crèches and nurseries were most commonly accredited, the proportion being almost half (45 per cent). More importantly however, the study showed that for half (50 per cent) of the providers used in the past year, parents did not know whether they were accredited. The levels were similar for crèches/nurseries (45 per cent), out of school clubs (47 per cent), playgroups (53 per cent) and nursery/ reception classes (58 per cent).

In the survey interview parents were asked whether they knew of an alternative childcare provider that was situated in their local area. For two-thirds (65 per cent) of providers there was an alternative however this proportion varied considerably across different provider types. What does stand out, is the lack of alternatives to out-of-school clubs. In just 36 per cent of the cases where an out-of-school club was being used, a parent knew of another similar provider situated in their local area.

In the next section we report the reasons parents gave for using a provider. Overall, two-thirds (67 per cent) of providers used in the previous year were chosen by parents because they could be trusted. The next most prevalent reason for being chosen was that the provider would show their child affection. Both of these reasons were cited more often when a person rather than a service provided the childcare. A good reputation was an important selection criterion for many parents (39 per cent) who used formal registered childcare providers. Other reasons for choosing a provider were having trained staff, offering education, cost and lack of alternative provision.

Relatively few providers (15 per cent) that had been used at some time in the previous year were no longer being used by parents. The main reason for ceasing to use a provider was that the child was older and no longer required the same type of care. In general circumstantial reasons were much more commonly cited for no longer using a provider compared with reasons related to the quality or cost of provision.

The majority of parents were satisfied with the providers they had used in the reference week: three-quarters (76 per cent) were rated as 'very good' and a fifth as 'fairly good' (21 per cent). However, in spite of high standards, parents reported that just under half (49 per cent) of providers could improve at least some aspects of their provision. The types of things that needed to be improved included the range of hours a provider was open for (16 per cent), communications between providers and parents (15 per cent) and the quality of the buildings (14 per cent).

The majority of providers were thought to have been in easy reach of parents: parents found two-thirds (64 per cent) of formal registered providers to be very

easily accessible, as were 48 per cent informal providers and 30 per cent of formal unregistered providers.

8 COSTS AND THE AFFORDABILITY OF CHILDCARE

8.1 Introduction

Information was collected from respondents on the use of paid and free childcare. All households that had used some childcare in the previous week were asked detailed questions about any money paid to providers, with the exception of former partners, as it did not seem appropriate nor relevant to ask these questions if the provider was the child's parent. Parents who in the previous week only used childcare provided by an ex-partner were therefore excluded from the analysis in this chapter.

The chapter explores:

- whether any payment had been made for childcare fees, wages, refreshments, travel, outings and equipment and whether anyone outside the household contributed to these costs;
- variations in the use of paid and free childcare among different groups of respondents and the most significant predictors of use of paid childcare;
- the total childcare costs paid by the household;
- which providers were most likely to have been paid and the use of payment in kind among informal providers;
- changes in the cost of childcare and its consequences;
- affordability of childcare.

These findings are presented in Sections 8.2 to 8.7. The final section of the chapter investigates changes in the use of paid and free childcare since 1999.

8.2 Payment to providers

Just over half (51 per cent) of the parents that had used childcare in the past week paid some money to the providers used in the reference week⁶¹. In only six per cent of cases did someone from outside the household (i.e. an employer, absent parent etc.) make a contribution towards the family's childcare costs. Since the focus of the survey was on households and the contribution made by others was negligible, the rest of the chapter focuses only on payment for childcare made by the household.

Table 8-1 shows what parents paid for. Just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of parents who paid for childcare reported paying for childcare fees and wages while a fifth (21 per cent) made a payment for education fees and wages. Payments for refreshments

⁶¹ The base excludes households where an ex-partner was the only childcare provider used.

and meals were mentioned by around a third (36 per cent) of parents. Relatively few parents said they had made a payment to cover the use of equipment (8 per cent), travel costs (6 per cent), outings (6 per cent) or other items (6 per cent).

Table 8-1 What did the household pay for?

	<i>Column percentages</i> ⁺
	Money paid by household (%)
Childcare fees / wages	67
Education fees/wages	21
Refreshments / meals	36
Use of equipment	8
Travel costs	6
Outings	6
Other items	6
Weighted base	1,256
Unweighted base	1,551

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

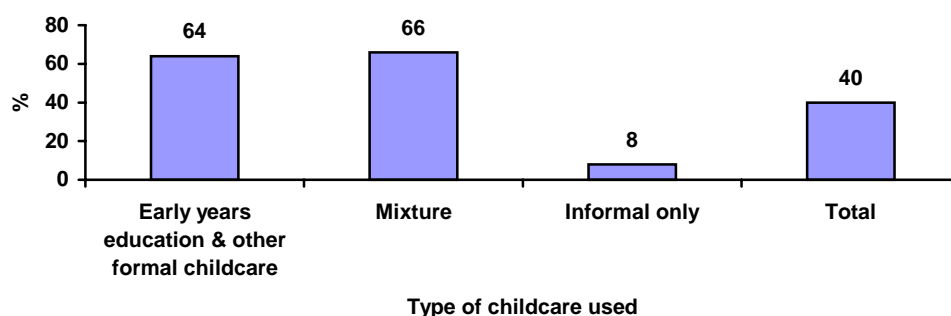
⁺ The columns show all the things parents paid for, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

It was possible that some of the providers, for example nannies and babysitters, may have done work for the parents in addition to childcare, for example, they may have done housework. Parents were asked whether the amount they paid was only for childcare, or whether it included a charge for other services. In an overwhelming majority of cases all the money paid went towards childcare, with fewer than one-in-ten parents (8 per cent) saying the money they paid covered the cost of other services.

8.3 Use of paid and free childcare

The majority of households (60 per cent) did not pay either fees or wages to providers in the reference week (Figure 8-1). Where only early years education or other formal childcare was used this figure falls to around two-fifths (36 per cent). As would be expected, relatively few households (8 per cent) that relied exclusively on informal arrangements paid for this childcare.

Figure 8-1 Proportion of households paying childcare fees or wages in the reference week, by type of childcare used



Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

Where one of the following providers was used – registered childminder, crèche or nursery or an out-of-school club (i.e. a formal provider as defined in Chapter 5) – parents were much more likely to have recorded having made a payment. Four-fifths (80 per cent) of the parents using these providers had paid some money compared with one-fifth (20 per cent) who had used some other provider in the reference week.

The use of paid and free childcare varied to some extent according to the sessions used by the household (Table 8-2). Families that used an early morning session of childcare were most likely to have paid money, 55 per cent having done so. Just under half of parents that used either daytime (47 per cent) or late afternoon (46 per cent) sessions of childcare paid some money. Parents who used childcare outside ‘standard’ hours and days (e.g. evenings and weekends) were less likely to have paid for childcare, reflecting parents’ reliance on informal childcare provided at these times.

Table 8-2 Use of free and paid childcare in the past week by type of childcare used

	<i>Column percentages</i>						
	Early am (%)	Day time (%)	Late pm (%)	Evening (%)	Night (%)	Weekend (%)	Total (%)
Paid fees/wages	55	47	46	39	30	30	40
Not paid fees/wages	45	53	54	61	70	70	60
Don’t know	-	*	*	*	-	*	*
Weighted base	883	1,831	1,674	928	322	582	2,508
Unweighted base	1,078	2,199	2,068	1,149	390	706	3,027

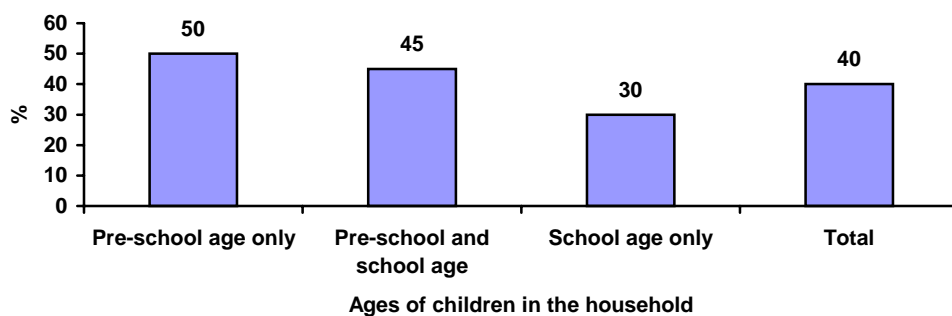
Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

Ages of children

The age of the children was found to be an important determinant of the likelihood of paying for childcare (Figure 8-2). Parents’ whose children were not attending school were more likely to pay for childcare (50 per cent) than those with all their

children at school (30 per cent). This reflects the greater use of early years education for 3-4 year olds discussed in previous chapters.

Figure 8-2 Proportion of households paying childcare fees or wages in the reference week, by age of children



Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

Household structure and employment

Whether a family paid for their childcare was also associated with household structure and the employment status of parents (Table 8-3). Lone parents were significantly less likely to have paid for wages or fees than were couples, the respective proportions were 30 and 44 per cent. After controlling for employment status, the differences between lone parents and couples become more apparent. Firstly, lone parents that worked full-time were just as likely to have used paid childcare, as were couples where both parents were in full-time employment. Half of these parents (49 and 51 per cent respectively) had used paid childcare in the reference week. All other lone parents, however, were less likely to have paid for their childcare than were couples. For example:

- a third (34 per cent) of lone parents in part-time employment used paid childcare compared with 44 per cent of couples where one parent worked part-time.
- 13 per cent of lone parents not in paid employment had paid for childcare compared with 18 per cent of couples where neither was in work and 41 per cent where only one parent worked.

Table 8-3 Use of free and paid childcare in the reference week, by household structure and work status

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Paid fees / wage (%)	Not paid fees / wages (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted base
<i>Couples</i>				
Both in full-time work	51	49	538	668
One in full-time work one in part-time work	44	56	873	932
One in full-time work one not in work	41	59	451	525
One or both in part-time work	[25]	[75]	57	69
Neither in paid work	[18]	[82]	56	64
All couples	44	56	1,886	2,258
<i>Lone parents</i>				
In full-time work	49	51	180	235
In part-time work	34	66	187	237
Not in paid work	13	87	255	297
All lone parents	30	70	622	769
Total	40	60	2,508	3,027

Base: All households who used childcare in the reference week, except those who only used an ex-partner.

As discussed in the previous chapters, a household's pattern of working may influence the use of different types of childcare and this in turn may determine whether the family paid for childcare. In particular, families with atypical work patterns may require very specific types of childcare (e.g. childcare outside of standard hours) that may not be available free of charge.

Table 8-4 shows that the use of paid childcare among families with atypical work patterns *was not* very different from that of the sample as a whole. Households where a parent worked long hours were the most likely to have used paid childcare (47 per cent) while those with a parent that usually worked shifts were the least likely to have paid for childcare (38 per cent).

In cases where the main respondent was working long hours the use of paid childcare was considerably higher. Just over half (56 per cent) of families where the main respondent worked long hours reported using paid childcare compared with 44 per cent of all families.

Table 8-4 Usage of free and paid childcare in the reference week, by household work patterns

	Atypical work patterns for either parent				Column percentages
	Works long hours (>45 hours)	Works shifts	Works at home only	Total	Atypical work patterns for neither parent
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Paid fees / wages	47	38	43	44	44
Not paid fees / wages	53	62	57	56	56
Don't know	-	-	*	*	*
Weighted base	884	433	119	1,199	998
Unweighted base	1,069	519	141	1,447	1,219

Base: All households who used childcare in the reference week, except those who only used an ex-partner and where at least one parent is in paid employment.

Household income

There is a strong positive relationship between the level of household income and the likelihood of someone in the household having paid for childcare in the reference week (Table 8-5). Almost three-fifths (58 per cent) of families in the highest income group (£31,200 or more) had used paid childcare in the previous week compared with less than a fifth (18 per cent) with an annual income of less than £10,400.

Table 8-5 Use of free and paid childcare in the past week by gross income.

	Household income					Column percentages
	Up to £10,399	£10,400 to £20,799	£20,800 to £31,199	£31,200 or more	DK or Refused	All households
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Paid fees/wages	18	34	41	58	38	40
Not paid fees/wages	82	66	59	42	62	60
Don't know	*	*	-	-	*	*
Weighted base	418	607	570	759	153	2,508
Unweighted base	502	737	675	931	182	3,027

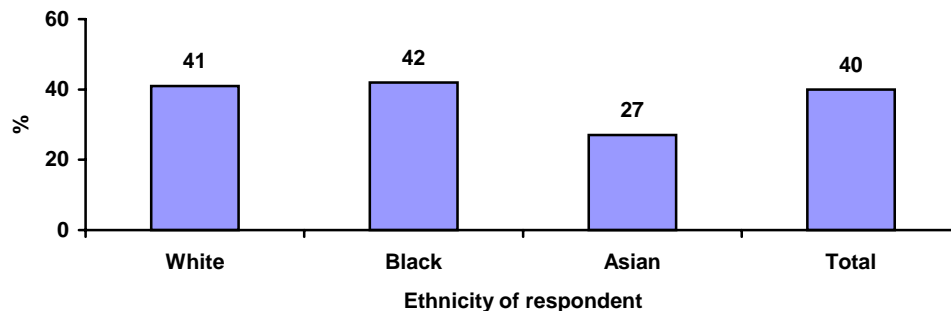
Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

Around three-in-ten (28 per cent) families in receipt of a state benefit or tax credit (excluding Child Benefit) used paid for childcare in the reference week. When the families who received Working Families Tax Credit are excluded, the proportion on state benefits and paying for childcare is even lower (17 per cent). In contrast nearly half (47 per cent) of families that did not receive a benefit or tax credit paid for the childcare they used in the reference week. This, along with evidence presented in chapter 2, points very clearly to the existence of a link between the ability to pay and access to childcare.

Ethnicity

There were small but non- significant differences in the likelihood of a family paying for childcare according to their ethnic background (Figure 8-3). Asian families were the least likely to have paid for childcare in the reference week, less than a third (27 per cent) having done so.

Figure 8-3 Proportion of households paying childcare fees or wages in the reference week, by ethnic origin of parent



Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

Degree of local deprivation

Elsewhere in this report it has been shown that families living in socially deprived areas were less likely to have used childcare compared with other families. Table 8-6 shows that where they did use childcare, they were less likely to have paid for it. Just over two-fifths (23 per cent) of families in the most deprived areas paid for the childcare they used in the reference week. In contrast, half (53 per cent) of the families in the least deprived areas paid for their childcare. It is also noticeable that the association between degree of deprivation and paying for childcare varied with the degree of local deprivation – that is, the greater the degree of local deprivation, the less likely the household was to pay for their childcare.

Table 8-6 Use of paid childcare in the reference week, by index of multiple deprivation

	Multiple deprivation index					Column percentages
	1 st quintile – least deprived	2 nd quintile	3 rd quintile	4 th quintile	5 th quintile – most deprived	All households
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Paid fees / wages	53	48	42	35	23	40
Not paid fees / wages	47	52	58	65	77	60
Don't know	*	-	*	-	-	*
Weighted base	533	494	501	499	469	2,496
Unweighted base	650	603	603	594	563	3,013

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

It was possible that the association between local deprivation and paying for childcare simply reflected differences in the use of early years education and other formal childcare and informal childcare. For example, fewer families in deprived areas may have been paying simply because more of them used informal childcare where payments are less common. This was not so. When the analysis is restricted to the use of early years education and other formal childcare providers, we found that 40 per cent of families in the most deprived areas paid for these types of childcare compared with 80 per cent of families in the least deprived areas. Fewer families in each quintile paid for early years education and other formal childcare. The same applied to informal childcare. Fourteen per cent of families in the most deprived areas reported paying an informal provider in the reference week, while a third (35 per cent) of families in the least deprived areas paid for this childcare⁶².

8.4 Significant predictors of use of paid childcare

Based on the analysis presented in the previous section, a model was estimated showing which factors were significantly associated with the use of paid or free childcare. The variables which were significant were:

- household family status;
- household income;
- qualifications of respondent;
- presence of an adult(s) other than parents in the household;
- number of children;
- age of children;
- number of hours of childcare;
- number of sessions of childcare;
- weekday early morning session of childcare;
- weekday daytime session of childcare;
- weekday night time session of childcare;
- weekend session of childcare;
- Government office region of household.

Variables which were included in the model but were not found to be significantly associated with use of paid or free childcare were: household employment, local deprivation, presence of child(ren) with special needs, atypical working practices and ethnicity. The model does not include the type of childcare used (i.e. formal or informal), as this factor would be highly correlated with the dependent variable. Its inclusion would mask potentially important factors associated with the use of paid childcare.

The results are summarised in Table 8-7, where only the variables that were significantly associated with the dependent variable are presented.

After controlling for all the above factors, the model shows that:

⁶² The association is, however, somewhat different when we look at families that have used any of the providers that are part of our stricter definition of formal childcare (i.e. registered childminder, crèche/nurseries or out of school clubs). More than four-fifths of families in the first three quintiles paid for these types of childcare in the reference week compared with 71 per cent of families in the fourth quintile and 55 per cent in the most deprived areas.

- households headed by a lone parent were significantly less likely to have used paid childcare than households headed by a couple.
- where there was an adult in the household other than a parent of the children, the family was significantly less likely to have used paid childcare in the reference week. The odds of a household with a non-parental adult using paid childcare were 32 per cent lower than a household with only parental adults.
- where all the children in the households were not attending school, the likelihood of using paid childcare was higher than for other families. These families were 2.1 times more likely than families with all their children at school, and 1.4 times more likely than families with a mixture of school and non-school attending children to have used childcare in the reference week.
- the greater the number of sessions of childcare used, the more likely it was that at least one of those sessions was paid for. Parents that used 10 or more sessions of childcare in the reference week were 5.4 times more likely to have paid for childcare than those that used just one session.

Table 8-7 Logistic estimation of childcare use in the reference week

Variable	Odds ratio	p-value	
Family status			
	Couple	1.00	
	Lone parent	0.80	0.003
Number of children			
	One	1.00	
	Two	1.41	0.001
	Three or more	1.33	0.049
Non-parental adult in the household			
	No	1.00	
	Yes	0.68	0.024
Children attending school			
	None	1.00	
	Some	0.73	0.017
	All	0.47	0.000
Household income			
	Up to £10,399	1.00	
	£10,400 to £20,799	1.02	0.838
	£20,800 to £31,199	0.93	0.533
	£31,200 or more	1.12	0.287
	Missing	0.91	0.460
Qualifications of the main respondent			
	First or higher degree	1.00	
	A-level or equivalent	0.74	0.045
	GCSE or equivalent	0.54	0.000
	Other qualifications	0.76	0.382
	No qualifications	0.36	0.000
	Don't know	0.22	0.003
Number of session of childcare			
	One	1.00	
	Two to four	2.01	0.000
	Five to nine	3.26	0.000
	Ten or more	5.44	0.000
Weekday daytime session of childcare			
		0.25	0.000
	Yes	0.33	0.000
	No	0.20	0.000
Weekday night-time session of childcare			
		2.40	0.000
	Yes	1.24	0.093
	No	0.33	0.000
Weekend session of childcare			
	Yes	1.00	
	No	0.83	0.002
Government Office Region			
	South East	1.00	
	North East	0.53	0.002
	North West	1.07	0.661
	Merseyside	1.11	0.706
	Yorkshire & Humberside	1.03	0.855
	East Midlands	1.12	0.514
	West Midlands	1.09	0.597
	South West	1.20	0.305
	Eastern	1.27	0.150
	London	1.02	0.922

Note: Based on 3,029 observations using household level data.

The dependent variable = 1 if household used paid childcare in the reference week, otherwise = 0 if used free childcare in the reference week. The first category in each group is the base group.

8.5 Payments to different types of providers

In this section a more detailed description of the payments made to providers is presented. The types of services covered by these payments included 'extras' such as refreshments, use of equipment and outings. The use of payments in kind among informal providers is also explored. The section ends by looking at which types of providers increased their charges in the past year and showing how parents reacted to such a change.

Payments to providers

Around two-fifths (43 per cent) of providers used in the reference week received some monetary payment. A third (33 per cent) received a payment which covered fees or wages for childcare, just over one-in-ten (13 per cent) were paid money to cover refreshments or meals while 8 per cent received money to cover the use of equipment, travel expenses or the cost of outings.

Not surprisingly, there was considerable variation in the making of payments across different types of provider (Table 8-8). Generally speaking, most formal providers received a payment covering fees or wages whereas this occurred relatively infrequently amongst informal providers:

- Most (94 per cent) childminders received a payment which covered fees or wages⁶³.
- Between three-fifths and three-quarters of the following providers received a payment covering childcare fees/wages – babysitters (60 per cent), playgroups (66 per cent), out-of-school clubs (67 per cent) and crèches (73 per cent).
- While few (7 per cent) nursery/reception classes received payment for fees/wages, they were considerably more likely to have received money for meals or refreshments – around two-fifths (41 per cent) having done so compared with an average of around one-in-nine (11 per cent) for all other providers.
- Proportionately more out-of-school clubs and crèches/nurseries received a payment to cover the cost of 'other' items – respectively, 17 and 15 per cent of these providers received payments for 'other' items compared with less than one-in-ten for all other providers.
- Just 7 per cent of grandparents received a payment for their childcare services in the reference week. Three per cent received a payment covering wages and a similar proportion received money for meals (2 per cent) or other items used by children when in their care.
- Under a fifth of friends (19 per cent) or other relatives (15 per cent) received a payment for their childcare services. Payments for fees/wages were more common for these providers (14 and 11 per cent respectively) than for grandparents (3 per cent).

⁶³ Where the childminder was registered the proportion in receipt of a payment was 97 per cent: 97 per cent received money for fees/wages, 13 per cent received money for meals and refreshments and 7 per cent were paid for other items.

Table 8-8 Payments for providers used in the reference week

	Payments for childcare				Row percentages	
	No payment	Fees / wages	Refreshments / meals	Other	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Childminder	6	94	13	7	220	273
Nanny / au pair	[11]	[83]	[29]	[43]	44	50
Babysitter	31	60	7	10	107	132
Crèche/nursery	16	73	28	15	498	606
Playgroup	24	66	18	8	285	328
Nursery/reception class	50	9	41	9	338	386
Family centre	[53]	-	[38]	[9]	7	8
Out of school club	22	67	16	17	287	439
Grandparents	93	3	2	3	1,165	1,386
Other relatives	85	11	2	4	352	422
Friends	81	14	2	6	275	342
Other	41	37	16	17	82	105
Total	57	33	13	8	3,663	4,483

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

The percentages in this table should be read horizontally. Because respondents could select more than one category, percentages add up to more than 100.

Less than 0.5 per cent of respondents said they did not know what their payments covered - these responses have been dropped from the table but have been included in the base totals. 'Other' covers payments for the following: use of equipment, outings, travel expenses.

The above table hides some of the detail in respect of the incidence of payments. In relation to the following formal providers - crèche/nursery, playgroup, nursery/reception class, family centre and out of school club - we would expect to see some differences in the receipt of payments according to whether they were publicly or privately owned.

Most providers that were classified as "*fee-paying or any type of organisation run as a business*" charged for their services (Table 8-9). The payments were most commonly for fees or wages (87 per cent), with around quarter (24 per cent) receiving payments for meals/refreshments and one-in-seven (15 per cent) receiving payments for 'other' items.

Table 8-9 Payments for privately owned providers used in the reference week

	Payments for childcare				Row percentages	
	No payment	Fees / wages	Refreshments / meals	Other	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Crèche/nursery	8	91	29	15	301	365
Playgroup	16	81	15	10	103	118
Nursery/reception class	[15]	[80]	[40]	[25]	20	24
Family centre	-	-	[100]	-	1	1
Out of school club	10	85	15	20	91	141
Other	[5]	[88]	[25]	[19]	13	19
Total	10	87	24	15	531	670

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner. The percentages in this table should be read horizontally. Because respondents could select more than one category, percentages add up to more than 100.

Less than 0.5 per cent of respondents said they did not know what their payments covered - these responses have been dropped from the table but have been included in the base totals. 'Other' covers payments for the following: use of equipment, outings, travel expenses.

Local authority controlled formal providers looked considerably different from privately run establishments in terms of requirements to pay for their services (Table 8-10):

- just under three-fifths (58 per cent) of Local Authority controlled providers received payments in the reference week, quarter (27 per cent) received a payment covering fees/wages, a third (32 per cent) received money for refreshments/meals and one-in-ten (9 per cent) were paid for other items.
- 31 per cent of Local Authority crèches were free, 36 per cent charged fees and 31 per cent received money for refreshments/meals.
- half (52 per cent) of nursery and reception classes did not require any payment, two-fifths were paid for refreshments/meals and only 3 per cent charged for fees⁶⁴.
- a third (32 per cent) of out-of-school clubs were free, a majority (54 per cent) charged for fees, unlike other Local Authority providers, and a fifth (19 per cent) requiring a payment for refreshments.

⁶⁴ This group includes grant maintained and foundation schools hence the payment of fees.

Table 8-10 Payments for Local Authority controlled providers used in the reference week

	Payments for childcare				Row percentages	
	No payment	Fees / wages	Refreshments / meals	Other	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Crèche/nursery	31	36	31	14	133	162
Playgroup	30	56	19	6	92	105
Nursery/reception class	52	3	43	8	294	335
Family centre	[62]	-	[38]	-	4	5
Out of school club	32	54	19	12	127	195
Other	[67]	[18]	[20]	-	20	26
Total	42	27	32	9	671	829

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner. The percentages in this table should be read horizontally. Because respondents could select more than one category, percentages add up to more than 100.

Less than 0.5 per cent of respondents said they did not know what their payments covered – these responses have been dropped from the table but have been included in the base totals.

'Other' covers payments for the following: use of equipment, outings, travel expenses.

Value for money

Respondents were asked whether the money they paid to providers represented good value for money. Table 8-11 shows that parents were generally pleased with this aspect of their childcare. Almost three-quarters of providers (72 per cent) were said to have represented very good value for money, a quarter (23 per cent) were rated fairly good and 3 per cent were either fairly poor or very poor. Some providers were thought of as being better than others in terms of their value for money:

- four-fifths of childminders (81 per cent) and playgroups (81 per cent) were given a very good rating.
- parents were somewhat less pleased with the value for money of crèches and out-of-school clubs. Around two-thirds (65 and 69 per cent respectively) of these providers received a rating of 'very good'. Nevertheless, even for these providers parents were almost unanimous in giving them a rating of 'fairly good' or better.

Local Authority run providers were significantly more likely to have received a 'very good' rating than were privately run establishments – the respective figures were 76 and 63 per cent. This is not surprising given that most Local Authority providers charged relatively small amounts for their childcare.

Table 8-11 Ratings of providers – value for money, by provider type

	Value for money rating					Weighted base	Unweighted base
	Very good (%)	Fairly good (%)	Fairly poor (%)	Very poor (%)	Don't know (%)		
Childminder	81	17	1	1	-	208	257
Nanny/au pair	[74]	[21]	[2]	-	[3]	39	44
Babysitter	[74]	[23]	[3]	-	-	73	92
Creche/nursery	65	31	2	1	1	436	532
Playgroup	81	17	2	-	*	234	271
Nursery/reception class	70	21	4	1	4	176	201
Family centre	[100]	-	-	-	-	3	4
Out of school club	69	24	1	1	5	224	344
Other	[84]	[14]	-	[2]	-	34	45
All providers	72	23	2	1	1	1,427	1,790

Base: All the above providers who per paid by respondent for childcare in the reference week.

Changes in the rates charged by childcare providers

Parents were asked about providers they had been using for at least the past six months and whether these providers had increased the rates they charged for childcare (Table 8-12). One-in-three providers (34 per cent) were found to have increased their rates in the past year and not surprisingly, only 1 per cent had reduced their rates.

Some providers were more likely to have increased their charges than were others. Half (53 per cent) of all crèches that were used by parents in the reference week increased their charges in the past year. Two-fifths of playgroups and out-of-school clubs (41 and 43 per cent respectively) and a quarter (24 per cent) of childminders also increased their charges.

Very few parents changed the number of hours they used a provider for as a result of the price increase. Just 4 per cent changed their hours which suggests that the demand for childcare is somewhat insensitive to price changes. However it may also reflect a lack of alternative childcare arrangements available to parents.

Table 8-12 Changes in the rates charged by providers

	<i>Changes in the rates charged by providers</i>				<i>Row percentages</i>	
	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same	Don't know	Weighted base	Unweighted base
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
Childminder	24	1	74	1	180	221
Nanny/au pair	[30]	[6]	[64]	-	33	38
Babysitter	[14]	[1]	[85]	-	57	72
Creche/nursery	53	2	43	2	347	428
Playgroup	41	2	55	2	188	219
Nursery/reception class	20	-	74	5	145	166
Family centre	-	-	[100]	-	3	4
Out of school club	43	1	55	1	190	290
Grandparents	[7]	-	[91]	[2]	74	87
Other relatives	[13]	-	[87]	-	41	48
Friends	[16]	[2]	[82]	-	42	52
Other provider	[22]	[3]	[74]	[2]	38	52
All providers	34	1	62	2	1,340	1,677

Base: If provider had been used for at least the past 6 months.

Payment in kind

As an alternative to monetary payments, it has always been very common among friends and family to exchange help for domestic and childcare services. In some cases this help can become quite 'formal', for example, 'baby-sitting circles' where groups of parents take turns to look after each others' children. We were interested in measuring the extent of such practices; therefore we asked parents to tell us about any payments in kind made to informal providers instead of (or in addition to) any monetary payments.

Payments in kind were made to 46 per cent of informal providers and Table 8-13 shows that the most common form of repayment was a gift or treat (28 per cent). Around one-in-six (16 per cent) of informal providers received a favour and 10 per cent had their children looked after in return.

However, there are considerable differences between different types of informal providers and their use of payment in kind:

- two-fifths (43 per cent) of grandparents received a payment in kind (32 per cent received a gift or treat and 17 per cent received a favour in return for looking after the child(ren)).
- a similar proportion of 'other' relatives received a payment in kind (47 per cent). A marginally smaller proportion received a gift or treat (26 per cent), while 15 per cent had received a favour or childcare in return for looking after the respondent's children.
- the use of payment in kind was widespread among friends (60 per cent received this). Looking after the provider's children in return was the most common form

of repayment among friends (reported in 42 per cent of cases), while the figures for a gift or treat (18 per cent) and a favour (12 per cent) were marginally lower than that recorded for other providers.

Table 8-13 Payment in kind to informal providers

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Grandparents	Other relatives	Friends	Total
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<i>Was payment in kind given</i>				
No payment in kind	57	53	40	54
Payment in kind	43	47	60	46
<i>Type of payment in kind</i>				
Give a gift/treat	32	26	18	28
Did them a favour	17	15	12	16
Looked after their children	1	15	42	10
Weighted base	1,165	352	275	1,792
Unweighted base	1,386	422	342	2,150

Base: Above mentioned providers that were used in the reference week.

8.6 Weekly childcare costs

This section discusses the total weekly costs among families who paid for the childcare used in the reference week. The data presented in this section cover all costs, that is, any money paid for refreshments, use of equipment, outings and travel, as well as fees and wages⁶⁵.

Respondents were asked about the level of payment made to the various providers used. In households with more than two children, the payment may have covered the cost of other children, in addition to the two selected for the interview. However, no additional questions were asked about any payment to providers used for children not selected for the interview. Consequently, the childcare cost information from households with more than two children might include the costs incurred for the non-selected children, but we cannot be certain that it provides the total childcare costs. For this reason, only families with two or fewer children have been included in this section. The number of households excluded from the analysis represents approximately 15 per cent of households (233 cases) where childcare was used in the reference week⁶⁶.

The main summary findings regarding the cost of childcare were:

- two-fifths of households (42 per cent) paid less than £20 per week to providers for childcare, with a further fifth (18 per cent) paying less than £40.
- around one-in-ten (10 per cent) households had to pay £100 or more per week on childcare.

⁶⁵ This replicates the methods used in the baseline study.

⁶⁶ This replicates the methods used in the baseline study.

The weekly cost of childcare varied according to times when childcare was used (Table 8-14). Families who used early morning sessions of childcare incurred the highest weekly childcare costs. The median payment by these families was £45 with over half (56 per cent) paying between £20-100 and nearly a fifth (18 per cent) reporting weekly costs in excess of £100.

The median weekly childcare costs for parents that used at least one early morning session in the reference week was £45, significantly higher than those that used some daytime childcare (£25). Families that had used childcare in the late afternoon had a median cost of £35 per week.

Relatively few parents used night and weekend sessions of childcare in the reference week. Those that did so had weekly childcare costs considerably lower than families that had used childcare at other times. The median payment by families that used a night session of childcare was £12 and for those that used a session of childcare on the weekend, the median was £11. It is also noticeable that a significant number of parents who used night or weekend sessions reported that they had made a one-off or unspecified payment to their provider(s), 11 and 8 per cent respectively. The lower costs reported by families using childcare during these times probably reflects the fact that, as discussed earlier, for these sessions parents relied mainly on informal or unregistered care, which tends to be low cost.

Table 8-14 Cost of childcare, by timing of childcare sessions

	<i>Column percentages</i>						
	Early am (%)	Day time (%)	Late pm (%)	Evening (%)	Night (%)	Weekend (%)	All households (%)
Less than £20	23	39	31	37	46	50	42
£20 to less than £40	18	17	19	17	17	17	18
£40 to less than £70	22	18	20	17	19	14	17
£70 to less than £100	16	11	12	10	6	6	9
£100 to less than £150	12	7	9	7	1	3	6
£150 or more	6	4	6	6	1	2	4
One off or unspecified amount	2	4	3	5	11	8	4
Mean	£60	£43	£51	£47	£25	£29	£40
Median	£45	£25	£35	£26	£12	£11	£21
Weighted base	496	935	779	371	99	193	1,101
Unweighted base	612	1,142	987	480	128	247	1,363

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

Childcare costs also varied according to the ages of the children in the household (Table 8-15). Families with children not yet attending school were those who reported the highest costs: the median where all children were of pre-school age was £35, with almost half (47 per cent) paying between £20-100, while 15 per cent paid over £100. Childcare costs reported by families with both pre-school and older children were lower, with a median of £20. Two-fifths (38 per cent) of these parents paid between £20-100 and just over one-in-ten (12 per cent) paid more than £100 in

the reference week. Costs were considerably lower among families where all the selected children were at school: they had a median of £16, with just under half (46 per cent) paying less than £20.

Table 8-15 Childcare costs in the past week by ages of children in the household

	Ages of children in the household			Column percentages
	Pre-school age only	Pre-school and school age	School age only	All households
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Less than £20	36	45	46	42
£20 to less than £40	15	12	26	18
£40 to less than £70	18	16	15	17
£70 to less than £100	14	10	3	9
£100 to less than £150	9	8	1	6
£150 or more	6	4	2	4
One off or unspecified amount	3	4	6	4
Mean	£49	£43	£27	£40
Median	£35	£20	£16	£21
Weighted base	426	332	343	1,101
Unweighted base	495	406	462	1,363

Base: All households with one or two children who paid some money to providers.

As discussed earlier, lone parents were considerably less likely to have used paid childcare than couples. However, where they did pay (or contribute) for their childcare, these payments were only slightly less than those made by couples: the median weekly cost of childcare was £20 for lone parents and £22 for couples (Table 8-16).

The employment status of the parents in a household appears to be strongly related to amount paid for childcare. Starting with lone parents, it is shown that:

- where the lone parent was in full-time employment, the median cost of their childcare was £37. Three-fifths (61 per cent) of these parents had childcare costs of between £20-100 and 14 per cent paid £100 or more.
- lone parents in part-time employment had weekly costs that were considerably lower than lone parents that worked full-time. The median cost of their childcare was £16, just under half (47 per cent) paid between £20-100 and 1 per cent paid £100 or more.

Among couples the differences between households where both parents worked full-time and others with different working arrangements was considerable:

- among couples in full-time employment the median childcare cost was £44, around half (52 per cent) paid between £20-£100 and a fifth (22 per cent) paid £100 or more.

Table 8-16 Childcare costs in the reference week, by household structure and employment

	<i>Column percentages</i>									
	Lone parent			Total	Both work full-time	Two-parent family			Neither works	Total
	Parent works full-time (%)	Parent works part-time (%)	Not in work (%)			One works full-time, one part-time (%)	One works full-time (%)	One or both work part-time (%)		
Less than £20	21	49	[71]	43	23	44	60	[66]	[63]	42
£20 to less than £40	28	19	[9]	20	20	17	14	[11]	-	17
£40 to less than £70	20	23	[4]	17	19	19	10	[6]	[7]	16
£70 to less than £100	13	5	[3]	8	13	11	4	[5]	-	10
£100 to less than £150	9	1	[1]	4	14	4	2	[3]	-	7
£150 or more	5	-	-	2	8	2	4	[3]	-	5
One off or unspecified amount	3	3	[12]	5	3	2	7	[5]	[30]	4
Mean	£52	£25	[£11]	£33	£64	£37	£26	[£25]	[£6]	£42
Median	£37	£16	[£2]	£20	£44	£20	£9	[£8]	[£1]	£22
Weighted base	92	73	58	223	286	355	204	20	14	878
Unweighted base	128	100	69	297	357	428	240	24	17	1,066

Base: All households with one or two children who paid some money to providers.

- In households where one parent was in full-time employment and the other was employed part-time, the median childcare costs were £20, which was less than half paid by households where both parents worked full-time (£44).
- families where only one parent worked (full-time) the median was even lower at £9. Three-fifths (60 per cent) of these households paid less than £20 for childcare, a quarter (28 per cent) paid between £20 and £100 and 6 per cent paid £100 or more.

Household income

As would be expected, a strong positive relationship was found between the household income and the amount paid for childcare costs (Table 8-17).

- the median expenditure on childcare of families with an annual household income of £31,200 or more was in the order of eight times greater than that of households with an annual income of £10,399 or less.
- families with an annual income of £10,399 or less had median weekly childcare costs of £5, seven-out-of-ten (71 per cent) paid less than £20 per week and a fifth (20 per cent) paid between £20 and £100 pounds. Just under a tenth (8 per cent) said that the amount paid represented a one off payment.
- families in the highest income band had median childcare costs of £40. A quarter (27 per cent) paid less than £20, half (51 per cent) paid between £20 and £100 with a fifth (19 per cent) paying £100 or more.

Table 8-17 Childcare costs in the past week by annual household income

	<i>Column percentages</i>					
	Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	DK or Refused (%)	All households (%)
Less than £20	71	50	43	27	53	42
£20 to less than £40	11	19	17	19	14	18
£40 to less than £70	8	16	17	20	10	17
£70 to less than £100	1	6	12	12	7	9
£100 to less than £150	2	3	6	10	5	6
£150 or more	-	1	1	9	3	4
One off or unspecified amount	8	4	3	3	10	4
Mean	£13	£29	£35	£59	£30	£40
Median	£5	£15	£21	£40	£10	£21
Weighted base	121	239	242	430	69	1,293
Unweighted base	154	303	294	529	83	1,596

Base: All households with one or two children who paid some money to providers.

Regional variations in childcare costs

The amount of money paid by parents for their childcare differed considerably across the 11 Government regions (Table 8-18). In part this variation reflects differences in the amount of childcare used by parents in these areas. It also reflects differences in the unit cost of childcare. In chapter 3 it was shown that the proportion of families that had used childcare in the reference week varied by as little as 10 percentage points across the 11 regions (Table 3-8). Therefore, we surmise that much of the variation evidenced in Table 8-21 is due to differences in the cost of childcare.

The median cost of childcare was highest in London (£36 per week) and this was three times higher than the lowest cost which was in the East Midlands (£12 per week). London and the South East stand out for their high cost of childcare; the median in these two regions was almost twice as high as in all other regions.

Table 8-18 Cost of childcare, by government office region

	Mean cost of childcare £ per week	Median cost of childcare £ per week	Unweighted base	Weighted base
London	57	36	181	147
South East	50	32	197	161
North West	35	20	152	120
West Midlands	32	20	152	124
Yorkshire & Humber	34	19	179	144
South West	35	17	130	108
Eastern	43	15	147	119
East Midlands	30	12	127	102
North East	[37]	[9]	60	47
Merseyside	[40]	[30]	38	30
Total	40	21	1,363	1,101

Base: All households.

Variations in childcare costs by local deprivation

Families living in geographical areas that had been classified as having a high relative level of social deprivation had a median weekly cost of childcare which was around 40 per cent lower than for families in the least deprived areas (Table 8-19). Their median weekly expenditure on childcare was £8, three-fifths (59 per cent) paid less than £20 and just under a third (31 per cent) paid between £20 and £100. In contrast, families situated in the least deprived areas had a median weekly expenditure of £30, a third (32 per cent) paid less than £20 and half (52 per cent) paid between £20 and £100.

Table 8-19 Use of paid childcare in the reference week, by index of multiple deprivation

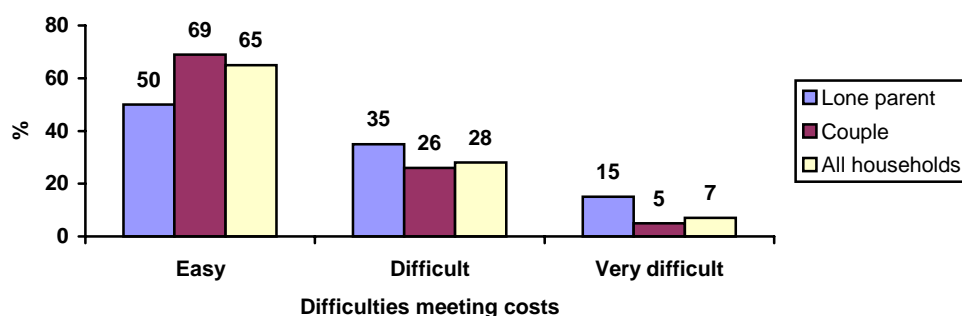
	Index of Multiple Deprivation					Column percentages
	1 st quintile - least deprived (%)	2 nd quintile (%)	3 rd quintile (%)	4 th quintile (%)	5 th quintile - most deprived (%)	All households (%)
Less than £20	32	44	39	43	59	42
£20 to less than £40	21	16	16	20	13	18
£40 to less than £70	21	11	22	17	9	16
£70 to less than £100	10	9	9	9	9	9
£100 to less than £150	9	9	5	4	3	6
£150 or more	6	7	2	2	*	4
One off or unspecified amount	2	4	7	5	5	4
Mean	£53	£46	£35	£35	£23	£40
Median	£30	£20	£23	£20	£8	£21
Weighted base	276	238	236	199	148	1,097
Unweighted base	344	292	292	244	185	1,357

Base: All households using childcare in the past week excluding those who only used an ex-partner.

8.7 Affordability of childcare

All parents that usually had to pay for the childcare they used⁶⁷ were asked whether they had experienced any difficulties meeting these payments given their family income. Two-thirds (66 per cent) said they found meeting the payments easy, a quarter (28 per cent) found it difficult, while one-in-ten (7 per cent) found it very difficult (Figure 8-4).

Figure 8-4 Difficulties with meeting the cost of childcare, by family structure



Base: All households that used childcare in the past week and who usually paid money to providers.

⁶⁷ This covers both parents that paid any money in the reference week as well as parents who would have usually paid some money but who did not for some reason.

Lone parents were more likely than couples to have had some difficulties: half of lone parents (50 per cent) had some difficulties compared with around one-in-three (35 per cent) couples. As would be expected, the experiencing of difficulties was related to household income (Table 8-20). Families with an income of between £10,400 and £20,799 were the most likely to have recorded some difficulties in meeting their childcare costs: just under half (45 per cent) of these households experienced some difficulties compared with a quarter (26 per cent) of households with an income greater than £31,199.

Table 8-20 Difficulties with meeting the cost of childcare, by household income

	Household income					Column percentages	
	Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	DK or Refused (%)	All households	
Easy	63	55	60	74	67	65	
Difficult	23	34	35	23	28	28	
Very difficult	13	11	5	4	5	7	
Don't know	1	-	*	*	-	-	
Weighted base	119	262	284	487	74	1,225	
Unweighted base	153	334	346	600	91	1,524	

Base: All households that used childcare in the past week and who usually paid money to providers.

Parents' ratings of the affordability of childcare in their local area

Parents were also asked more generally about the affordability of childcare in their local area. The question put to them was:

"And thinking about the overall affordability of childcare provided in your local area, for a family like yours how good would you say this is?"

At an aggregate level, parents fell into one of three groups of roughly equal size (Table 8-21) – those that thought the affordability was good or very good (33 per cent), those that thought it was poor or very poor (36 per cent), and the third group who did not know (32 per cent). However significant differences were apparent among several sub-groups:

- users of childcare had a better opinion of its affordability than non-users. Almost two-fifths (38 per cent) of parents that had used childcare in the reference week thought that the affordability of childcare was either 'good' or 'very good' compared with a quarter (25 per cent) of those that did not use childcare in the reference week.
- non-users were more likely to say they did not know about the affordability of childcare – 40 per cent of this group said 'don't know' compared with 25 per cent of parents that had used childcare in the reference week

- fewer lone parents than couples thought the affordability of childcare in their local area was good or very good – 24 per cent of lone parents gave either of these ratings compared with 36 per cent of couple households.
- proportionately more households where at least one parent was in work gave a rating of good or better with regard to local affordability than did households where no parent was in work – the respective proportions were 35 and 23 per cent.
- families living in socially deprived areas were significantly less likely than other families to have rated the affordability of local childcare as good or very good – the respective proportions were 27 and 38 per cent.
- fewer low income households (24 per cent) said they thought the local affordability was at least good compared with higher income households (43 per cent).

Table 8-21 Parents’ perception of the local affordability of childcare, by use of childcare in the past year and past week

	<i>Column percentages</i>				
	Used childcare in the past week		Used childcare in the past year		All households
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	(%)
Very good	8	3	7	2	6
Fairly good	30	22	28	19	27
Fairly poor	23	20	23	17	22
Very poor	13	14	13	15	14
Don’t know	25	40	29	46	32
Weighted base	2,574	2,045	3,962	657	4,619
Unweighted base	3,102	2,314	4,709	707	5,416

Base: All households.

Parents were also asked whether affordability of childcare in their local area had changed over the past two years (Table 8-26). Relatively few parents (5 per cent) said that it had improved, a sixth (16 per cent) said that it had got worse, with the remaining parents split between those that did not know (41 per cent) and those that thought it had stayed the same (37 per cent). The number of parents that reported a change (i.e. improvement or worsening) in the affordability of childcare was only marginally different according to whether or not childcare had been used in the past year or the reference week. However, non-users were significantly less likely to be aware of changes in affordability.

Table 8-22 Parents' perception of changes in the local affordability of childcare, by use of childcare in the past year and past week

	<i>Column percentages</i>				
	Used childcare in the past week		Used childcare in the past year		All households
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	(%)
Improved	5	5	5	6	5
Worsened	17	15	17	13	16
Stayed the same	42	31	39	27	37
Don't know	35	49	39	54	41
Weighted base	2,574	2,045	3,962	657	4,619
Unweighted base	3,102	2,314	4,709	707	5,416

Base: All households.

Low income families were no more or less likely to have reported an improvement in the affordability of childcare than were high income families. Nor were any differences found according to the degree of deprivation of the area where the family was living. However, significant differences were found across regions. Proportionately more families in the North West (8.2 per cent) reported an improvement in affordability than elsewhere in England. The region with the lowest percentage of families reporting an improvement was Merseyside, here 2.6 per cent of families reported an improvement.

8.8 Changes in the costs and affordability of childcare since 1999

Overall, the proportion of households paying at least some money to a provider in the reference week has remained stable since the 1999. In the baseline survey it was estimated that 40 per cent of families that had used childcare in the reference week had paid some fees or wages and this figure remained unchanged in 2001.

Across various sub-groups there were some minor changes that are worth reporting:

- a higher proportion of parents that used a late afternoon session of childcare paid for childcare: 46 per cent did so in 2001 compared with 33 per cent in 1999.
- more lone parents who were in employment paid for childcare in 2001 than in 1999: 49 per cent of those working full-time and 34 per cent working part-time paid for childcare - the comparable figures in 1999 were 42 and 31 per cent respectively. This could stem from a greater use of formal childcare as a result of parents claiming the childcare tax credit element of WFTC.
- families with an annual income of less than £10,400 were less likely to have paid for their childcare than were similar families in 1999, although this difference was not statistically significant.
- more Asian families used paid childcare in 2001 than in 1999 - an increase from 17 to 32 per cent.

In general changes in the incidence of monetary payments across different types of providers were small. Of note, however was a slight increase in the likelihood of a Local Authority controlled crèche/nursery charging for their services – 66 per cent had done so in 1999, increasing to 69 per cent in 2001.

The proportion of providers that received either a good or very good rating in terms of their value for money had remained stable since the baseline survey. There was a small but insignificant decrease in the number of providers receiving a very good rating (72 per cent received this rating in 2001 compared with 76 per cent in 1999).

A slight increase in the median weekly cost of childcare was recorded between the two surveys. Costs had increased from £19 in 1999 to £21 in 2001, a rise of approximately 11 per cent.

- weekly costs of childcare for families with children not yet attending school increased by £8 - from £27 to £35.
- lone parents working full-time saw their weekly childcare costs increase from £25 to £37.
- couples where both parents were in full-time work were paying £6 per week more – the median weekly cost of childcare increased from £38 to £44.
- median weekly childcare costs increased from £35 to £40 among households with an annual income of £31,200 or more. In contrast, low income households saw a fall in their median costs of childcare, from £8 to £5 per week.

8.9 Impact of WFTC and the childcare tax credit on childcare use

In Chapter 2 we reported that around one-in-five parents (18 per cent) were currently receiving Working Families' Tax Credit and of these a further fifth (or 3 per cent of all parents) received the childcare tax credit component of WFTC. Here we report some additional details about these families, including estimates of the impact of the childcare tax credit on parents' demand for childcare. Because there were only a small number of families in receipt of the childcare tax credit among the parents interviewed, the analysis reported in this section is confined to an aggregate level, that is, we do not report results for sub-groups as has appeared elsewhere in the report.⁶⁸

Childcare costs covered by the childcare tax credit

Parents receiving the childcare tax credit were asked to estimate the percentage of their childcare costs covered by the tax credit⁶⁹. Under the rules governing the tax credit, parents can claim for up to 70 per cent of their childcare costs, for certain types of providers. Just under a third (31 per cent) had 70 per cent of their total childcare costs met by the tax credit and one-in-four parents reported that 50 per cent or less of their costs were met. Almost one-in-five parents (18 per cent) said more

⁶⁸ Families were purposely selected in the booster sample in attempt to increase the number of childcare tax credit recipients.

⁶⁹ This was their total childcare costs which included the costs for children that were not part of the main interview.

than 70 per cent of their costs were covered while 16 per cent said they did not know how much of their costs were covered. The latter two figures, along with the fact that almost a fifth of WFTC recipients did not know whether they qualified for childcare tax credit, reflects a general lack of knowledge about the childcare tax credit⁷⁰.

Affects of childcare tax credit

All recipients of the childcare tax credit were asked whether the tax credit had affected the following:

- the type of childcare used;
- the amount of childcare used; and,
- the number of hours worked.

Whereas a small majority (53 per cent) of parents said the childcare tax credit had affected the type of childcare they used, a much smaller proportion (27 per cent) reported that they had changed the number of hours they had used childcare for. Not surprisingly, almost all (96 per cent) parents reported an increase in the number of hours.

In terms of the impact of childcare tax credit on the number of hours worked, around a quarter (25 per cent) of respondents said that they had changed their hours, and of these, four-fifths (80 per cent) said their hours had increased. The receipt of the tax credit did not appear to have had much of an impact on the labour supply of partners as just 5 per cent of respondents reported that their partner had changed the number of hours they worked as a result of the tax credit.

Apart from labour supply issues, childcare tax credit would also be expected to affect financial wellbeing. As reported elsewhere in this chapter, parents' were asked how difficult they found meeting their childcare costs. All things equal, we would expect parents in receipt of the childcare tax credit would to be less likely to have experienced difficulties. In order to compare like-with-like the analysis was restricted to parents using similar amounts of formal childcare (i.e. childcare that was eligible for the tax credit) and with similar incomes⁷¹. The number of cases which met both these criteria were small therefore some caution is required with respect to this analysis. The analysis showed childcare tax credit recipients to have been slightly less likely to have said they found it very difficult to meet their childcare costs than did non-recipients – 16 per cent said they found it very difficult compared with a quarter (25 per cent) of non-recipients. Both groups were as likely to have said they had no difficulties meeting their childcare costs.

8.10 Summary

The survey findings show that just over half (51 per cent) of parents paid some money for the childcare they used in the reference week with 40 per cent having made a payment covering fees or wages. Both these remained unchanged from the baseline survey in 1999. Paid-for childcare was more likely to have been used by

⁷⁰ We suspect that a number of parents confused the childcare tax credit with the Children's Tax Credit.

⁷¹ The relevant base was families with a household income of less than £20,800 per year that had used at least 10 hours of childcare from one or a combination of the following providers: registered childminder, crèche/nursery, out of school club.

families with high incomes and by those with pre-school aged children. Lone parents were less likely to have used paid childcare than were couples as were families living in socially deprived areas relative to those in the least deprived areas.

Understandably, whether a payment was required was closely related to the type of childcare being used. A majority of parents using early years education and other formal childcare had to pay for this childcare, whereas this occurred relatively infrequently with respect to informal providers. However, it did matter whether the provider was privately owned or run by the Local Authority, use of the latter being less likely to incur charges for fees or wages.

Most (72 per cent) providers were thought to represent 'very good' value for money. One-in-three providers (34 per cent) increased their childcare costs in the past year although this appears to have had very little effect on parents' use of childcare. Just 4 per cent of parents changed the number of hours their child(ren) attended the provider as a result of the price change.

The overwhelming majority of informal providers were not paid which partly explains why they were used by so many parents. However, just under half of these providers received a payment in kind. Gifts or treats were the most common form of payment in kind with respect to relatives, while looking after the provider's children was the most frequent response among friends;

The median weekly cost of childcare among parents that used childcare was £21. Two-fifths of parents paid less than £20 per week and one-in-ten paid more than £100. There was, however, considerable variation in these costs between different groups. Families in the highest income bracket and those with children not yet attending school had the highest childcare costs. There were also large regional differences in childcare costs with median three times higher in London than in the East Midlands.

The generally low cost of childcare is reflected in parents' evaluation of its affordability. A majority of parents found it easy to manage their childcare costs. However, somewhat at odds with this, only a third of all parents regarded the affordability of childcare in their local area to have been fairly or very good. In addition, very few parents thought childcare was becoming more affordable.

9 PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDCARE

9.1 Introduction

The report now turns to the attitudes of parents with regard to various aspects of childcare. During the course of the interview with the main respondent, parents were asked a series of questions about their general attitudes and awareness of childcare provision in their local area. The first section looks at different sources of information about childcare. It then goes on to assess the quality of this information before describing parents requirements for further information about childcare. The latter part of the chapter examines parents' opinions on the quantity and quality of childcare provision in their local area. Attention is given throughout the chapter to how things have changed since 1999.

These responses reported in this chapter are from the main respondent interview. Partners were not asked these questions and hence the views of the main respondent are regarded as those of the family or household.

9.2 Sources of information about childcare

All parents were asked a number of questions regarding the information available about childcare options and the adequacy of these various sources.

Parents were shown a list of potential sources of information and were asked to chose which ones they had used in the past year.

Table 9-1 shows that just over half of parents (54 per cent) had obtained some information on childcare in the past year. More parents who had used childcare had obtained information than those who had not used any childcare (57 per cent and 35 per cent respectively). In 1999 this question was only asked of parents who had used childcare in the previous year and a similar proportion (56 per cent) of these families reported obtaining information.

Word of mouth was the most common source of information (38 per cent). The other main sources were the local authority (13 per cent), local advertising (9 per cent) or through conversations with health visitors (also 9 per cent). Relatively few parents said they had used a childcare information service and similarly the use of *ChildcareLink* was not commonplace. Overall, it appears that parents were more willing to rely on the views of people they knew.

Table 9-1 Where information was obtained, by use of childcare in the past year

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Childcare used in the past year (%)	Childcare not used in the past year (%)	All households (%)
Word of mouth	41	22	38
Local Authority	14	5	13
Local advertising	10	5	9
Health visitor	9	6	9
Local library	5	3	5
Doctor's surgery	4	3	4
Children's information services	3	2	3
Employers	3	2	3
Yellow Pages	3	1	3
National organisations (e.g. CAB)	2	1	2
Employment Service / Job Centre	2	2	2
Local Community Centre	2	1	2
Internet	2	1	2
Schools	2	1	2
<i>ChildcareLink</i>	1	*	1
Other childcare providers	1	1	1
Church or religious groups	*	*	*
Other specific answer	*	-	*
Don't know	*	*	*
None of these	43	65	46
Weighted base	3,962	657	4,619
Unweighted base	4,709	707	5,416

Base: All households

+ The columns show all sources of childcare information used by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Some parents were more likely than others to have used particular sources of childcare information. For example:

- households with at least one parent in paid work were slightly more likely to seek information about local childcare than families with no parent in work – 54 per cent of the former and 51 per cent of the latter obtained some information.
- households with at least one parent in paid work were less likely to have received childcare information from a health visitor (8 per cent compared with 13 per cent where no parent was in work). Working families were also less likely to have received information from the local authority or through local advertising (8 and 6 per cent respectively) compared with 13 and 10 per cent for families where no parent was in work). However, for both these types of households, word of mouth was still the most important source of childcare information (39 percent for families where no parent was in work and 34 per cent for those with at least one parent in paid work respectively).

- lone parents and two-parent families were very similar in terms of where they looked for childcare information. Lone parents were slightly more likely to use the Employment Service (including Job Centres) as a source of childcare information than were couples (4 per cent compared to 1 per cent). Couples were slightly more likely to rely on word of mouth (39 per cent compared to 35 per cent for lone parents) or local authorities for information (13 per cent for couples and 11 per cent for lone parents).
- the higher the qualifications of the main respondent the more likely they were to have obtained childcare information. Two-thirds (65 per cent) with a first or higher degree sought some childcare information in the past year whereas only 39 per cent parents that had no qualifications had done likewise. This difference remained irrespective of whether childcare was used in the past year. There were also considerable differences in the sources of information used by parents with different qualifications. Those with at least an A-level were around three times more likely to have used the local authority for childcare information as parents with no qualifications (18 per cent compared with 6 per cent respectively). They were also more likely to have used the local library (8 per cent compared with 3 per cent). The difference was even more substantial for the use of childcare information services (6 per cent compared with 1 per cent respectively). The information provided by Childcare Information Services may not be reaching less qualified parents or the service may not meet their needs.

Table 9-2 shows that parents in higher income groups were marginally more likely to seek information about childcare. In households where the income was up to £10,399 52 per cent of parents used any information source, compared to 57 per cent of parents in the highest income group. Even when the analysis is restricted to those who used childcare in the past year, high income families were still more likely than low income families to have used any of these sources (46 and 41 per cent respectively).

- High income families are more likely to find out about childcare through word of mouth. Just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of families with a household income of £31,200 or more reported using word of mouth to find out about local childcare, compared with 33 per cent of parents with an income of up to £10,399;
- high income families were almost one and a half times more likely as low income families to have used their local authority as a source of childcare information – 16 per cent compared with 9 per cent;
- a similar relationship applied to the use of local advertising;
- health visitors were used more often as a source of childcare information among low income families. One in nine (12 per cent) households with an annual income of less than £10,399 sought childcare information from a health visitor compared with 6 per cent of families with a household income greater than £31,199;

- high income families were more likely than low income families to have used their employers or the internet as a source of childcare information (4 per cent of high income families compared with 1 per cent of low income families for both sources);

Table 9-2 Where information was obtained, by household gross annual income

Column percentages +

	Household income				All households
	Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	(%)
Word of mouth	33	37	40	43	38
Local Authority	9	12	13	16	13
Local advertising	7	8	9	12	9
Health visitor	12	10	8	6	9
Local library	4	5	5	6	5
Doctor's surgery	4	4	4	4	4
Children's information services	2	3	3	4	3
Employers	1	3	3	4	3
Yellow Pages	2	3	3	4	3
National organisations (e.g. CAB)	2	2	2	2	2
Employment Service / Job Centre	5	1	*	1	2
Local Community Centre	2	2	2	2	2
Internet	1	1	2	4	2
Schools	2	2	2	2	2
<i>ChildcareLink</i>	1	1	1	1	1
Other childcare providers	1	*	1	1	1
Church or religious groups	-	*	*	*	*
Other specific answer	*	*	1	*	*
Don't know	*	*	-	*	*
None of these	48	46	47	43	46
Weighted base	911	1,111	1,018	1,245	4,619
Unweighted base	1,043	1,309	1,191	1,491	5,416

Base: All households.

+ The columns show all sources of childcare information used by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

There were 384 families for which there was no household income data. These are not reported separately, however, they are included in the all households column.

Compared with the baseline survey, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of low income families (less than £10,400) that sought childcare information in the past year. Just over half (52 per cent) of these families were reported to have used childcare information sources in the repeat survey compared with just under half (48 per cent) in 1999. For families in other income bands any changes between the two surveys were not significant.

There were small differences in the use of childcare information sources according to the ethnicity of the main respondent:

- respondents from an Asian background were least likely and parents of black ethnic origin were most likely to have sought childcare information in the past year. 48 per cent of those of Asian origin had sought information compared with 65 per cent of parents from a black ethnic origin and 53 per cent of white parents;
- however, these differences between Asian and white parents all but disappear when only looking at families that had used childcare in the past year – 55 per cent and 56 per cent respectively sought information in the past year;
- black parents were more likely to have used word of mouth to receive childcare information than either white or Asian parents (44, 38 and 32 per cent respectively);
- proportionately more black parents sought childcare information from the local authority than either white or Asian parents (17, 12 and 11 per cent respectively);
- relatively few Asian parents (3 per cent) used local advertising as a source of childcare information compared with white (10 per cent) or black parents (8 per cent).

There were small regional variations in the use of sources of information:

- parents in London were more likely to have obtained information than parents in other areas, two-thirds (59 per cent) having done so in the past year;
- parents in Merseyside were the least likely to have obtained information (49 per cent);

Families living in socially deprived areas were no different from other families in terms of whether they sought childcare information in the past year and the sources of that information.

ChildcareLink

As shown in the above analyses, relatively few parents (1 per cent or approximately 55,000 families) were reported to have used *ChildcareLink*, the government sponsored helpline and internet site which provides details of local childcare providers as well as general information about childcare⁷². Parents were asked which of these two services they had used. The telephone service was used by a higher proportion of parents - 71 per cent had used the telephone helpline, compared with 42 per cent used the internet site, while 15 per cent used both.

While few parents had used the service, considerably more families were aware of the service. Around one-in-nine parents (11 per cent) said they had heard of *ChildcareLink*⁷³, with marginally more parents that had used childcare in the past year being aware of the service (12 per cent compared with 9 per cent of those that had not used childcare).

⁷² Approximately 14 per cent of families employed a formal childcare provider in the past year. These families were no more likely to have either used or have heard of *ChildcareLink* than other families.

⁷³ This includes parents that had used *Childcarelink*.

Awareness of *ChildcareLink* varied across a number of family and respondent characteristics:

- 14 per cent of households with an income of more than £31,199 per year had used or heard of *ChildcareLink* compared with 10 per cent of families with an annual income of less than £10,400;
- respondents with no academic qualifications were less likely to have used or heard of *ChildcareLink* than parents with an 'A' level or higher qualification - 9 and 15 per cent respectively showed some awareness;
- Table 9-3 shows that awareness of *ChildcareLink* was highest in London and the South East (13 per cent awareness in both) and lowest in the South West and Merseyside where just 8 per cent of parents in both regions had heard of the service.

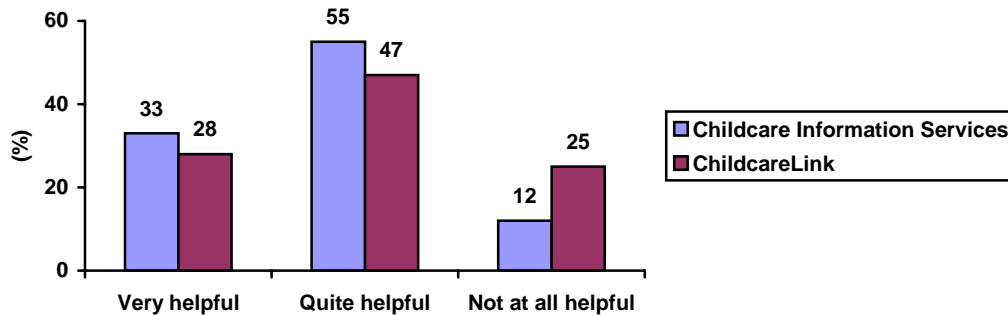
Table 9-3 Awareness of *ChildcareLink*, by Government Office Region

	<i>Row percentages</i>				
	Used <i>Childcare</i> <i>-Link</i> (%)	Heard of <i>Childcare-</i> <i>Link</i> (%)	Neither heard or used <i>Childcare-Link</i> (%)	Unweighted base	Weighted base
London	1	13	86	731	628
South East	1	13	86	786	669
East Midlands	1	12	87	497	418
West Midlands	1	11	88	622	527
North East	1	11	88	323	272
Eastern	1	10	89	628	537
North West	1	9	90	585	499
Yorkshire & Humber	*	9	91	636	546
Merseyside	1	8	91	134	117
South West	1	8	92	474	407
Total	1	11	88	5,416	4,619

Base: All households.

Parents that had used one of the Children's Information services or *ChildcareLink* were asked for their views about helpful this information was. The results are reported in Figure 9-1 and they show that a majority of parents thought they were helpful. However, the small number of observations, particularly with respect to the evaluation of *ChildcareLink* means that these estimates should be treated with some caution.

Figure 9-1 Helpfulness of Childcare Information Services and *ChildcareLink*



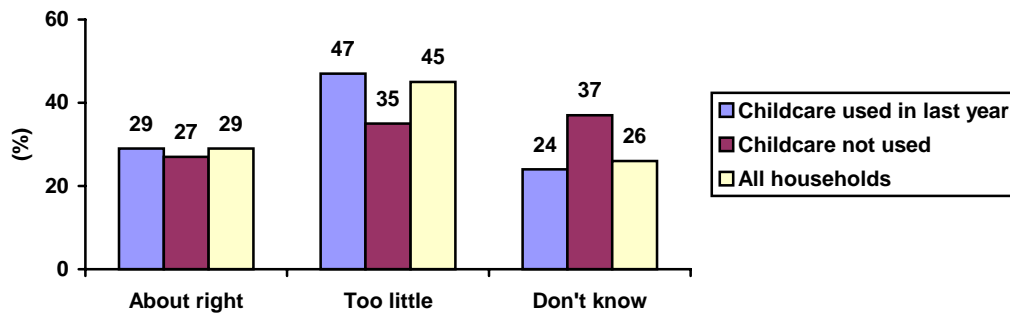
Base: All households using these information sources in the past year.
Figures are weighted and based on responses from 176 households that had used Childcare Information Services and 46 households that had used ChildcareLink.

9.3 Parents' evaluation of the information available to them

All parents were asked whether the available information about childcare provision in their local area was adequate. Almost half (45 per cent) reported that there was too little information available, just under a third (29 per cent) said it was about right and 1 per cent said there was too much. The remaining quarter (26 per cent) of families said they did not know.

Understandably, knowledge of childcare information was closely related to the use of childcare. As Figure 9-2 shows, parents that had not used childcare in the past year were much more likely than other parents to have said they did not know whether there was enough childcare information available (37 per cent compared with 24 per cent of families that had used childcare in the past year). It is interesting that proportionately, users of childcare were more likely to have said that there was not enough information about childcare than those who did not use childcare in the past year.

Figure 9-2 Whether the right amount of information was available, by use of childcare in the past year



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households. The percentages do not sum to 100 as we have excluded the percentage which said there was too much information. One per cent of households in each group responded in this way.

The degree of satisfaction with the amount of local childcare information varied across different household and personal characteristics.

Just under half (47 per cent) of lone parents thought local childcare information was insufficient compared with 44 per cent of two-parent households.

Families with children of pre-school age were significantly more likely to have said there was not enough childcare information than other families (Table 9-4). Families with children of pre-school age are the most likely to have used childcare. Over half (55 per cent) of these families, thought local childcare information was insufficient. In contrast, a lower proportion, namely two-fifths (39 per cent), of families that had all their children at school thought local childcare information was insufficient. Even when the analysis was restricted to families that had used childcare in the past year, the relationship between having children at school and the level of satisfaction with childcare information remained.

Table 9-4 Whether the right amount of information was available, by age of children in the household

	Ages of children in the household			Column percentages
	Pre-school age only (%)	Pre-school and school age (%)	School age only (%)	All households (%)
About right	30	32	26	29
Too much	1	*	*	1
Too little	55	49	39	45
Don't know	14	18	34	26
Weighted base	946	1,171	2,501	4,618
Unweighted base	1,073	1,355	2,987	5,415

Base: All households.

High income families with an annual income of £31,200 or more were more likely to think the current levels of information were satisfactory, with 31 per cent holding this view, compared to 27 per cent of those with an income of less than £10,400 per year. However, there was very little difference in the proportions which said there was too little information - 44 and 45 per cent respectively gave this response.

There was some variation in parents' perceptions of the availability of childcare information across regions (Table 9-5). Parents in London were most likely to state an opinion about the level of childcare information available, with parents in Merseyside being least able to do so. Parents in the North West and the South West were more likely to think that current levels of information were satisfactory (31 per cent holding this view). Almost half of the families in the East Midlands (49 per cent), London, the North East and Merseyside (all 48 per cent) thought there was too little information.

Table 9-5 Whether the right amount of information was available, by Government Office Region

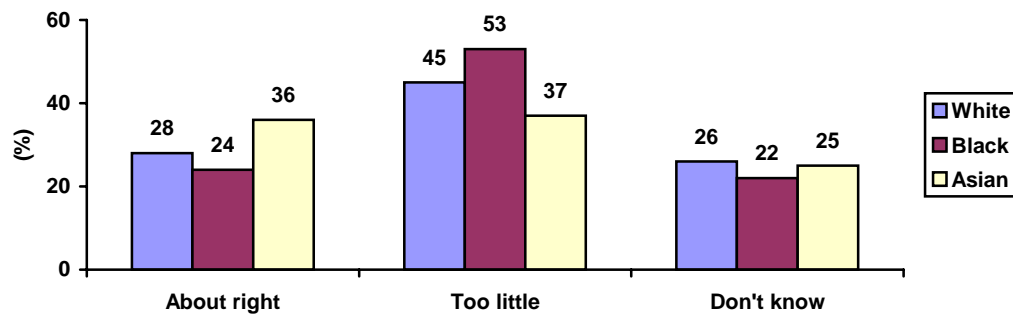
	Amount of local childcare information			Row percentages	
	Unweighted base	Weighted base			
	About right (%)	Too little (%)	Don't know (%)		
North West	31	45	24	585	499
South West	31	44	25	474	407
London	30	48	20	731	628
South East	30	43	26	786	669
North East	30	48	22	323	272
Yorkshire & Humber	30	43	26	636	546
West Midlands	27	43	28	622	527
East Midlands	25	49	25	497	418
Eastern	25	44	31	628	537
Merseyside	18	48	34	134	117
Total	29	45	26	5,416	4,619

Base: All households.

The percentages do not sum to 100 as we have excluded the percentage which said there was too much information. One per cent of households responded in this way.

There were also strong differences in opinion about the amount of local childcare information available according to the ethnicity of the respondent (Figure 9-3). Families of Asian origin were more likely than either white families or families of black ethnic origin to report that there was sufficient information about childcare. Over one-in-three (36 per cent) of families of Asian origin thought there was sufficient information compared with one-in-four (24 per cent) families of a black ethnic origin and 28 per cent of white families.

Figure 9-3 Whether the right amount of information was available, by ethnic origin of the respondent



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households. The percentages do not sum to 100 as we have excluded the percentage which said there was too much information. One per cent of households responded in this way.

Further information required by parents

Parents who said there was not enough childcare information available were asked for details of the further information they required. The overall findings show that:

- A majority of parents (54 per cent) did not want to know about one specific issue, instead stating that they required more information about general issues;
- Just under a fifth (17 per cent) wanted some general information about the cost of childcare;
- Information about the quality of childcare was of lesser concern than information about cost. Only seven per cent of parents specifically mentioned needing further information about the quality of childcare compared to 17% who wanted more information about cost.
- One in ten parents requested more specific details about pre-school childcare options (10 per cent) and a further one in ten parents wanted more information about childcare options before and after the school day (10 per cent);
- 7 per cent of families wanted to know more about holiday providers while 5 per cent wanted more information about the opening hours of local childcare providers;

Understandably, the type of response given to this question was closely related to the age of the children in the household and Table 9-6 illustrates this clearly. While a fifth (21 per cent) of families with children of pre-school age reported to have wanted more information about pre-school childcare, just 2 per cent of families with all their children at school reported likewise. Conversely, the need for information about before and/or after-school childcare and holiday provision was much greater among families with children attending school than those whose children were not yet at school.

Table 9-6 Further information required by parents, by age of children in the household

	<i>Ages of children in the household</i>			<i>Column percentages +</i>
	Pre-school age only (%)	Pre-school and school age (%)	School age only (%)	All households (%)
General information on childcare	59	54	52	54
Costs of childcare (general)	20	18	15	17
Pre-school childcare	21	14	2	10
Childcare before/after the school day	2	8	16	10
Childcare during the school holidays	1	5	11	7
Quality of childcare (general)	8	9	6	7
Childminders, nannies, au pairs	6	8	6	6
Hours of childcare (general)	5	5	4	5
Schools	5	3	1	3
Childcare for older children	-	1	4	2
Other specific answer	4	6	9	7
Don't know	3	4	3	3
Weighted base	518	579	984	2,081
Unweighted base	589	680	1,214	2,483

Base: All households that reported there was 'too little' information about local childcare in the past year.

+ The columns show all types of information required by parents, therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Information about the cost of childcare was a more pressing concern for parents who did not work and for lower income households. A fifth (21 per cent) of non-working households stated this was an area where they needed more information compared to 16 per cent of working households. Similarly, 21 per cent of families with an annual income of less than £10,400 said they wanted to know more about childcare costs, compared with 12 per cent of families with an income of £31,200 or more per year.

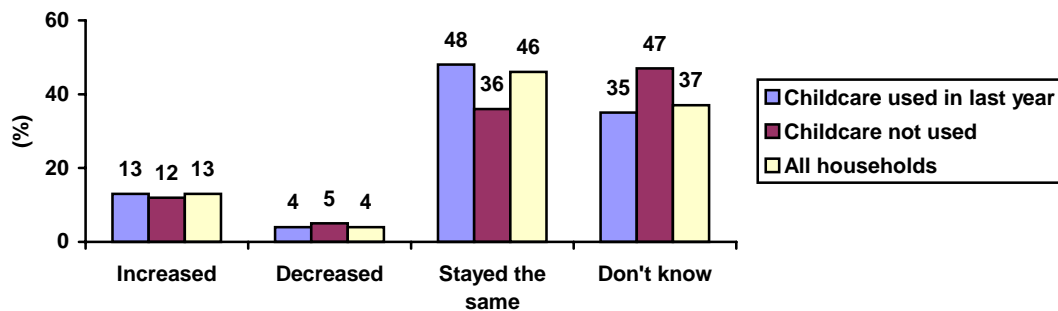
Changes in the amount of information available to parents

There are two ways in which the survey allows us to look at changes in parents' perceptions of the amount of local childcare information which is available to them. First, we can look at the responses to a question put to all parents in the 2001 study which asked whether the amount of information had changed in the past two years. Secondly, we can compare responses in the repeat study with the baseline survey to the general question about local childcare information.

Starting with the first of these, we found that overall 13 per cent of parents thought that the amount of childcare information available had increased in the past two years and 4 per cent thought it had worsened. The vast majority of parents either did not know (37 per cent) or thought the amount of information had stayed the same (46 per cent).

Parents that had used childcare in the past year were more likely to have had an opinion about changes in the amount of information available than those that had not used childcare. A third of those who used childcare (35 per cent) compared with almost a half of those who did not (47 per cent) said they did not know what had happened to the amount of information. Otherwise, as Figure 9-4 shows, these two types of parents were just as likely to have reported either an increase or a decrease in the amount of local childcare information.

Figure 9-4 Changes in the amount of information in the past two years, by use of childcare in the past year



Base: All households

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

The proportion of parents reporting a change in the amount of information did not vary much across different household or respondent characteristics. The one notable exception was in relation to the ages of the children in the household. Parents with all their children attending school were more likely to have recorded an increase in the amount of information available than were parents with all their children not yet at school – 14 and 9 per cent respectively.

Table 9-7 shows the results of comparisons between the baseline and repeat surveys. The proportion of parents that thought the amount of local childcare information was 'about right' decreased from 35 to 29 per cent across the two surveys. It appears that this change reflects the increase in those who "Do not know" about the adequacy of childcare information from 18 to 24 per cent in the same period.

Table 9-7 Whether the right amount of information was available, by year of survey

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	1999 survey (%)	2001 survey (%)
About right	35	29 ⁺⁺
Too much	1	1
Too little	46	47
Don't know	18	24 ⁺⁺
Weighted base	n/a	3,967
Unweighted base	4,213	4,715

Base: All households that had used childcare in the past year.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

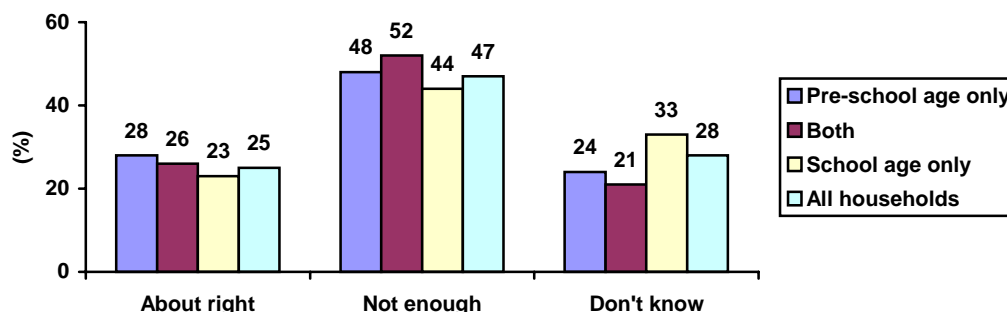
9.4 Parental perceptions of the availability of childcare in their local area

All parents were asked for their opinions about the number of childcare places available in their local area. Overall the study found:

- Just under half (47 per cent) of parents thought there were too few childcare places, a quarter (25 per cent) thought that there were about the right number of places, 28 per cent said they did not know and only 1 per cent thought there were too many childcare places.
- Parents that had used childcare in the past year were more likely to have said there were not enough places- 48 per cent compared to 36 per cent who had not used childcare;

Parents with all their children at school were less likely than other parents to have thought there were enough childcare places in their local area (Figure 9-5). Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of parents of school age children thought the number of places was 'about right' compared with 28 per cent of parents whose children were not yet at school. Families where at least one child was at school and at least one was still at home were the most likely to have reported that there were not enough childcare places in their local area - just over half (52 per cent) of these families thought more places were needed.

Figure 9-5 Assessment of number of childcare places, by age of children in the household



Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

The percentages do not sum to 100 as we have excluded the percentage which said there was too many information. One per cent of households responded in this way.

Parents that had used some early years education or other types of formal childcare in the last year were more likely than other parents to have said there were not enough childcare places in their local area. Just over half (54 per cent) thought there were not enough places compared with around two-fifths of parents who either did not use childcare in the past year (36 per cent) or who did not use any formal childcare (40 per cent). Users of formal childcare were also the least likely to have said “don’t know” to this question (19 per cent compared with 37 and 39 per cent for the two other groups).

Dissatisfaction with the number of childcare places did not appear to be related to the following:

- household structure;
- employment structure; or
- household income.

Families of black ethnic origin were more likely to have reported insufficient childcare places in their local area than other families – 56 per cent said there were not enough places compared with 47 per cent of white families and 38 per cent of Asian families.

Half (50 per cent) of the parents living in socially deprived areas said there were not enough childcare places compared with 46 per cent of families in the least deprived areas.

Table 9-8 shows significant variation in the number of childcare places across the ten Government office regions. Families in the North West, North East and the East Midlands were most likely to have been satisfied with the number of childcare places in their local area - 30, 28 and 28 per cent respectively thought there were enough places. In contrast, fewer than one-in-five (16 per cent) parents living in Merseyside thought there were enough places. Parents in London and the North East were more

likely to have said there were not enough places – just over half (52 per cent) held this view. The fact that families in the North East were most likely to say there were enough childcare places and that there were not enough childcare places reflects the lower number of people in the North East who responded “Don’t know” to this question.

Table 9-8 Assessment of number of childcare places, by government office region

	Number of childcare places			<i>Row percentages</i>	
	About right (%)	Not enough (%)	Don't know (%)	Unweighted base	Weighted base
North West	30	43	26	585	499
North East	28	52	20	323	272
East Midlands	28	44	27	497	418
Yorkshire & Humber	26	43	31	636	546
West Midlands	26	43	30	622	527
South West	25	43	31	474	407
South East	23	49	28	786	669
London	21	52	26	731	628
Eastern	20	49	30	628	537
Merseyside	16	50	34	134	117
Total	25	47	28	5,416	4,619

Base: All households.

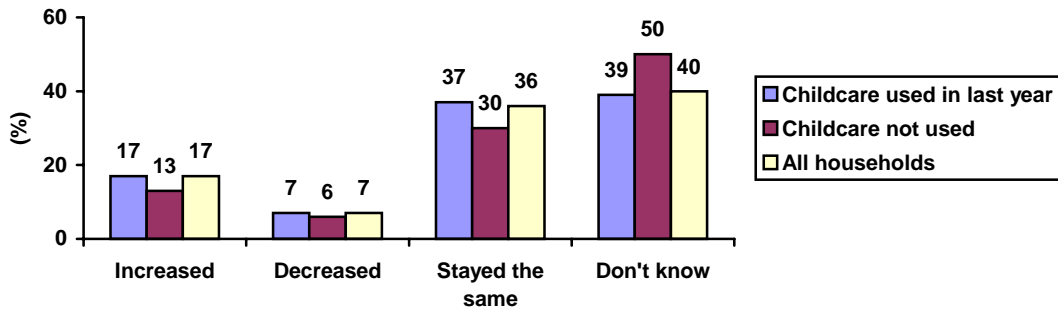
The percentages do not sum to 100 as we have excluded the percentage which said there was too many childcare places. One per cent of households responded in this way.

Changes in the number of childcare places

All parents were asked whether there had been a change in the number of childcare places that were available in their local area over the past two years. While most said there had either been no change (36 per cent) or that they did not know what had happened (40 per cent), around one-in-five (24 per cent) thought there had been some change. The change was most likely to have been an increase in the number of places in the local area with just under one-in-five parents (17 per cent) reporting an increase. This was just over twice as many as those who thought the number of childcare places had decreased (7 per cent).

Figure 9-6 shows that parents that had used childcare in the past year were more likely to have had an opinion about changes in the number of childcare places than those that had not used childcare. Two-fifths (39 per cent) of those that had used childcare said they did not know what had happened to the number of childcare places compared with half (50 per cent) of those that had not used childcare. Marginally more users of childcare reported an increase in the number of childcare places than non-users. 17 per cent of users compared with 13 per cent of non users reported an increase in the number of childcare places.

Figure 9-6 Changes in the number of childcare places in the past two years, by use of childcare in the past year



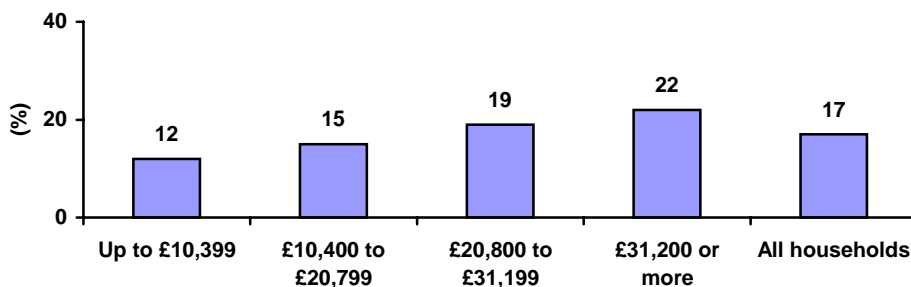
Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

Two parent families were more likely to report an increase in the number of childcare places. Just under a fifth (18 per cent) of two-parent families thought that the number of childcare places had increased in the past year compared with just over a tenth (12 per cent) of lone parents. Across both of these family types, an increase in the number of childcare places was more likely to have been reported where at least one of the parents was in employment. For example, among two-parent families where neither parent was in employment, just 9 per cent said the number of places had increased, whereas 18 per cent of families where both were in full-time employment reported an increase in childcare places. The result was similar for lone parents – 16 per cent of those in employment (either full or part-time) thought the number of places had increased compared with 9 per cent of those who did not work.

High income families were significantly more likely than low income families to have thought that the number of childcare places had increased in the past two years (Figure 9-7). Just over a fifth (22 per cent) of families with an annual household income of more than £31,199 thought there had been an increase in the number of places compared with just over a tenth (12 per cent) of families with an income of less than £10,400.

Figure 9-7 Proportion of families reporting an increase in the number of childcare places in the past two years, by household gross annual income



Base: All households.

In comparison with the 1999 baseline survey, this repeat study shows that there has been a fall in the proportion of families that appear to be satisfied with the number of childcare places available to them (Table 9-9). Looking only at families which had used childcare in the past year, the proportion of parents which were satisfied fell from 30 per cent in 1999 to 25 per cent in 2001. This fall is almost exactly matched by an increase in the proportion saying there are not enough childcare places – this increased from just over two-fifths (42 per cent) in 1999 to nearly half (48 per cent) in the repeat survey.

Table 9-9 Assessment of the number of childcare places, by year of survey

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	1999 survey (%)	2001 survey (%)
Too many	1	1
About right	30	25
Not enough	42	48
Don't know	27	26
Weighted base	n/a	3,967
Unweighted base	4,213	4,715

Base: All households that had used childcare in the past year.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

9.5 Parents' evaluation about the need for more childcare places

Parents were asked about the need for more pre-school childcare and supervised places for school age children in their local area⁷⁴. The main findings from this section are:

- 77 per cent of parents thought there should be more childcare places for pre-school children;
- 86 per cent of parents thought there should be more out-of-school childcare places;

Lone parents were more likely than two parent families to agree that there needed to be more of these types of childcare places. Ninety per cent of lone parents thought there should be more supervised places for school aged children outside of school hours compared with 84 per cent of two-parent families.

There is a slightly lower demand amongst lone parent and two parent families for childcare places for pre-school children. 80 per cent of lone parents and 76 per cent of two parent families agree that there is a need for more childcare places for pre-school children.

⁷⁴ These questions were asked of both the main respondent and their partner. Only the main respondent answers are reported here.

Table 9-10 Parental attitudes towards childcare, by household work status

Column percentages

	Both work full-time (%)	One works full-time, one part- time (%)	Two-parent family		Neither works (%)	All couples (%)	Parent works full-time (%)	Lone parent		All lone parents (%)
			One works full-time (%)	One or both work part-time (%)				Parent works part-time (%)	Parent not in work (%)	
<i>There should be more childcare places for pre-school children</i>										
Agree strongly	35	28	31	25	31	31	31	34	35	34
Agree	44	45	46	50	45	45	50	45	44	46
Neither agree nor disagree	14	18	15	15	14	16	17	15	14	15
Disagree	5	7	6	7	6	5	2	4	4	4
Disagree strongly	1	1	*	1	1	*	*	*	*	*
Don't know	1	1	1	2	3	2	*	2	3	2
<i>There should be more supervised places for school-age children to go to outside of school hours</i>										
Agree strongly	49	40	37	29	42	41	53	57	45	50
Agree	40	43	45	50	40	43	40	37	42	40
Neither agree nor disagree	7	11	13	11	11	11	6	5	8	7
Disagree	2	4	3	6	4	3	1	1	2	2
Disagree strongly	*	*	*	1	2	*	-	*	*	*
Don't know	1	2	2	3	1	1	-	1	2	1
Unweighted base	1015	1579	1099	148	192	4033	323	369	691	1383
Weighted base	835	1347	963	128	172	3446	254	302	617	1173

Base: All households.

Across the range of household incomes captured in the survey there was very little difference in the proportion of families which thought there should be more out of school or pre-school childcare. For out-of-school places, 87 per cent of families with an annual income of more than £31,199 thought there should be more places and the same percentage of families with an income of less than £10,400 thought likewise. Regarding childcare for pre-school children the result was very similar - 77 and 79 per cent in the highest and lowest income brackets thought more places were needed.

Families in socially deprived areas were more likely to have agreed strongly that there was a need for more pre-school and out-of-school childcare (Tables 9-11 and 9-12):

- 35 per cent of parents living in the most socially deprived areas thought there should be more pre-school childcare places compared with 28 per cent living in the least deprived areas.
- A similar relationship was present with respect to out-of-school care - 46 per cent of families in the most deprived areas agreed strongly that there needed to be more out-of-school care compared with 41 per cent of families living in the least deprived areas.

Table 9-11 Assessment of pre-school childcare places, by index of multiple deprivation

<i>There should be more childcare places for pre-school children</i>	Multiple deprivation index					Column percentages
	1st quintile - least deprived (%)	2 nd quintile (%)	3 rd quintile (%)	4 th quintile (%)	5 th quintile - most deprived (%)	All households (%)
Agree strongly	28	29	34	32	35	31
Agree	47	44	44	47	45	45
Neither agree nor disagree	17	18	14	15	13	16
Disagree	6	7	6	5	4	5
Disagree strongly	*	1	*	0	*	*
Don't know	1	2	2	1	2	2
Weighted base	956	915	895	918	909	4,593
Unweighted base	1,133	1,084	1,054	1,064	1,049	5,384

Base: All households.

There were 32 cases where it was not possible to attach a deprivation score due to incomplete data regarding the location of the family.

Table 9-12 Assessment of out-of-school childcare places, by index of multiple deprivation

<i>There should be more supervised places for school-age children to go to outside of school hours</i>	Multiple deprivation index					Column percentages
	1st quintile - least deprived (%)	2 nd quintile (%)	3 rd quintile (%)	4 th quintile (%)	5 th quintile - most deprived (%)	All households (%)
Agree strongly	41	41	43	44	46	43
Agree	42	43	43	43	41	42
Neither agree nor disagree	11	11	9	9	8	10
Disagree	4	3	2	2	2	3
Disagree strongly	*	*	*	*	*	*
Don't know	1	1	2	1	2	1
Weighted base	956	915	895	918	909	4,593
Unweighted base	1,133	1,084	1,054	1,064	1,049	5,384

Base: All households.

There were 32 cases where it was not possible to attach a deprivation score due to incomplete data regarding the location of the family.

9.6 Assessment of the quality of childcare places

All parents, including those who had not used childcare in the past year, were asked to rate the quality of the childcare in their local area. The main findings were:

- Just under half (49 per cent) of parents thought the quality of childcare in their local area was fairly good (35 per cent) or very good (13 per cent);
- Over one-in-ten (14 per cent) thought the quality was either poor (11 per cent) or very poor (3 per cent);
- Just under two-fifths (37 per cent) said they did not know about the quality of childcare in the local area.
- Users of childcare were more likely to give a rating of at least good (51 per cent) than non-users (35 per cent). They were, however, as likely to give a rating of fairly poor or worse (14 per cent compared with 12 per cent).

Parents with children of pre-school age only were more likely than other parents to have rated the quality of their local childcare as either fairly or very good (Table 9-13). Just over half (54 per cent) gave such a rating compared with just over two-fifths (42 per cent) of parents who had all their children at school. This is consistent with the findings in chapter six where parents were generally more satisfied with the childcare that was available for younger children than for older, school aged children. Satisfaction with out-of-school clubs was generally lower than for other providers.

Table 9-13 Assessment of the quality of local childcare places, by age of children in the household

	Ages of children in the household			Column percentages
	Pre-school age only	Pre-school and school age	School age only	All households
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Very good	15	18	10	13
Fairly good	39	40	32	35
Fairly poor	11	10	11	11
Very poor	4	3	4	3
Don't know	31	28	44	37
Weighted base	946	1,171	2,501	4,618
Unweighted base	1,073	1,355	2,987	5,415

Base: All households.

Fewer lone parents (41 per cent) thought the quality of local childcare was 'fairly' or 'very good' compared with two parent families (51 per cent). There was also considerable variation in the responses among lone parents according to their work status. Those that were in employment were more likely to have rated the quality of local childcare as 'good' compared with lone parents not currently in work (45 and 37 per cent respectively). This variation in the rating of quality by work status was not evident among two-parent families.

Satisfaction with the quality of local childcare was highest among white families. 50 of white families compared to 42 per cent of Asian families and 43 per cent of black families.

Considerably more high income than low income households were satisfied with the quality of their local childcare. As Table 9-14 shows, 56 per cent of families with an income of £31,200 or more rated the quality of local childcare as 'very good' or 'fairly good' compared with just 38 per cent of families in the lowest income bracket. Part of this relationship can be explained by the over-representation of lone parents among low income families. However, even after controlling for family structure, high income families were still more likely to give a better rating for the quality of their local childcare.

Table 9-14 Assessment of the quality of local childcare places, by household gross annual income

	Household income					All households
	Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 to £20,799 (%)	£20,800 to £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	DK or Refused (%)	(%)
Very good	10	13	15	15	11	13
Fairly good	28	36	36	41	31	35
Fairly poor	13	11	10	9	10	11
Very poor	4	5	3	3	4	3
Don't know	44	36	35	32	46	37
Weighted base	911	1,111	1,018	1,245	334	4,619
Unweighted base	1,043	1,309	1,191	1,491	382	5,416

Base: All households.

Parents were also asked about the change in quality of childcare in their local area over the past two years. 13 per cent of parents said the quality of childcare had improved, with only 3 per cent saying it had worsened. Most parents either didn't know (44 per cent) or thought the quality of childcare had remained the same (39 per cent).

Changes in parental evaluation of quality of childcare since 1999

As before the results are compared to those from the baseline survey. Again, while the same question was asked, in 1999 it was only asked of parents that had used childcare in the past 12 months. Table 9-15 shows no significant change between the two surveys in parents' evaluation of the quality of local childcare.

Table 9-15 Satisfaction with the quality of childcare in local area

	Column percentages	
	1999 survey (%)	2001 survey (%)
Very good	16	14
Fairly good	36	37
Fairly poor	10	11
Very poor	4	4
Don't know	36	35
Weighted base	n/a	3,967
Unweighted base	4,213	4,715

Base: All households that used childcare in the past year.

+ = significantly different from 1999 at the 95% confidence interval.

++ = significantly different from 1999 at the 99% confidence interval.

9.7 Summary

In this chapter we have described the views parents have about their own childcare and what is available to them in their local area.

Starting with parental views on sources of information about childcare in their local area, we found that just over half of parents (54 per cent) had obtained some information about childcare in the past year. By a considerable distance, the main source of information about childcare is word of mouth – 38 per cent of parents had received information about childcare from this source which was almost three times as many as the next most commonly used source of information, the Local Authority (13 per cent). Generally speaking, more parents relied on informal sources of information than on formal sources such as childcare information services.

Parents were asked specifically about their use and awareness of *ChildcareLink*, the government sponsored helpline and internet site. Relatively few parents (1 per cent or approximately 55,000 families) reported having used *ChildcareLink* in the past year.

Almost half (45 per cent) of parents thought that there should be more information available. Those with children of pre-school age are most likely to think that more information is needed. Of those who wanted more information about childcare, 54 per cent wanted general information, 17 per cent wanted specific information about cost and 7 per cent wanted more information about quality. Most parents thought that in the past two years there was either no change (46 per cent) or did not know (37 per cent) if there had been any change in the amount of childcare information available in the local area.

We also reported on parents' views about the number of childcare places in their local area. Just under half (47 per cent) thought there were not enough childcare places in their locality. Dissatisfaction with the number of childcare places did not appear to be related to many of the key characteristics we have used to classify families apart from ethnicity. Families of black ethnic origin were more likely to have reported insufficient childcare places in their local area than other families – 56 per cent said there were not enough places compared with 47 per cent of white families and 38 per cent of Asian families. In comparison with the 1999 baseline survey, this repeat study shows that there has been a fall in the proportion of families that appear to be satisfied with the number of childcare places available to them.

More specifically, parents were asked about the need for more pre-school childcare and supervised places for school age children in their local area. A large majority (77 per cent) thought there should be more childcare places for pre-school children and an even higher proportion (86 per cent) thought there should be more out-of-school childcare places. Across most of the characteristics which we have used to define parents and households, there was little variation in these proportions. One notable exception was families in socially deprived areas who were more likely to have strongly agreed that there was a need for more pre-school and out-of-school childcare.

All parents were asked about the quality of childcare in the local area and about half (49 per cent) thought that it was 'fairly' or 'very good'. Not surprisingly, users of childcare are more likely to report good quality than non-users (51 per cent compared to 35 per cent). There has been no change in the parental evaluation of childcare quality since the last survey.

10 LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION AND THE USE OF CHILDCARE

10.1 Introduction

In this and the next chapter our attention turns to the question of what influences a parent's decision to enter the labour market, and more specifically, we explore the effect that childcare arrangements have on this decision.

We have decided to focus on the employment behaviour of mothers in these two chapters, for the simple reason that they tend to be responsible for childcare provision in the household and, as such, we would expect childcare to have a larger impact on their labour market activities than it would for men⁷⁵. Over two-thirds of mothers (67 per cent) had main responsibility for childcare in their household, with a further 30 per cent having at least shared responsibility. Just three per cent of males had main responsibility, and of these, half (50 per cent) were male lone parents.

The influences on mothers' employment decisions are analysed, taking into account other factors which are known to be key determinants of labour market behaviour, including household structure, mothers' qualifications and employment status.

The responses analysed in this chapter have been taken from the main respondent interview, and where the mother was interviewed as a partner, from the partner or partner proxy interview⁷⁶. In this chapter the bases for the analysis are mothers who were in paid employment at the time of the survey, that is a total of 3,363 mothers, including 2,713 who were in two-parent households and 650 lone mothers.

The chapter starts by exploring the reasons behind a mother's decision to *enter* a paid job, and takes this further by exploring more generally the decision to work. It then looks at which childcare arrangements mothers thought were of most value to them. An analysis is made of the work and childcare related reasons for working to see which was the biggest influence on mothers' labour market participation. The chapter finishes by looking at the ideal work and childcare arrangements of working mothers.

⁷⁵ Just 1.5 per cent of the sample were male lone parents. Since their numbers were not sufficient to allow separate analysis we have decided to exclude them from the analysis reported in this and the following chapter.

⁷⁶ Of the 5,416 productive interviews, 79 were with male lone parents. All other households (5,337) therefore had a mother present. Of these, 5,162 (or 97 per cent) were interviewed as the main respondent, 113 as a partner (2 per cent) and in 62 cases (1 per cent) a proxy interview was done with the mother's partner.

10.2 Transition into work and the role of childcare

A majority (58 per cent) of mothers who were in employment at the time of the interview had started a job within two years of having their youngest child⁷⁷ (Table 10-1). Similar proportions of working mothers had entered employment before (20 per cent) and after (21 per cent) their youngest child had reached their fifth birthday. Lone mothers were marginally less likely than mothers in two-parent families to enter work before their children were five, preferring it seems to wait until their youngest child had reached five years old. Whereas over a quarter of lone mothers (27 per cent) returned to work some time after their youngest child turned five, a fifth (20 per cent) of mothers in couple households had done likewise.

Table 10-1 **Timing of entry into work by household structure**

	Type of family		Column percentages
	Couple (%)	Lone parent (%)	All mothers (%)
Returned within 2 years of having child	60	50	58
Returned within 2 to 5 years of having child	20	24	20
Returned 5 or more years after having child	20	27	21
Weighted base	2,281	520	2,802
Unweighted base	2,713	650	3,363

Base: All mothers who were in paid employment at the time of the interview.

Mothers who had no qualifications were considerably less likely than other mothers to enter work when they had a very young child. Just under half (45 per cent) of mothers with no academic qualifications took a paid job prior to their youngest child reaching two, compared with three-fifths (60 per cent) of other mothers with at least one GCSE or its equivalent. Mothers without a qualification were much more likely to wait until their youngest child was old enough to attend school, 32 per cent having gone to work when their youngest was five or more years of age.

If the mother had started their current job some time in the two years preceding the date of their interview, they were asked to explain why they had entered work at that time. Mothers were shown a list of possible explanations for this decision and these explanations were a mixture of financial, childcare related and more general factors.

Before describing the reasons for entering work at that time we should describe these mothers. They represented just under a fifth (18 per cent) of all mothers who were currently in paid employment. Prior to entering into employment the majority had been at home looking after their home and family (72 per cent), while fewer than one-in-ten classified their previous activity as unemployment (8 per cent), a student (7 per cent), long-term sick (2 per cent) or something else (10 per cent). In terms of the jobs they were entering, just over a fifth (22 per cent) were full-time jobs for 30 or more hours per week. The average age of these mothers was 34, and the median number of children was two. Just under half (46 per cent) had all their children in

⁷⁷ There is also evidence from the survey data that around three-quarters of these mothers (76 per cent or 45 per cent of all mothers who were in employment) returned directly from maternity leave.

school, with the remaining mothers evenly split between those without any children at school (28 per cent) and those with children in both these states (26 per cent). Around one in five (22 per cent) were lone parents, which was marginally lower than for the sample as a whole.

Table 10-2 shows the reasons given by these mothers for entering work broken down by type of family.

- The most common reason mentioned was that they had found a job which enabled them to combine their work with their responsibilities to look after their child or children. Just over a third (35 per cent) of mothers gave this response.

Table 10-2 Reasons for entering into work by household structure

<i>Reasons for entering work</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>		<i>All mothers (%)</i>
	<i>Type of family Lone parent (%)</i>	<i>Couple (%)</i>	
Found job that enabled work to be combined with child(ren)	38	34	35
Wanted to get out of the house	17	16	16
Financial situation	14	15	15
Child(ren) commenced school	15	14	14
Child(ren) old enough to use childcare	8	9	9
Wanted financial independence	8	8	8
Returned from maternity leave	3	9	8
The job was offered to me	9	7	8
Family became available/willing to help with childcare	6	7	7
Finished studying	6	5	5
Became eligible for WFTC or childcare tax credit	12	1	4
Child(ren) old enough to look after themselves	4	2	3
Appropriate childcare became available	3	3	3
Became eligible for other financial help with childcare costs	1	*	*
Other	2	1	2
Don't know	1	*	*
Weighted base	111	400	511
Unweighted base	136	473	609

Base: All mothers that had entered work in the past 2 years.

+ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- Aside from this most popular reason, other reasons offered were fairly diffuse. Sixteen per cent mentioned that they wanted to 'get out of the house,' 15 per cent mentioned financial reasons, and 14 per cent explained that their children had commenced school. No other reason had more than 9 per cent of the mothers' responses.
- Very few differences are apparent when lone mothers are compared with mothers in two-parent households. Only one factor showed significant differences based on household structure. Twelve per cent of lone mothers said that they entered work because of the extra in-work support available through WFTC. This reason was cited by only one per cent of mothers with partners.

The decision to take up paid employment is naturally an important one for mothers raising children. Another critical decision revolves around how many hours to work in combination with rearing children. Mothers who decided to increase their hours from less than 30 to more than 30 per week form a key sub-group of working parents. They represented just six per cent of all mothers who were currently in paid employment. The average age of these mothers was 37, and the median number of children was two. A large majority (79 per cent) had all their children in school, which is not surprising, nor is it surprising that most (84 per cent) had a partner. Table 10-3 shows the reasons these mothers gave for increasing their hours of work.

- The most common reason cited was financial need, mentioned by 28 per cent of mothers. Other financial reasons were cited with far less frequency. For instance, the desire for financial independence was mentioned by only nine per cent of respondents, while eligibility for benefit or financial help with childcare were each cited by only one per cent of the working mothers.
- For some mothers, the decision to increase weekly hours appears to have happened somewhat by chance. Twenty-two per cent simply said that 'the job was offered to me.' This may nevertheless indicate a latent interest to extend work for financial or personal reasons.
- More than one in five apparently learned to combine work with child rearing while on the job. Twenty-one per cent said that they found a job which enabled them to combine work with children (after they were in paid employment), thereby permitting them to increase their hours.
- Other reasons were less popular. Eleven per cent of working mothers said they increased their hours when their children commenced school. No other reason was cited by more than 6 per cent of working mothers.

Table 10-3 Reasons for increasing number of hours worked in the past two years.

Column percentages +

<i>Reasons for changing hours</i>	All mothers (%)
Financial situation	28
The job was offered to me	22
Found job that enabled work to be combined with child(ren)	21
Child commenced school	11
Wanted financial independence	9
Family helped with childcare	6
Child(ren) old enough to look after themselves	5
Child(ren) old enough to use childcare	4
Wanted to get out of the house	4
Childcare came available	3
Became eligible for WFTC or childcare tax credit	1
Became eligible for other financial help with childcare	1
Finished studying	1
Returned from maternity leave ⁷⁸	1
Other	7
Don't know	2
Weighted base	161
Unweighted base	201

Base: All mothers that had increased the number of hours they worked in the past two years from less than 30 to 30 or more per week.

+ The column show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

10.3 Influences on the decision to work outside the home

A more general set of questions about the factors which influenced the decision to work were also asked of mothers in employment.

Respondents were asked to first identify from the factors listed in Table 10-4 all those which influenced their decision to work, and then to select what they regarded as the single most important influence. These factors are analysed by a number of personal and household characteristics which were found to be significantly related to mothers' reasons for working. As in the *baseline* survey we found household structure (i.e. whether it was a lone parent or two-parent household) to yield the largest variation in responses, and for this reason this is explored in more depth, including both the results on all the factors which influenced the decision to work and the most important factor. For other factors which were found to be associated with the decision to work - mothers' qualifications and employment status - we have only reported the range of factors which were mentioned. The analysis of the

⁷⁸ This code is possible given the definition used in the survey regarding employment status while on maternity leave. If parent was on paid maternity leave their activity status was to be recorded as in paid employment. This employment may have been for fewer than 30 hours per week before the baby was born, and then for more than 30 on return from maternity leave.

single most important reason for working did not, on the whole, show any different relationships and has therefore not been reported.

The last two columns of Table 10-4 show the results for the sample as a whole, the first indicating all the influences determining a mother's decision to go out to work and then the most important reason for working. The overall findings show that:

- Predictably, financial factors were important determinants of labour market participation, with half (51 per cent) of mothers mentioning financial autonomy as a factor influencing their decision to work and 17 per cent identifying this as their main reason for working. Just over two-fifths (44 per cent) of mothers said they worked because they needed the money and over a third (34 per cent) mentioned this as the most important reason. Keeping up with pension contributions was mentioned by around one-in-four (23 per cent) mothers, however this was rarely reported as the most important reason.
- Intrinsic job motivators were also very important: 69 per cent of mothers said they were working because they enjoyed it and this was the most important reason for just over a fifth (22 per cent) of working mothers. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of mothers worked because they wanted to get out of the house; however, only six per cent mentioned this as the key factor behind their decision to work. One-in-four (24 per cent) mothers reported that they would feel useless if they did not work and 14 per cent said their career would suffer if they stayed at home. Both of these were rarely mentioned as the most important reason for working (three and two per cent respectively).
- The use of family friendly working practices was less commonly mentioned by mothers as an influence on the decision to work than either financial or intrinsic factors. As shown elsewhere, the fact that flexi-time, term-time working and homeworking were not widely available to parents, may explain why they were not readily cited as a factor behind the decision to work. Just under one-in-five mothers mentioned flexi-time (17 per cent) or term-time only working (15 per cent) as a reason for working and very few (two and six per cent respectively) said the availability of these arrangements was the main factor behind their decision to work. Homeworking, either all or some of the time, was mentioned by fewer than 10 per cent of mothers and only one per cent said this was the most important factor.
- Finally, for the overwhelming majority of mothers in two-parent households, a partner's access to and use of family friendly working arrangements played a negligible part in the decision to go out to work. A very small proportion of mothers said they were able to work because their partner worked from home (4 per cent), flexi-time (2 per cent) or term-time (1 per cent). None of these was the most important reason behind a mother's decision to work outside the home.

Table 10-4 Influences on mothers' decision to work, by household structure

	Type of family				Column percentages	
	Mothers in two-parent family		Lone mothers		All mothers	
	All+ (%)	Most imp. (%)	All+ (%)	Most imp. (%)	All* (%)	Most imp. (%)
Like own money	52	18	44	9	51	17
Need money	36	26	80	66	44	34
Pension contribution	23	2	22	1	23	2
Enjoys work	70	24	68	12	69	22
Get out of the house	40	7	38	4	40	6
Useless without job	22	3	32	2	24	3
Career would suffer	14	2	11	1	14	2
Work flexi-time	17	2	15	2	17	2
Term-time work	17	7	10	2	15	6
Some homeworking	8	*	7	*	7	*
Always homeworking	5	2	2	1	4	1
Partner homeworking	5	*	N/A	N/A	4	*
Partner works flexi-time	3	*	N/A	N/A	2	*
Partner works term-time	1	*	N/A	N/A	1	*
Other reasons for working	1	1	1	1	1	1
Don't know	*	-	*	-	*	-
None of these reasons	1	*	*	1	1	1
Weighted base	2,281		520		2,802	
Unweighted base	2,713		650		3,363	

Base: All mothers that were in paid work.

* These columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Household structure

Some of the main differences between mothers with a partner and lone mothers were related to financial considerations, as shown in Table 10-4.

- Financial autonomy was more likely to be reported by mothers in couples, with just over half (52 per cent) mentioning this as an influence on their decision to work. Almost one-in-five (18 per cent) thought this was their main reason for working. In contrast fewer lone parents worked to gain financial autonomy – just over two-fifths (44 per cent) mentioned this factor while one-in-ten (9 per cent) gave it as their main reason for working.
- Just over a third (36 per cent) of mothers in households headed by a couple said they worked because they needed the money, whereas over twice that percentage of lone parents (80 per cent) worked for this reason. Financial need was by far the most important factor influencing the decision of lone parents to work, with

two-thirds (66 per cent) citing it as their main reason, whereas a quarter (26 per cent) of mothers in two-parent households thought likewise.

As discussed earlier, the variables measuring attachment to work were also very likely to be mentioned as important influences on the decision to work, but again variations emerged between those in two-parent households and lone mothers.

- Similar proportions of lone mothers (68 per cent) and mothers in two-parent households (70 per cent) said they worked because they enjoyed it. However, lone parents were much less likely than mothers in households headed by a couple to have said this was their main reason for working (12 per cent compared with 24 per cent respectively). This difference reflects the high priority of financial necessity which influences the decision of lone parents to work.
- A desire to get out of the house was mentioned by roughly equal proportions of mothers in two-parent households (40 per cent) and lone mothers (38 per cent). The former of these two groups was slightly more likely to have said this was their main reason for working (the respective figures were 7 and 4 per cent).
- Lone mothers were considerably more likely than mothers in two-parent households to have said they would feel useless if they did not work – 32 and 22 per cent respectively responded in this manner. However, the proportion of those who regarded this as the main reason was similar for both groups (2 and 3 per cent respectively).
- Concern that a break from employment might damage one's career prospects was shared by a similar proportion of mothers in couples and lone mothers (14 and 11 per cent respectively). Few of these parents (2 and 1 per cent respectively) reported this as their main reason for working.

There were only small differences between lone mothers and mothers in two-parent households in terms of family friendly working arrangements influencing their decision to work.

Mothers' qualification level

The results on mothers with different qualification levels seem to be closely linked to their labour market position, as one would expect, given that qualification level is a key factor determining employment circumstances (Table 10-5).

- Financial autonomy was mentioned by around half (51 per cent) of working mothers irrespective of their qualifications.
- The less qualified mothers were, the more likely they were to identify financial need as a reason for working. Just under half (48 per cent) of mothers with no qualifications mentioned this as a reason for working compared with just over two-fifths (43 per cent) with a degree or higher qualification.
- A strong relationship was evident between a mother's qualifications and the citing of the need to contribute to a pension as a reason for working. One-in-three (33 per cent) mothers with a degree or higher qualification worked so that

they could contribute to their pension compared with 14 per cent of mothers with no qualifications. This probably reflects the fact that highly qualified mothers were more likely than others to have access to jobs offering pension schemes.

Table 10-5 Influences on mothers' decision to work, by mothers' qualification level

	Highest qualification				All mothers (%)
	No qualif. (%)	GCSE or equiv. (%)	A-level or equiv. (%)	Degree or higher (%)	
Like own money	52	52	47	47	51
Need money	48	44	41	43	44
Pension contribution	14	21	25	33	23
Enjoys work	60	68	73	78	69
Get out of the house	43	41	38	36	40
Useless without job	27	24	21	25	24
Career would suffer	5	8	20	33	14
Work flexi-time	10	17	23	19	17
Term-time work	15	14	13	24	15
Some homeworking	2	6	10	15	7
Always homeworking	3	4	5	4	4
Partner homeworking	1	3	5	8	4
Partner works flexi-time	1	2	3	4	2
Partner works term-time	1	*	*	3	1
Other reasons for working	1	*	1	2	1
Don't know	*	*	*	*	*
None of these reasons	2	1	1	*	1
Weighted base	338	1,566	390	442	2,802
Unweighted base	386	1,852	487	554	3,363

Base: All mothers that were in paid work.

+ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Two columns have been omitted, mothers with some other qualification (60 unweighted responses) and mothers that did not know their highest qualification (24 unweighted responses).

Variations in employment related reasons for working also emerged between mothers with different qualification levels.

- The more qualified mothers were, the more likely they were to report attachment to work. For example, three-fifths (60 per cent) of mothers with no qualifications said they were in employment because they enjoyed work, compared with almost four-fifths (78 per cent) of mothers with a degree or higher qualification.
- In contrast, working because they wanted to get out of the house was cited more often by the less well qualified mothers. Just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of

mothers with no qualifications cited this reason, compared with 36 per cent of mothers with a degree or higher qualification.

- The biggest difference was found in relation to concern about the potential negative effect an employment break could have on career prospects: this was mentioned by a third (33 per cent) of the highest qualified mothers, a fifth (20 per cent) of those qualified at A-level, and ranges between five and eight per cent among those with lower or no qualifications.

The main differences in relation to employment arrangements which help mothers to work were again found between the most highly qualified mothers and the rest of the sample. Again, we conjecture that these differences are mainly a result of mothers with higher qualifications having greater access to flexible working arrangements⁷⁹.

- Both term-time working and homeworking were mentioned more often by mothers with a degree or higher qualification than other mothers. Whereas between 13 and 15 per cent of mothers with at most an A-level said they worked because they could work in term-times only, a quarter (24 per cent) of mothers qualified to a degree level cited this reason. Similarly, one-in-five (19 per cent) of mothers with a degree worked because they could work at home either all or some of the time compared with between five and ten per cent of mothers with either no qualifications or at most a GCSE.

Mothers' employment status

Variations between mothers who worked full-time and those who were in part-time employment were also observed and are shown in Table 10-6.

- While financial autonomy was equally important for both groups, financial necessity was much more likely to be mentioned by mothers in full-time employment than by those employed part-time, the respective figures being 52 and 39 per cent. Pension contribution was also more likely to be reported by mothers with a full-time job (30 per cent) than those working part-time (18 per cent). As with qualification levels, this result probably reflects differential access to jobs offering a pension scheme.

⁷⁹ For example, see Forth, J., Lissenburgh, S., Callender, C. and Millward, N. (1997) *Family Friendly Working Arrangements in Britain*, 1996. DfEE Research Report 16, Sheffield.

Table 10-6 Influences on mothers' decision to work, by employment status

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	In full-time employment (%)	In part-time employment (%)	All mothers (%)
Like own money	48	52	51
Need money	52	39	44
Pension contribution	30	18	23
Enjoys work	70	69	69
Get out of the house	31	46	40
Useless without job	26	23	24
Career would suffer	19	10	14
Work flexi-time	17	17	17
Term-time work	9	19	15
Some homeworking	9	6	7
Always homeworking	4	4	4
Partner homeworking	5	3	4
Partner works flexi-time	3	2	2
Partner works term-time	1	1	1
Other reasons for working	1	1	1
Don't know	*	*	*
None of these reasons	1	1	1
Weighted base	1,117	1,684	2,802
Unweighted base	1,374	1,989	3,363

Base: All mothers that were in paid work.

* These columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- There were no significant differences in the reporting of an intrinsic interest in work between mothers working full or part-time: 70 per cent of the former and 69 per cent of the latter said they enjoyed work. Similar proportions of full and part-time workers also said they worked because they would feel useless if they did not (26 and 23 per cent respectively). However, differences were more apparent in terms of mothers working because they wanted to get out of the house. Just under half (46 per cent) of those working part-time cited this as a reason for working compared with under a third (31 per cent) in a full-time job. The potential impact of an employment break on career prospects was considerably more likely to be reported by those working full-time (19 per cent), than those in part-time work (10 per cent).
- Term-time only working was more likely to be mentioned by mothers who worked on a part-time basis than those in full-time work (the respective figures were 19 and 9 per cent), indicating both that among the former this type of work arrangement was more likely to be available, and also that among mothers the need to arrange working hours around the needs of the family might be more important. Differences in relation to other working arrangements were very small.

- Again, partners' working arrangements had very little impact on the decision to work, irrespective of whether the mother was working full or part-time.

10.4 Childcare arrangements in support of working parents

As well as exploring the financial and employment related factors which determined mothers' decision to enter paid work, the extent to which different childcare arrangements helped them to combine work and caring responsibilities was also explored.

Respondents were again asked first to identify all the childcare arrangements which enabled them to go out to work, and then select what they regarded as the single most important one. The results on all the childcare arrangements which enabled mothers to go out to work, as well as the single most important one, are reported in the first part of this section, where the overall findings and differences between mothers in two-parent households and lone mothers are explored. However, for the reasons explained earlier, when looking at mothers' qualifications and employment status, the analysis focuses on the range of childcare arrangements which enabled mothers to go out to work.

Looking at the overall findings (the last two columns of Table 10-7):

- Having children at school was the most commonly mentioned arrangement which enabled mothers to work: half (50 per cent) of the mothers interviewed who were currently in paid employment mentioned this factor with a fifth (20 per cent) identifying it as the most important influence on their decision to go out to work. In addition, 11 per cent of working mothers said their children were old enough to look after themselves and as such, this enabled them to work. For three per cent, this was the most important reason.
- A similar proportion of mothers reported that the assistance they received from relatives with their childcare helped them to go out to work. This is not surprising, given that elsewhere in this report we have shown parents to have relied heavily on informal childcare arrangements. Just under half (48 per cent) identified the help with childcare provided by relatives as a factor which enabled them to go out to work. Almost one-in-six (16 per cent) also mentioned the help they received from friends. Fifteen per cent identified one of these as the single most important factor.
- Over a third (36 per cent) of mothers said that having childcare which fitted in with their working hours helped them to go out to work. One-in-ten (10 per cent) thought this was the most important factor in determining their decision to work.

Table 10-7 Childcare arrangements which enabled mother to go out to work, by household status

	<i>Column percentages</i>					
	Type of family				All mothers	
	Mothers in two-parent family		Lone mothers		All+ (%)	Most imp. (%)
All+ (%)	Most imp. (%)	All+ (%)	Most imp. (%)			
Child(ren) at school	50	21	49	17	50	20
Relatives help with childcare	47	13	56	18	48	14
Childcare fits working hours	35	9	42	11	36	10
Good quality childcare	32	18	43	21	34	18
Reliable/free/cheap childcare	28	9	40	16	30	11
Friends help with childcare	16	1	19	3	16	1
Child(ren) old enough	11	3	12	3	11	3
Employer helps with childcare	1	*	1	*	1	*
Partner helps with childcare	26	7	N/A	N/A	21	6
Childcare fits partners' hours	15	2	N/A	N/A	12	1
Work when partner not working	14	7	N/A	N/A	12	6
Partners' employer help with childcare	*	*	N/A	N/A	*	*
Ex-partner helps with childcare	-	-	15	3	3	1
Other	*	1	*	1	*	1
Don't know	*	*	1	1	*	*
None of these	8	8	6	6	7	7
Weighted base	2,281		520		2,802	
Unweighted base	2,713		650		3,363	

Base: All mothers that were in paid work.

* These columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- The availability of good quality childcare was also mentioned by around a third (34 per cent) of working mothers as a factor which helped them to work. Just under a fifth (18 per cent) thought this was the single most important reason, the second most likely of the responses reported.
- Having reliable free or cheap childcare also influenced the decision of a substantial minority of mothers (30 per cent), with 11 per cent identifying this as the single most important factor helping them to go out to work.
- The results also confirm the lack of employers' assistance with childcare, as this was reported by only one per cent of mothers.

Household structure

Starting with two-parent households, Table 10-7 shows that partners play a small role in terms of assisting mothers to go out to work, compared with some of the other factors mentioned by mothers. For example, their contribution to childcare was considerably less important compared with that of other relatives.

- A quarter (26 per cent) of mothers in two-parent households said they were able to work because their partner helped with childcare, with only seven per cent mentioning this as the most important factor which enabled them to work.
- Fifteen per cent of working mothers worked because they had childcare which fitted with their partner's working hours; however, just two per cent said that this was the main factor that helped them to go out to work.
- A similar proportion (14 per cent) said they worked when their partner was not working, with seven per cent regarding this arrangement as the single most important influence on the decision to work.

For lone mothers the help of an absent parent was rarely reported as an important factor which helped them to go out to work. Just over one-in-seven (15 per cent) mentioned the help of an absent parent as a factor which helped them to work and just three per cent said it was the main factor.

Differences between lone mothers and mothers in two-parent households were generally small in terms of the childcare arrangements which enabled them to work.

- Lone mothers were slightly more likely to have reported the support of their family and friends as an aid to them working – 56 per cent of lone mothers said the help of relatives enabled them to go out to work and 19 per cent mentioned the help of their friends, compared with 47 and 16 per cent respectively of mothers in two-parent households. In terms of the most important reason, a fifth (21 per cent) of lone mothers said that either of these informal types of childcare enabled them to work, compared with 16 per cent of mothers in two-parent households.
- The other key difference between mothers in a couple and lone mothers was the importance of access to reliable free or cheap childcare: 28 per cent of the former and 40 per cent of the latter mentioned this reason. The gap between the two remains with respect to the proportion quoting this as the most important reason; 16 per cent of lone mothers compared with 9 per cent of mothers in two-parent families thought the availability of reliable free or cheap childcare was the most important factor which enabled them to work. These findings are not surprising given that lone parents were generally less well-off than were couple households.
- Finally, access to good quality childcare was more likely to be mentioned by lone mothers, 43 per cent reported this, compared with 32 per cent of mothers in a couple. They were also more likely to have mentioned this as the main factor which enabled them to work, 21 per cent reported this, compared with 18 per cent of mothers in a couple.

Mothers' qualification level

Variations were also found between mothers with different qualification levels in terms of the childcare factors which enabled them to go out to work (Table 10-8).

- Having childcare that fitted in with their hours of work was more often reported by mothers the higher their qualifications. For example, a fifth (22 per cent) of mothers without academic qualifications worked for this reason compared with just under half (45 per cent) of mothers qualified to a degree level.

Table 10-8 Childcare arrangements which enabled mother to go out to work, by mother's qualification level

	Highest qualification				All mothers
	No qualif.	GCSE or equiv.	A-level or equiv.	Degree or higher	
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
All mothers					
Children at school	48	49	50	54	50
Relatives help with childcare	49	52	48	36	48
Childcare fits working hours	22	36	39	45	36
Quality childcare	24	32	36	45	34
Reliable free/cheap childcare	31	33	28	21	30
Friends help with childcare	13	16	18	18	16
Children old enough	12	10	11	14	11
Employer help with childcare	1	1	2	1	1
Mothers in two-parent family					
Partner helps with childcare	24	24	29	27	26
Childcare fits partners' hours	10	14	18	15	15
Work when partner not working	17	16	13	8	12
Partners' employer help with childcare	*	*	-	1	*
Lone mothers					
Ex partner helps with childcare	12	15	16	17	15
Other	*	*	*	1	*
Don't know	*	*	*	*	*
None of these	10	7	6	8	7
Weighted base	338	1566	390	442	2802
Unweighted base	386	1852	487	554	3363

Base: All mothers that were in paid work.

* The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Two columns have been omitted, mothers with some other qualification (60 unweighted responses) and mothers that did not know their highest qualification (24 unweighted responses).

- Access to good quality childcare was least likely to be reported by mothers with no qualifications - 24 per cent mentioned this, while the corresponding figure among other mothers ranged from 32 to 45 per cent.

- Having access to reliable free or cheap childcare was less likely to have been mentioned by mothers qualified to a degree level than by other mothers. A fifth (21 per cent) of mothers with a degree were able to work because of the low cost of their childcare compared with 28 per cent of mothers with at most an 'A' level, 33 per cent of mothers qualified to GCSE level and 31 per cent of mothers with no academic qualifications.
- The more highly qualified the mother was, the less likely they were to have reported that the help given by relatives enabled them to work. Just over a third (36 per cent) of mothers with at least a degree were in work because of the assistance given by relatives compared with around half of mothers with either no qualifications (49 per cent) or who were qualified up to GCSE or 'A' level (52 and 48 per cent respectively).

Employment status

A number of differences was evident in the childcare factors that enabled mothers to go out to work, between mothers who worked full-time and those in part-time employment (Table 10-9).

- Having childcare which fitted with their working hours was more important for mothers in full-time employment - 40 per cent mentioned this compared with 33 per cent of those who were working part-time.
- Having good quality childcare was also more important for mothers in full-time employment - 40 per cent mentioned this compared with 30 per cent of mothers in part-time employment. This difference may reflect the greater use of formal childcare by mothers in full-time employment (as shown in section 9.6 in this chapter), which, in turn, may lead to greater concern about quality.

Table 10-9 Childcare arrangements which enabled mother to go out to work, by mother's employment status

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	In full-time employment (%)	In part-time employment (%)	All mothers (%)
All mothers			
Children at school	51	49	50
Relatives help with childcare	47	49	48
Childcare fits working hours	40	33	36
Quality childcare	40	30	34
Reliable free/cheap childcare	30	30	30
Friends help with childcare	16	17	16
Children old enough	15	9	11
Employer help with childcare	1	1	1
Mothers in two-parent family			
Partner helps with childcare	29	23	26
Childcare fits partners' hours	19	12	15
Work when partner not working	11	16	14
Partners' employer help with childcare	*	*	*
Lone mothers			
Ex-partner helps with childcare	16	14	15
Other	*	*	*
Don't know	*	*	*
None of these	7	8	7
Weighted base	1,117	1,684	2,802
Unweighted base	1,374	1,989	3,363

Base: All mothers that were in paid work.

+ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Discriminating between work and childcare based reasons for working

After being asked separately which work and childcare related reasons were the most important factors which enabled them to go out to work, mothers were then asked to choose which of the two was the most important (Table 10-10). Half (50 per cent) thought the work related reasons were more important, two-fifths (42 per cent) thought the childcare related reasons were most important, with the remaining mothers undecided between the two.

Lone mothers were more likely to have been working for work related reasons than were mothers in two-parent households, 67 and 45 per cent respectively. Where a lone mother had said their main reason for working was because they needed the money, they almost unanimously (92 per cent) said they were working for a work related reason.

Table 10-10 Main factor which enabled mothers to work by household structure

Chief reason for working	Household Structure		Column percentages
	Mothers in a two-parent family (%)	Lone mothers (%)	All mothers (%)
Work-related	45	67	50
Childcare-related	44	31	42
None of these or don't know	11	2	8
Weighted base	2,281	520	2,802
Unweighted base	2,713	650	3,763

Base: All working mothers

Family status appeared to explain much of the variation in the chief reason for working. Other factors such as qualifications and the employment status of the mother's job did not seem to be related to whether work or the availability of childcare was more influential in deciding whether to work.

10.5 Ideal work arrangements of working parents

Having reviewed the factors that influenced mothers' decision to work outside the home, in this section we present the findings on their preferred working arrangements.

Working mothers were asked whether they would prefer:

- to work more hours if they had access to good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare;
- to reduce their working hours in order to spend more time with their children if they could afford to do so;
- to give up work to stay at home to look after their children.

Table 10-11 shows the proportion of mothers who answered positively to these questions (i.e. they either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'). The main conclusions from this were:

- almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of mothers who were currently in employment wanted to work fewer hours and spend more time with their children. Lone mothers were more likely to say they wanted to work fewer hours (70 per cent) than mothers in two-parent families (61 per cent). This difference is maintained when comparing couples and lone mothers with the same work status.
- Just under half (44 per cent) of working mothers said that if they could afford it, they would prefer to give up work and stay at home with their children. Mothers in couples (44 per cent) were only slightly less likely than lone mothers (46 per

cent) to share this opinion and, again, there was little variation between these two groups according to their work status.

- Overall, a quarter of working mothers would like to work more hours if they had access to adequate childcare. Lone mothers were considerably more likely to want to work more hours than those in a couple (34 per cent compared with 22 per cent). In particular, a relatively large number of lone parents currently in a part-time job, wished they could work longer hours so long as they had access to adequate childcare.

Table 10-11 Mothers' preferred working arrangement

	<i>Cell percentages</i>				
	Mothers in two-parent family		Lone mothers		Total
	Part-time (%)	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	Full-time (%)	(%)
Work more hours	28	12	46	18	24
Work fewer hours	52	76	58	85	63
Give up work	44	43	46	46	44
Weighted base	1387	894	297	223	2802
Unweighted base	1626	1087	363	287	3363

Base: All working mothers.

Note: Answers were not mutually exclusive therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Ideal working practices

Apart from how they would like to change their hours, mothers were also asked about their ideal working practices. They were shown a list (see Table 10-12) of working practices which differed somewhat according to their preferred hours of work. For example, only mothers that wanted to work fewer than 30 hours per week were asked whether it would be ideal to have the flexibility to work fewer days in the week. Mothers that wanted to work 30 or more hours per week were instead asked whether flexi-time would be an ideal arrangement.

Table 10-12 reports the results from this question and can be summarised as follows:

- Just over half (55 per cent) of mothers wanted to work in school term times only. This working practice was more likely to be mentioned by mothers that were currently working fewer than 30 hours per week and wanted to remain doing so (58 per cent) than those that either wanted to (55 per cent) or were currently working 30 hours or more per week (51 per cent).
- A similar proportion of mothers (53 per cent⁸⁰) ideally wanted to work only when their children were at school. Mothers that preferred to be working less than 30 hours per week were particularly enthusiastic about this working practice, 64 per cent of these reporting this as an ideal arrangement. Somewhat fewer mothers wanting to or currently working 30 or more hours a week reported this as an ideal arrangement (between 40 and 43 per cent).

⁸⁰ Understandably, a higher proportion of parents (59 per cent) with children attending school respond in this way.

Table 10-12 Ideal working arrangements among mothers that wanted to work

	<i>Column percentages +</i>			
	Currently working 30 hours or more	Working less than 30 hours, would like to work 30+ hours	Working less than 30 hours, does not want to work more than 30 hours	All mothers
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Work in school term only	51	55	58	55
Work in school hours only	43	40	64	53
Work at home some of the time	32	26	21	26
Work at home all the time	13	9	10	11
Shift work	3	2	4	3
Flexi-time	49	55	N/A	26
Fixed start times	15	30	N/A	9
Flexibility to work fewer days in the week	N/A	N/A	28	14
Flexibility to work fewer hours in the day	N/A	N/A	21	10
Job share	N/A	N/A	15	7
Current situation is ideal	1	-	1	1
Don't know	1	*	*	1
Weighted base	1,041	312	1,265	2,618
Unweighted base	1,277	375	1,487	3,139

Base: All mothers that wanted to work and who were currently in work.

+ The columns show all the ideal working arrangements selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- One-in-four (26 per cent) parents who were currently in work said that an ideal arrangement would be to work at home some of the time. This was more likely to be an ideal arrangement for mothers who were currently working more than 30 hours per week - 32 per cent said this arrangement would be ideal - than for other working mothers. The respondents were less enthusiastic about working from home all the time, 11 per cent reporting this as an ideal arrangement.
- Flexi-time was considered to be an ideal working arrangement for around half of mothers who were either currently employed for 30 or more hours per week (49 per cent) or who wanted to work these hours (55 per cent). Considerably fewer of these parents thought having a fixed start and finish time each day would be ideal (15 and 30 per cent respectively).
- More than a fifth of mothers who wanted to remain working less than 30 hours per week wanted some flexibility in their working hours - 28 per cent wanted the flexibility to work fewer days in the week while 21 per cent wanted the flexibility to work fewer hours in the day.
- Just over one-in-seven (15 per cent) mothers who wanted to remain working less than 30 hours per week ideally wanted to work in a job share.

A large majority of mothers wanted a mixture of these working arrangements. Fewer than a third (29 per cent) said just one would be sufficient, while almost two-

fifths (38 per cent) wanted a combination of two arrangements, a fifth (22 per cent) wanted three and just over a tenth (11 per cent) ideally wanted four or more of these arrangements.

The reality is, however, that few working mothers have access to any of these arrangements. For example, while 55 per cent of working mothers said that ideally they would like to work only during term-times, around one-in-ten (11 per cent) worked in this way.

10.6 Ideal childcare arrangements of working parents

The same mothers as those outlined in the previous section were also asked what their ideal childcare arrangements would be if availability and cost were not prohibitive factors. More than one provider could be chosen.

Table 10-13 reports the results from this question by type of family. A wide range of childcare provision was reported, with most mothers (81 per cent) choosing a number of providers. Understandably, a greater range of providers was chosen where there were more children in the family and where the children's ages were more diverse. For example, an average of four providers were chosen in cases where all children were attending school, compared with an average of more than five where only some of the children were attending school.

Informal provision was more likely to have been chosen as ideal than was formal provision. Almost two-thirds of working mothers (65 per cent) thought grandparents were the ideal provider, and similarly high numbers thought either friends or neighbours (54 per cent) or their partners (including ex-partners) were ideal. Out-of-school clubs were the most frequently cited formal childcare providers (53 per cent of working mothers thought were ideal childcare). One-in-three mothers (30 per cent) cited a childminder or a crèche/nursery as ideal childcare providers..

Table 10-13 Ideal childcare arrangements for working mothers, by family structure

Column percentages ⁺

	Type of family		All
	Lone parent	Couple	mothers
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Childminder	33	29	30
Nanny or au-pair	25	22	22
Baby-sitter	34	29	30
Creche or nursery	26	30	30
Playgroup	17	20	19
Nursery / reception class	20	24	23
Family Centre	11	6	7
Out of school club (including holiday club)	59	51	53
Ex-partner	30	3	8
Grandparent	62	65	65
Older sibling	13	14	14
Friend or neighbour	56	53	54
Take care of child themselves	10	11	11
Partner take care of child	15	65	56
Other	4	3	3
None of these	2	3	3
Don't know	-	*	*
Weighted base	519	2,214	2,733
Unweighted base	648	2,631	3,279

Base: All mothers in paid work.

⁺ The columns show all the ideal childcare arrangements selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

The choice of ideal provision varied significantly across a number of family characteristics. For example, a quarter (27 per cent) of mothers with a household income of £31,200 or more per year thought an au pair was ideal, compared with 17 per cent of mothers in households with an annual income of less than £10,400. These low income mothers were more likely to choose friends or relatives as ideal (62 per cent) than those in the highest income bracket (50 per cent).

Not surprisingly, the ages of the children in the household was also an important factor in the mothers' choice of what was ideal (Table 10-14). For example, almost four-fifths (78 per cent) of working mothers with only pre-school children thought a crèche or nursery would be ideal childcare, compared with just 6 per cent with all their children attending school⁸¹. Conversely, out-of-school clubs were chosen by many more mothers with all their children at school compared with those with only pre-school children (61 per cent and 16 per cent respectively).

⁸¹ Parents had to say whether the childcare was ideal or not. They also had the option to say that it was not applicable for their child(ren).

Table 10-14 Ideal childcare arrangements for working mothers, by age of children in household

	Ages of children in the household			Column percentages ⁺
	Pre-school only (%)	Pre-school and school age (%)	School age only (%)	All mothers (%)
Childminder	33	37	27	30
Nanny or au-pair	23	27	21	22
Baby-sitter	25	30	31	30
Creche or nursery	78	64	6	30
Playgroup	50	42	4	19
Nursery / reception class	46	60	6	23
Family Centre	5	7	7	7
Out of school club (including holiday club)	16	57	61	53
Ex-partner	5	7	9	8
Grandparent	67	65	64	65
Older sibling	2	4	20	14
Friend or neighbour	49	48	57	54
Take care of child themselves	*	4	16	11
Partner take care of child	56	55	56	56
Other	1	2	3	3
None of these	1	1	4	3
Don't know	*	-	-	*
Weighted base	477	532	1,723	2,732
Unweighted base	555	642	2,081	3,278

Base: All mothers in paid work.

⁺ The columns show all the ideal childcare arrangements selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Categorising the ideal childcare into two groups – formal⁸² and informal childcare – we found that most (85 per cent) mothers thought that some type of formal childcare would be ideal with a similar proportion (86 per cent) expressing the same view about informal provision. Just under three-quarters (72 per cent) of working mothers wanted a mixture of these two types of provision. The reality, however, is somewhat different. Around half of the working mothers (53 per cent) actually used some formal childcare in the past year while a third (33 per cent) used some formal childcare in the reference week. The gap between what parents would ideally use and the reality gives some indication of the extent to which childcare use might increase with greater availability and affordability of childcare.

10.7 Summary

In this chapter we have looked at how childcare impacts on the decision to work. The analysis was restricted to mothers, as it appears that it is their work which is most affected by childcare arrangements. The study identified a total of 3,363

⁸² In this instance formal childcare refers to the following provider types: childminder (whether or not registered), nanny or au-pair, baby-sitter, crèche or nursery, playgroup, nursery / reception class, family centre, out-of-school club (including holiday club).

mothers who were in paid employment at the time of the survey, of which 2,713 were in two-parent households and 650 were lone mothers.

Most women (60 per cent) in couple households had started work within two years of the birth of their youngest child. In comparison, just half (50 per cent) of female lone parents had done the same. A key factor in *entering* work (mentioned by 35 per cent of those who started a job in the last two years) was finding a job which allowed the woman to manage childcare. Availability of in-work support was mentioned by 12 per cent of lone mothers as a reason for starting work, but by significantly fewer mothers (1 per cent) in couple households.

A small group (6 per cent of all mothers in paid work) of mothers who decided to increase their hours from less than 30 to more than 30 per week were identified in the survey and were asked why they had done this. The most common reason was financial need, mentioned by 28 per cent of mothers. However, for a significant minority the decision to increase weekly hours appears to have happened somewhat by chance. Twenty-two per cent simply said that 'the job was offered to me.' This may nevertheless indicate a latent interest to extend work for financial or personal reasons.

When asked the more general question about why they were currently working, half (51 per cent) of mothers mentioned financial autonomy as a factor influencing their decision. However, attachment to working was also very often mentioned, in terms of wishing to get out of the house or more simply as something valued for its own sake, especially by respondents with higher levels of qualifications.

We also asked whether there were any factors related to their childcare requirements which enabled mothers to go out to work. The key factor allowing mothers to work (mentioned by 50 per cent) was having children of school age. Childcare support provided by relatives was mentioned just as often (48 per cent), slightly more often by lone parents than by mothers in a couple. The availability of free or low-cost childcare was a factor mentioned by one-third of mothers, and again slightly more often by lone parents. However, employer involvement in provision of childcare was notable by the low percentage of mothers who mentioned this factor in enabling them to work (1 per cent).

When asked to judge whether work or childcare related factors were more important in terms of the decision to work, mothers were generally divided. Half (50 per cent) thought the work related reasons were more important, two-fifths (42 per cent) thought the childcare related reasons were more important with the remaining mothers undecided between the two. Lone mothers were more likely to have been working for work related reasons than were mothers in two-parent households, 67 and 44 per cent respectively. Where a lone mother had said their main reason for working was because they needed the money, they almost unanimously (92 per cent) said they were working because of a work related reason.

The chapter finished with an analysis of mothers' preferred arrangements for work and childcare. The findings on this topic reflect the priority attached by mothers to ensuring the quality of care for their children, at the same time as most of them reported a high degree of attachment to work. Two-thirds (63 per cent) of mothers who were currently in employment wanted to work fewer hours and spend more

time with their children and just under half (44 per cent) of working mothers said that if they could afford it, they would prefer to give up work and stay at home with their children. Many mothers were interested in having greater flexibility in their working arrangements. Just over half (55 per cent) of mothers wanted to only work in school term times (although only about one-in-ten actually did so), and a similar proportion wanted to work no more than school hours each day. A quarter of mothers (26 per cent) would like to be able to do some of their work at home; many wished for some combination of family-friendly practices, such as flexi-time. At the same time, a quarter of working mothers would prefer to work more hours if they had access to adequate childcare.

Most mothers (85 per cent) in work said they would like to use some formal childcare if it was readily available and was affordable. The current reality is, however, that less than half of the working mothers had used some formal childcare in the past year, therefore indicating that there is considerable scope for growth in the availability of formal childcare.

11 NON-WORKING MOTHERS AND THE ROLE OF CHILDCARE

11.1 Introduction

In this chapter we focus on non-working mothers. A key distinction between them is their household structure, which has important ramifications for their reasons for not working. In general, lone mothers were far more likely to cite reasons pertaining to their socio-economic status, while the responses of women in couples tended to reflect more flexibility in their stay-at-home position.

Two types of reason for staying home were explored: those pertaining to issues about work itself, and those dealing with childcare. As the data makes clear, both sets of reasons discourage mothers from working, but the childcare reasons ultimately figure to be more important barriers to work.

11.2 Work-related influences on the decision to stay home

We begin with those work-related reasons cited for not having a job. Respondents were initially asked to tick the reasons they were not working from a card provided. Those reasons appear in Table 11-1. Overall, the work-related reasons cited by all non-working mothers for staying home were diffuse. The most common reason cited was unsuitable work hours (28 per cent), and the second most common was the demands of the job (20 per cent). No single reason was reported by a third of the mothers, suggesting that there are a variety of work-related reasons why non-working mothers stay at home.

There are important differences when the responses are analysed by household structure (Table 11-1). Lone mothers were more likely to cite financial concerns, while mothers in couples were more likely to express financial ease and a preference for staying home. Key findings are as follows:

- Lone mothers were far less likely (2 per cent) than those with partners (16 per cent) to say they have enough money, and therefore don't work. Conversely, lone mothers were far more likely to worry that they would lose their benefits if they worked (26 per cent as opposed to 7 per cent of mothers with partners).
- Similarly, non-working lone mothers were more likely to cite a lack of qualifications (19 per cent) than mothers with partners (8 per cent), perhaps indicating a less privileged socio-economic status. One promising finding is that a disproportionate number of non-working lone mothers are studying (10 per cent), indicating that some lone mothers wish to improve their job readiness.
- Non-working mothers with partners naturally tended to cite the demands of their partner's job (13 per cent) as a reason to stay home, but they were also more likely to say that work was not important to them (13 per cent as opposed to 3

per cent of lone mothers). This latter reason may be a luxury that mothers with partners can afford, but which is not available to lone mothers.

Table 11-1 Work-related reasons for not working by household structure

<i>Work-related reasons for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Household Structure		All
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two- parent family (%)	mothers (%)
Enough money	2	16	11
Would lose benefits	26	7	13
Unsuitable work hours	35	25	28
Job too demanding	20	20	20
Unsocial work hours	6	5	6
Partner's job too demanding	N/A	13	8
Not very well qualified	19	8	12
Working not important	3	13	10
Lack of job opportunities	8	5	6
Been out of work for too long	5	4	4
Illness/disability	15	13	14
Maternity leave	2	5	4
Caring for disabled person	7	7	7
Studying	10	5	7
Between jobs	-	1	*
Other reasons	3	2	2
Don't know	8	10	9
None of these reasons	11	11	11
Weighted base	583	1,092	1,675
Unweighted base	654	1,238	1,892

Base: All non-working mothers

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Main reasons for not working

These findings were largely reinforced when mothers were asked to give the most important reason for not working (Table 11-2). Overall, the demands of work (13 per cent) and unsuitable hours (12 per cent) were once again the most commonly mentioned reasons. Differences between lone mothers and those with partners tended to mirror those provided above where more than one response was recorded:

- Mothers with partners were more likely to say they had enough money (6 per cent) compared with lone mothers (1 per cent). They were also more likely to say that work was not important to them (8 per cent compared to 2 per cent).
- Lone mothers were more likely to fear losing their benefits (14 per cent) than mothers with partners (3 per cent). They were also more likely to cite a lack of qualifications (9 per cent as opposed to 3 per cent).

In general, however, the reasons cited by non-working mothers – whether considered as a group or separately by household structure – tended to be fairly diffuse. No single reason was cited by more than 13 per cent of the respondents.

Table 11-2 **Most important work-related reason for not working by household structure**

<i>Most important work-related reason for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Household Structure		All
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two-parent family (%)	mothers (%)
Enough money	1	6	4
Would lose benefits	14	3	7
Unsuitable work hours	11	13	12
Job too demanding	15	12	13
Unsocial work hours	2	1	1
Partner's job too demanding	N/A	6	4
Not very well qualified	9	3	5
Working not important	2	8	6
Lack of job opportunities	1	1	1
Been out of work for too long	2	1	1
Illness/disability	12	11	12
Maternity leave	1	5	4
Caring for disabled person	5	5	5
Studying	6	3	4
Between jobs	-	1	*
Other reasons	7	10	8
Don't know	-	*	*
None of these reasons	11	11	11
Weighted base	583	1,092	1,675
Unweighted base	654	1,238	1,892

Base: All non-working mothers.

Prior experience in the labour market

In addition to household structure, other factors had a bearing on the work-related reasons mothers gave for staying at home. One important consideration was prior work experience – whether the mother had ever worked and if so, how recently. Table 11-3 indicates that those who had never worked distinguished themselves by the reasons they provided. They tended to cite reasons indicative of a lower socio-economic position.

- Mothers who had never worked were more likely to cite a lack of qualifications (19 per cent) than those who had worked prior to two years ago (12 per cent) and those whose work experience was more recent (7 per cent).

- Mothers who had never worked (14 per cent) and those that hadn't worked for at least two years (15 per cent) were more likely to cite fear of losing their benefits than mothers with more recent work experience (8 per cent).
- Mothers who had worked within the last two years were less likely to cite a range of considerations, including a lack of qualifications (7 per cent), the belief that work is not important (6 per cent), few job opportunities (6 per cent), and the feeling they had been out of the work force too long (2 per cent). This group seemed more proximate to work, both temporally and attitudinally.

Some interesting differences are apparent when work-related reasons for staying home are examined by the work experience of lone mothers. In this case, financial concerns were decidedly pronounced among those who had never worked and those whose work experience was some time ago:

- The fear of benefit loss was particularly pronounced among lone mothers who had worked more than two years ago (30 per cent).
- A lack of qualifications was commonly cited by lone mothers who had never worked (24 per cent), as well as those who had worked more than two years ago (21 per cent).
- Lone mothers with recent work experience were less likely to cite financial concerns and a lack of qualifications, but more likely to mention unsuitable work hours (30 per cent) – a response also common among those with work experience of two or more years in the past (38 per cent).

When mothers with partners were singled out for examination, those who had never worked were distinguished in the following ways:

- Those who had never worked were far less likely (19 per cent compared with 12 per cent who had worked more than two years ago and 7 per cent who had worked in the past two years) to suggest they had enough money (and therefore chose to stay at home),
- Those who had never worked were far more likely to also mention that they were not very well qualified (15 per cent), as opposed to mothers who had worked recently (6 per cent) or worked over two years ago (8 per cent).

Table 11-3 Work-related reasons for not working by past work experience

<i>Work-related reasons for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>			
	Worked in last 2 years (%)	Work Experience Worked prior to 2 years ago (%)	Never worked (%)	All mothers (%)
Enough money	10	12	4	11
Would lose benefits	8	15	14	13
Unsuitable work hours	24	31	20	28
Job too demanding	18	22	16	20
Unsocial work hours	7	6	1	6
Partner's job too demanding	7	10	2	8
Not very well qualified	7	12	19	12
Working not important	6	10	12	10
Lack of job opportunities	6	6	7	6
Been out of work for too long	2	5	7	4
Illness/disability	13	14	14	14
Maternity leave	13	2	-	4
Caring for disabled person	4	8	7	7
Studying	6	7	6	7
Between jobs	2	*	-	*
Other reasons	4	2	2	2
Don't know	8	10	7	9
None of these reasons	11	10	17	11
Weighted base	369	1,088	218	1,675
Unweighted base	424	1,229	239	1,892

Base: All non-working mothers

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Qualification Level

Qualifications were also important in explaining the reasons given by non-working mothers for staying home. Looking once again at all non-working mothers, their reasons for staying home varied considerably by their level of qualification (Table 11-4).

- Those with no qualifications were far less likely to say they had enough money (3 per cent) than mothers with a first or higher degree (28 per cent). They were much more likely than those with a degree to fear losing their benefits (17 per cent as opposed to 4 per cent). Obviously, they were also more likely to cite a lack of qualifications as a barrier to work.
- Those with A-levels or higher were almost twice as likely to say that work was not important to them (14 per cent) than mothers with no qualifications (8 per cent).

- Those with a first degree or higher were more likely to say that their partner’s job was too demanding (17 per cent) and that the job they would like would be too demanding to combine with raising children (38 per cent).
- Illness and disability were more commonly cited by individuals with few or no qualifications. Among those without qualifications, 18 per cent cited a disability, compared with only 8 per cent of those with a first degree or higher.

Table 11-4 Work-related reasons for not working by qualifications

<i>Work-related reasons for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>				
	None (%)	GCSE or equivalent (%)	A-level or equivalent (%)	First or higher degree (%)	All mothers (%)
Enough money	3	10	19	28	11
Would lose benefits	17	14	8	4	13
Unsuitable work hours	26	31	26	30	28
Job too demanding	16	19	20	38	20
Unsocial work hours	4	5	9	8	6
Partner’s job too demanding	4	8	11	17	8
Not very well qualified	20	11	7	1	12
Working not important	8	9	14	14	10
Lack of job opportunities	8	5	3	7	6
Been out of work for too long	6	4	5	4	4
Illness/disability	18	13	12	8	14
Maternity leave	2	4	4	7	4
Caring for disabled person	9	7	5	3	7
Studying	4	6	14	9	7
Between jobs	-	*	1	1	*
Other reasons	1	2	2	3	2
Don’t know	8	9	13	13	9
None of these reasons	13	11	6	9	11
Weighted base	467	828	169	177	1,675
Unweighted base	506	941	199	206	1,892

Base: All non-working mothers

Note: Those with ‘other’ qualifications (n=32) and those who responded don’t know/refuse (N=8) to the question on qualifications are not included due to insufficient cases.

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Considering just non-working lone mothers, most had either a GCSE or equivalent (48 per cent) or no qualifications at all (40 per cent). The reasons each group gave for not working were mostly similar, although those with a GCSE were more likely to indicate that work hours would be unsuitable. The other categories of lone parents had too few cases to assess.

Mothers in a two-parent household tended to be better qualified than lone mothers: 21 per cent had A-levels or higher, 49 per cent had a GCSE or equivalent, and 28 per cent had no qualifications. Their responses varied in patterns similar to those for non-working mothers as a whole (see Table 11-4).

Age of the youngest child

Turning once again to all non-working mothers, their reasons for not working tended to vary based on the age of their youngest child in predictable ways (Table 11-5).

Table 11-5 Work-related reasons for not working by age of youngest child

<i>Work-related reasons for not working</i>	Age of youngest child					Column percentages ⁺
	0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	All mothers (%)
Enough money	11	11	10	12	6	11
Would lose benefits	11	12	19	15	15	13
Unsuitable work hours	26	31	34	31	18	28
Job too demanding	22	27	19	15	10	20
Unsocial work hours	6	7	5	6	2	6
Partner's job too demanding	8	11	9	7	4	8
Not very well qualified	11	13	12	13	12	12
Working not important	11	10	7	7	8	10
Lack of job opportunities	7	5	6	6	6	6
Been out of work for too long	3	3	7	4	8	4
Illness/disability	6	9	18	26	34	14
Maternity leave	7	4	1	1	-	4
Caring for disabled person	4	6	10	11	10	7
Studying	4	9	9	8	5	7
Between jobs	*	*	1	*	2	*
Other reasons	2	1	1	3	5	2
Don't know	13	10	4	4	4	9
None of these reasons	13	13	8	8	11	11
Weighted base	724	303	277	264	107	1,675
Unweighted base	794	345	324	311	118	1,892

Base: All non-working mothers

⁺ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- Financial reasons understandably bore little relationship to the age of the youngest child. No significant differences were recorded for citing enough money, concern about benefit loss, or lack of qualifications.
- The demands of a job were more commonly cited by mothers with younger children. For instance, 22 per cent of mothers with children under the age of two said that work would be too demanding, compared with 10 per cent of those with children aged 12 to 14.

- Illness or disability was cited more frequently by those with older children; perhaps it was contracted some time after giving birth. For instance, 34 per cent of those with children aged 12 to 14 cited an illness or disability. Mothers with young children cited an illness or disability less often (6 per cent of those with children under the age of two), but were more likely to cite maternity leave.
- Mothers with children aged 12 to 14 were also somewhat more likely to say they'd been out of work too long (8 per cent), compared with mothers of children under the age of four (3 per cent).

Similar differences are apparent when the age of the youngest child is analysed separately among lone mothers and mothers with partners, with the following exceptions:

- Among lone mothers, being out of work too long did not bear any relationship to the age of the youngest child. This could, perhaps, indicate long-term unemployment among a subset of lone mothers which began prior to the arrival of children.
- Among mothers with partners, the proportion saying that work was not important to them did not vary with the age of the youngest child, possibly indicating a lifestyle choice made irrespective of the presence of children.

11.3 Childcare-related influences on the decision to stay home

In addition to testing work-related reasons for staying home, the questionnaire also posed a set of childcare-related reasons. These reasons spanned the range of childcare issues – from its quality and availability to whether it was deemed appropriate for mothers and their children.

Compared with the work-related reasons provided by respondents, which were quite diffuse, non-working mothers tended to converge around several key childcare-related reasons for staying out of work (Table 11-6). Over half of all non-working mothers (52 per cent) said they preferred to stay at home with their children. Other common reasons included the young age of the children (31 per cent), lack of free/cheap childcare (23 per cent) and the belief that the children would suffer (23 per cent).

Of the childcare-related reasons that mothers could select from, some pertained to its availability and quality, while others concerned its appropriateness. In general, lone mothers tended to cite the availability and quality of childcare as chief reasons for not working, while mothers with partners tended to view it as inappropriate for them (Table 11-6). Key findings based on household structure were as follows:

- Lone mothers were consistently more likely than mothers with partners to cite reasons pertaining to the quality and availability of childcare. They were far more likely to mention the lack of free/cheap childcare that would make working worthwhile (30 per cent compared with 19 per cent), and somewhat more likely to cite a lack of care at suitable times (20 per cent compared with 12 per cent), reliable care (9 per cent compared with 5 per cent), good quality care (8 per cent

compared with 5 per cent), and childcare close to home (8 per cent compared with 3 per cent).

- Mothers with partners were more likely to suggest that childcare was inappropriate for them and their children. Fifty-eight per cent said they preferred to stay home with their children, as opposed to 41 per cent of non-working lone mothers. They were also more likely to believe that their children were too young to justify working (32 per cent compared with 28 per cent), and that their children would suffer (25 per cent compared with 19 per cent).
- Although differences on these last two responses were somewhat smaller, they fit with the overall pattern, in which lone mothers express a need for appropriate care, while mothers with partners appear not to favour childcare for their children.

Table 11-6 Childcare-related reasons for not working by household structure

<i>Childcare-related reasons for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Household Structure		All mothers
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two-parent family (%)	(%)
I want to stay with my child(ren)	41	58	52
Child(ren) too young	28	32	31
Child(ren) would suffer	19	25	23
Child(ren) disability/ needs	9	7	7
Lack of free/cheap childcare	30	19	23
Lack of childcare at suitable times	20	12	15
Lack of reliable childcare	9	5	6
Lack of good quality childcare	8	5	6
Lack of childcare in the local area	8	3	5
Other reasons	1	1	1
Don't know	*	*	*
None of these reasons	18	15	16
Weighted base	495	931	1,427
Unweighted base	557	1,059	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those on maternity leave and those unable to work due to illness or disability. +Columns show all reasons selected hence percentages add up to more than 100.

Main childcare related reasons for not working

These findings were reinforced when non-working mothers were asked for their main childcare-oriented reason for not working. The most common reason remained a preference for staying at home with children, mentioned by 37 per cent of all non-working mothers. Once again, however, this preference was stronger among mothers in two-parent households (43 per cent) than among lone mothers (26 per cent) – an indication that mothers with partners may be better able to afford staying home.

For lone mothers, other common reasons were a lack of free/cheap childcare to make working worthwhile (16 per cent) and the feeling that the children were too young to justify working (12 per cent). Among mothers with partners, other oft-quoted

reasons were the belief that the children were too young (11 per cent) or would suffer (10 per cent) if the mother worked.

Prior experience in the labour market

Returning again to the multiple reasons for staying home offered by non-working mothers, some differences were apparent based on prior work experience (Table 11-7). For instance,

- Mothers who had never worked were less likely to cite a lack of free or cheap childcare that would make working worthwhile (19 per cent), compared with mothers who had worked recently (26 per cent) or more than two years in the past (23 per cent).

Table 11-7 Childcare-related reasons for not working by work experience

<i>Childcare-related reasons for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>			
	Worked in last 2 years (%)	Work Experience Worked prior to 2 years ago (%)	Never worked (%)	All mothers (%)
I want to stay with my child(ren)	43	54	54	52
Child(ren) too young	26	32	31	31
Child(ren) would suffer	15	26	22	23
Child(ren) disability/ needs	6	8	8	7
Lack of free/cheap childcare	26	23	19	23
Lack of childcare at suitable times	15	14	14	15
Lack of reliable childcare	6	6	7	6
Lack of good quality childcare	6	6	6	6
Lack of childcare in the local area	5	4	7	5
Other reasons	1	1	2	1
Don't know	*	-	-	*
None of these reasons	24	14	14	16
Weighted base	278	951	197	1,427
Unweighted base	322	1,077	217	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those on maternity leave and those unable to work due to illness or disability.

+ Columns show all reasons selected hence percentages add up to more than 100.

- Mothers who had never worked and those whose work experience was more than two years ago were more likely to say they wanted to stay at home (54 per cent) than those whose work experience was more recent (43 per cent). These two groups were also more likely to worry that their children were too young or would suffer if they went to work.

Qualifications

The mothers' qualifications had some bearing on the childcare-related reasons they gave for not working (Table 11-8). In general, mothers with higher qualifications tended to express a preference for staying at home and worried that their children were too young or would suffer if they went to work.

- Mothers with higher qualifications were more likely to say they wished to stay home with their children – perhaps because they were financially able to take this position. For instance, 66 per cent of those with one or more degrees expressed this preference, compared with 48 per cent of those with no qualifications. Compared to mothers with no qualifications, those with one or more degrees were also more likely to cite the age of the children (35 per cent) and concern that they would suffer (27 per cent).

Table 11-8 Childcare-related reasons for not working by qualifications

<i>Childcare-related reasons for not working</i>	<i>Column percentages +</i>				
	None (%)	Highest qualifications GCSE or equivalent (%)	A-level or equivalent (%)	First or higher degree (%)	All mothers (%)
I want to stay with my child(ren)	48	52	52	66	52
Child(ren) too young	27	32	34	35	31
Child(ren) would suffer	20	23	29	27	23
Child(ren) disability/ needs	10	8	5	4	7
Lack of free/cheap childcare	22	25	19	20	23
Lack of childcare at suitable times	15	14	16	15	15
Lack of reliable childcare	7	6	8	6	6
Lack of good quality childcare	4	5	6	11	6
Lack of childcare in local area	6	5	4	3	5
Other reasons	1	1	*	1	1
Don't know	*	*	-	-	*
None of these reasons	16	17	22	10	16
Weighted base	398	698	145	154	1,427
Unweighted base	433	795	171	179	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those on maternity leave and those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

Note: Those with 'other' qualifications (n=30) and those who responded don't know/refuse (n=8) are not included due to insufficient cases.

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- Mothers with no qualifications were more likely to cite the disability or special needs of their children (10 per cent), compared with mothers holding one or more degrees (4 per cent).

There was little variation based on qualifications for reasons pertaining to the availability of childcare, with the exception that mothers with a first degree or higher were more likely to be concerned about the lack of quality care (11 per cent).

Household income

Another measure of socio-economic status is household income. Many of the differences evident based on qualifications appear in sharper relief when this second measure of socio-economic status is analysed. Those in less privileged positions

tended to cite reasons for staying home that pertained to the cost and availability of childcare, while those who are more privileged cited reasons of personal preference (Table 11-9). By way of example:

- Those in the lower income bands were less likely to express a preference for staying home. Forty-three percent of mothers in the lowest income band preferred to stay home, as opposed to 65 per cent in the highest income band. The lower percentage of low-income mothers who felt this way may reflect the fact that they cannot afford to not work, rather than a preference for work over children.
- Lower-income mothers were also more likely to cite the lack of free/cheap childcare that would make work worthwhile for them – possibly because their skills would not command sufficient pay to cover the costs of decent childcare. Twenty-seven per cent of those in the lowest income band registered this concern, versus 15 per cent of those in the highest income band.
- Those in the highest income band were both more likely to express a preference for staying home (65 per cent) and more likely to say their children were too young (37 per cent) or would suffer if they worked (32 per cent).

Table 11-9 Childcare-related reasons for not working by household income

<i>Childcare-related reasons for not working</i>	Household Income				<i>Column percentages⁺</i>	
	Up to £10,399 (%)	£10,400 - £20,799 (%)	£20,800 - £31,199 (%)	£31,200 or more (%)	Don't know/ Refused (%)	All mothers (%)
I want to stay with my child(ren)	43	52	59	65	55	52
Child(ren) too young	31	26	36	37	28	31
Child(ren) would suffer	21	21	24	32	18	23
Child(ren) disability needs	8	10	5	5	8	7
Lack of free/cheap childcare	27	22	30	15	14	23
Lack of childcare at suitable times	19	15	12	7	12	15
Lack of reliable childcare	9	6	5	2	6	6
Lack of good quality childcare	7	4	6	5	5	6
Lack of childcare in the local area	8	5	2	2	4	5
Other reasons	1	1	-	*	-	1
Don't know	1	*	1	*	1	1
None of these reasons	19	14	16	13	18	16
Weighted base	526	329	195	231	146	1,427
Unweighted base	598	372	221	263	162	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those on maternity leave and those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

* These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Age of the youngest child

Some barriers to work may be higher for those with younger children. Factors such as the need for childcare may be intense at first, but receded as children enter school. Likewise, a need for work that conforms to school hours is likely to be high among mothers with school-age children. Not surprisingly, reasons cited for staying home were differentiated in fairly predictable ways according to the age of the mother's youngest child (Table 11-10). For example:

- Mothers of younger children were more likely to prefer staying home. Fifty-nine per cent of mothers with children under the age of two felt this way, compared with 43 per cent of those with children aged eight to eleven. Understandably, they were also more likely to believe their children were too young to justify working.
- Mothers of younger children were more likely to cite a lack of free/cheap childcare that would make working worthwhile financially. Among those with children under two, 28 per cent felt this way, compared with only 16 per cent of mothers with children aged eight to eleven.

Table 11-10 Childcare-related reasons for not working by age of youngest child

<i>Childcare-related reasons for not working</i>	Age of youngest child					Column percentages ⁺
	0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	All mothers (%)
I want to stay with my child(ren)	59	50	46	43	39	52
Child(ren) too young	50	27	12	8	1	31
Child(ren) would suffer	24	23	23	24	14	23
Child(ren) disability/ needs	5	7	11	10	14	7
Lack of free/cheap childcare	28	26	18	16	8	23
Lack of childcare at suitable times	12	20	16	16	5	15
Lack of reliable childcare	6	8	6	8	2	6
Lack of good quality childcare	6	7	5	3	4	6
Lack of childcare in the local area	5	5	5	6	3	5
Other reasons	1	2	-	*	1	1
Don't know	*	*	*	1	-	*
None of these reasons	8	15	25	26	36	16
Weighted base	650	270	231	201	75	1,427
Unweighted base	713	308	273	237	85	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those on maternity leave and those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

Note: The column of mothers with children aged 12-14 is bracketed due to the small number of cases in this category.

⁺ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

11.4 Which reasons act as a bigger barrier

Initially the non-working mothers in the sample were not forced to choose among the types of barriers to work they faced. Instead, they could pick from among work-related barriers and then pick from among childcare-related barriers, ticking as many as they pleased. They were asked, however, which type of factors were most important in determining their stay-at-home status - those pertaining to work or those pertaining to childcare to gain a sense of priority (Table 11-11). Nearly two-thirds of all non-working mothers cited reasons related to childcare as their chief reason for not working (61 per cent).

Interestingly, mothers with partners were more likely to cite reasons related to the care of their child(ren) as their chief reason for not working - despite their apparent ability to call on a partner for help with such responsibilities. Sixty-four percent of mothers with partners cited care related factors as their chief reason for not working, as opposed to 57 per cent of lone mothers.

Table 11-11 Mothers' chief reason for not working by household structure

<i>Chief reason for not working</i>	Household Structure		<i>Column percentages</i>
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two- parent family (%)	All mothers (%)
Work-related	39	30	33
Childcare-related	57	64	61
Neither of these reasons	3	3	3
Don't know	1	4	3
Weighted base	495	931	1,427
Unweighted base	557	1,059	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those on maternity leave and those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

Among the 61 per cent of all respondents who said childcare was their chief reason for not working, it is possible to inspect which specific childcare issue they cited when asked to name the most important in a previous question. A preference to stay home with their children was expressed by half (51 per cent), indicating that they would likely opt to stay home regardless of the quality and affordability of available child care. Other reasons cited with some frequency were the belief that the children were too young (13 per cent) or would suffer (11 per cent) if the mother worked. Only 10 per cent of this group said that a lack of free/cheap childcare was their main childcare-oriented reason for not working.

Of the remaining third that said work related factors were the chief reason for not working, not being able to find a job that had suitable hours was the mostly frequently cited reason - almost a fifth responded in this way (19 per cent). Other reasons included the losing of benefits (11 per cent) or the absence of suitable qualifications to get a job (7 per cent). Around one in ten said other commitments such as studying (11 per cent) or caring for a relative (8 per cent) stopped them from working. Only two per cent said that a lack of jobs in their area was the main reason why they were not working.

11.5 Arrangements which would facilitate paid employment

We have just learned that nearly two-thirds of non-working mothers said that factors related to the care of their child(ren) - more than issues pertaining to the work they would do - were more central to their decision to stay home. It should therefore come as little surprise that a similar 63 per cent agreed that they would prefer to go out to work or study if they had access to good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare (Table 11-12). This percentage was higher among lone mothers (78 per cent) than among mothers with partners (54 per cent), providing further evidence that lone mothers may be more interested in taking advantage of good quality childcare and entering paid employment.

Table 11-12 Whether mothers would prefer to go out to work or study if they had access to good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare by household structure

<i>Would prefer to work or study if had good care</i>	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Household Structure Lone mothers (%)	Household Structure Mothers in two-parent families (%)	All mothers (%)
Strongly agree/agree	78	54	63
Strongly disagree/disagree	11	29	22
Neither	10	16	14
Don't know	1	1	1
Weighted base	583	1,092	1,675
Unweighted base	654	1,238	1,892

Base: All non-working mothers

Factors that would facilitate employment

Factors that would facilitate employment were explored further with a question asking mothers to choose from a list of childcare related arrangements aimed at helping them combine paid work with raising children (Table 11-13). Results indicate the following:

- The most popular were if their children would be safe and well looked after (72 per cent), if they could have a term-time job (67 per cent), and if they could earn enough to make working worthwhile (66 per cent).
- Several arrangements were less popular, eliciting support from less than half of the non-working mothers interviewed. They were: getting training (48 per cent), if the mother suffered no benefit loss (36 per cent), if the work hours fitted with present childcare arrangements (30 per cent), and if friends would help with childcare (26 per cent).
- These overall findings were largely reflected among non-working mothers with partners.
- Lone mothers showed more enthusiasm than mothers with partners about each of the arrangements they were asked about, except for working from home (where there was little difference) and naturally, an arrangement whereby the mother's partner would help with care.
- Although their support was higher for each arrangement across the board, lone mothers were especially supportive of earning enough to make paid employment worthwhile (82 per cent), ensuring their children were safe and well care for (79 per cent), having a term-time job (71 per cent), having their employer provide or pay for childcare (67 per cent), receiving training (63 per cent), working flexible hours (63 per cent) and an arrangement whereby they wouldn't lose their benefits (62 per cent).

Table 11-13 Arrangements to help mothers work outside the home by household structure

Arrangement	Household Structure		
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two-parent family (%)	All mothers (%)
<i>Column percentages +</i>			
All mothers			
Earn enough to make it worthwhile	82	57	66
If didn't lose benefits	62	22	36
Term-time job	71	65	67
If could get training	63	40	48
Part-time job	60	55	57
Flexi-time	63	56	59
If didn't have to work unsocial times	59	50	53
Work from home sometimes	58	60	60
If child(ren) safe and well looked after	79	67	72
If work hours fitted current childcare	35	28	30
If employer provided/paid for childcare	67	54	59
If relatives helped with childcare	48	41	43
If friends helped with childcare	31	23	26
Mothers in two-parent household			
If partner/ ex-partner helped with childcare	15	39	31
Weighted base	495	931	1,427
Unweighted base	557	1,059	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

In many ways this question made it fairly easy for non-working mothers to favour a range of schemes that would ease their transition to work. They could simply tick off all those arrangements that interested them. A follow-up question asked them to identify the top three arrangements they favoured most (Table 11-14).

- Among all non-working mothers the top three arrangements were:
 - 1) if the mother could have a term-time job (39 per cent)
 - 2) if her children would be safe and well looked after (35 per cent)
 - 3) if she could earn enough to make paid employment worthwhile (33 per cent).
- Lone mothers also prioritised the various arrangements in roughly the same manner. However, earning enough money to make working worthwhile was their top priority, favoured by 46 per cent. A large proportion also favoured an assurance that they wouldn't lose their benefits (31 per cent), and having their employer provide or pay for childcare (21 per cent).
- Among mothers in two-parent households, the prioritisation was similar to that among all non-working mothers. Support for working at home (30 per cent),

however, rivalled interest in earning enough to make work worthwhile (27 per cent).

Table 11-14 **Three most important arrangements to help mothers work outside the home by household structure**

Arrangement	Household Structure		
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two-parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
<i>Column percentages +</i>			
All mothers			
Earn enough to make it worthwhile	46	27	33
If didn't lose benefits	31	10	17
Term-time job	32	43	39
If could get training	17	10	12
Part-time job	14	19	17
Flexi-time	14	15	14
If didn't have to work unsocial times	10	11	11
Work from home sometimes	18	30	26
If child(ren) safe and well looked after	38	33	35
If work hours fitted current childcare	8	7	8
If employer provided/paid for childcare	21	18	19
If relatives helped with childcare	6	9	8
If friends helped with childcare	1	2	2
Mothers in two-parent household			
If partner /ex-partner helped with childcare	1	10	7
None of these arrangements	6	11	10
Weighted base	495	931	1,427
Unweighted base	557	1,059	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Age of youngest child

Table 11-15 analyses the three most important arrangements favoured for easing the transition to work by the age of the non-working mother's youngest child. Several important findings stand out:

- Mothers with younger children tended to favour arrangements that addressed childcare, rather than those pertaining to the job itself. For instance, 26 per cent of mothers with children aged two or under favoured an employer's allowance for or provision of childcare, compared with 15 per cent of mothers with children aged eight to eleven.
- Mothers with young children were also more likely to favour an arrangement whereby their child was safe and well looked after (39 per cent as opposed to 32 per cent of mothers with children aged eight to eleven). There was also a slight tendency for these mothers to favour help from relatives.

Table 11-15 Three most important arrangements to help mothers work outside the home by age of youngest child

Arrangement	Age of youngest child					Column percentages +
	0-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	5-7 (%)	8-11 (%)	12-14 (%)	All mothers (%)
All mothers						
Earn enough to make it worthwhile	38	30	31	28	31	33
If didn't lose benefits	16	15	20	20	20	17
Term-time job	29	45	50	54	30	39
If could get training	10	10	13	16	22	12
Part-time job	15	16	20	20	14	17
Flexi-time	13	15	18	15	12	14
If didn't have work unsocial times	9	11	13	15	13	11
Work from home sometimes	25	26	26	24	30	26
If child(ren) safe and well looked after	39	33	31	32	26	35
If work hours fitted current childcare	6	15	7	4	5	8
If employer provided/paid for childcare	26	16	13	15	6	19
If relatives helped with childcare	10	7	8	6	3	8
If friends helped with childcare	1	3	2	1	4	2
Mothers in two-parent household						
If partner helped with childcare	8	7	7	4	7	7
None of these arrangements	10	10	6	9	18	10
Weighted base	650	270	231	201	75	1,427
Unweighted based	713	308	273	237	85	1,616

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those unable to work due to an illness or disability.

Note: The column of mothers with children aged 12-14 is bracketed due to the small number of cases in this category.

+ These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- Those with children aged two or under were also likely to favour an arrangement that made work financially worthwhile (38 per cent), as opposed to women with children aged eight to eleven (28 per cent).
- One arrangement was particularly popular among mothers with older children. Having a term-time job was reported by half (50 per cent) of mothers with children aged five to seven, and slightly more than half (54 per cent) of those with children aged eight to eleven.

11.6 Proximity to the labour market

Naturally some non-working mothers will be more proximate to the work force than others. For some mothers, the desire to work will subside after having children; others will wish to return to work for personal or financial reasons. In order to gauge how proximate each non-working mother was to paid employment, we asked each how likely they were to seek a job, how soon, what type of job, and so forth.

As Table 11-16 indicates, less than half of the non-working mothers in the sample said they were likely to enter paid employment within the next year: 24 percent said they were 'very likely' and 21 per cent said they were 'fairly likely' to seek paid employment. The other half (54 per cent) said they were not very or not at all likely to seek employment.

Lone mothers were more likely to indicate an intention to seek paid employment than mothers with partners. Among lone mothers, 55 per cent were very or fairly likely to seek work, compared with 40 per cent of mothers in two-parent families. This finding comports with a finding reported above, in which mothers with partners tended to prefer staying home with their children over going to work.

Table 11-16 Likelihood of seeking paid employment in next year or so by household structure

Likelihood	Household Structure		Column percentages
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two- parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
Very likely	33	20	24
Fairly likely	22	20	21
Not very likely	22	28	26
Not at all likely	23	31	28
Weighted base	499	957	1,456
Unweighted base	561	1,088	1,649

Base: All non-working mothers

The results reported in Table 11-16 were collapsed with those from a follow-up question to non-working mothers who had said they were unlikely to work in the next year. These mothers were asked if they were likely to work 'one day' and if so, when. Taken together, it is possible to more closely gauge proximity to paid employment based on when each mother hopes to work. The results appear in Table 11-17.

Again, we see that 45 per cent of all non-working mothers plan to enter paid employment in the next year. Beyond this core of mothers, the remainder report a range of work plans. Eighteen per cent plan to work between 2002 and 2004; 11 per cent would like to work between 2005 and 2007; three per cent said some time after 2007, and fully 17 per cent said they never plan to take up a paid job.

These findings are consistent with those reported above. It is clear that non-working lone mothers are more proximate to the labour force. They are more interested in arrangements that would ease the transition to work and more likely to work in the near future.

Table 11-17 When plans to work by household structure

When plans to work	Household Structure		Column percentages
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two- parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
Next year	54	40	45
Between 2002-2004	20	17	18
Between 2005-2007	8	13	11
After 2007	2	3	3
Never	11	21	17
Don't know	5	5	5
Weighted base	499	957	1,456
Unweighted base	561	1,088	1,649

Base: All non-working mothers

Qualifications

Few differences were apparent according to the qualifications of the non-working mother. For instance, 49 per cent of mothers with a first degree or higher anticipated working within the next year, as opposed to 45 per cent of those with A-levels, and 47 per cent of those with a GCSE or equivalent. Only among those with no qualifications the percentage was slightly lower (40 per cent).

Past work experience

There were, however, important differences based on recent work experience. These are reported in Table 11-18. Those whose work experience was more recent were considerably more likely to express a shorter time horizon for re-entering the work force. Key differences are as follows:

- More than half (59 per cent) of those who had worked within the last two years planned to return to work within the year, compared with 43 per cent of those with more distant work experience and 33 per cent of those who had never worked.
- Conversely, those who had never worked were much more likely to express a desire to stay out of the labour force. Among them, 34 per cent said that they never planned to work, compared with 17 per cent of those with distant work experience and 9 per cent of those who had worked in the last two years.

These findings suggest that prolonged absence from the labour market may make paid employment even more remote for non-working mothers.

Table 11-18 When plans to work by past work experience

When plans to work	Column percentages			
	Worked in last 2 years (%)	Work Experience Worked prior to 2 years ago (%)	Never worked (%)	All mothers (%)
Next year	59	43	33	45
Between 2002-2004	18	19	13	18
Between 2005-2007	8	12	12	11
After 2007	1	4	2	3
Never	9	17	34	17
Don't know	4	5	7	5
Weighted base	321	947	188	1,456
Unweighted base	370	1,072	207	1,649

Base: All non-working mothers

Type of employment

Focusing now on those mothers who were likely to work in the next year, the vast majority (77 per cent) would prefer part-time employment. Lone mothers were slightly less likely to want a part-time job, and somewhat more likely to seek a full-time job. Among lone mothers very or fairly likely to see employment in the next year or so, 19 per cent would like a full-time job, compared with just 10 per cent of mothers in two-parent households (Table 11-19).

Table 11-19 Job type sought by household structure

Job type	Column percentages		
	Lone mothers (%)	Household Structure Mothers in a two- parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
Full-time job	19	10	14
Part-time job	71	81	77
Either	10	8	9
Weighted base	271	385	656
Unweighted base	309	449	758

Base: All non-working mothers very or fairly likely to seek paid employment in the next year or so.

There was somewhat less, although still considerable, interest in term-time positions among mothers intending to work in the next year. Asked whether they planned to look for a term-time versus a year round job, slightly less than half (48 per cent) of the mothers likely to work in the next year said they planned to seek a term-time job. Another quarter (25 per cent) said they planned to seek year round employment, and a final quarter (25 per cent) said that either type of job would be acceptable. There was virtually no difference in responses according to household structure. Among lone mothers, 47 per cent expressed interest in a term-time job, compared with 49 per cent of mothers with partners.

Reasons for working

The decision to take up work after the birth of children may come about for a variety of reasons – financial or personal. In order to determine the key stimuli of this decision, those non-working mothers who expressed an interest in working within the year were asked their reasons for doing so. No single reason prevailed; both personal and financial reasons proved important.

Among all non-working mothers who wished to begin work within a year, nearly six in ten (59 per cent) said they ‘needed the money.’ Although this reason was the most popular of those tested, several personal reasons were close runners-up. Fifty-seven per cent said they wanted to ‘get out of the house/I miss the company at work.’ Another 52 per cent said they simply enjoyed working and wish to return, and 51 per cent said they liked to earn their own money (Table 11-20).

Lone mothers and those in two-parent households differed in several important ways (Table 11-20). For instance:

- Lone mothers were considerably more likely to cite financial reasons for wishing to return to work. Sixty-nine per cent said they needed the money, as opposed to 51 per cent of mothers in two-parent households.
- Lone mothers were also slightly more likely to say that they like to have their own money. Fifty-four per cent ticked this response, as opposed to 48 per cent of mothers in couples.

Table 11-20 Reasons for working by household structure

	<i>Column percentages⁺</i>		
	Household Structure Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two- parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
Need the money	69	51	59
Like to have own money	54	48	51
Need to contribute to pension	16	20	18
Get out of house/ miss the company	57	56	57
Enjoy working	52	52	52
Feel useless without a job	36	16	24
Career will suffer otherwise	10	13	12
Serve as example to children	2	-	1
None of these reasons	2	3	2
Don't know	1	1	1
Weighted base	271	385	656
Unweighted base	309	449	758

Base: All non-working mothers very or fairly likely to seek paid employment in the next year or so.

⁺These columns show all the reasons selected therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

- Mothers in couples were much less likely to say they'd feel useless without a job. Sixteen per cent of mothers in two-parent households gave this response, compared with 36 per cent of lone mothers.

11.7 Proximity to Study

Rather than enter work in the near future, some mothers may wish to begin a course or training to improve their job readiness. We asked all the non-working mothers in the sample who were not already studying, how likely they were to do any learning or training. Two-fifths (40 per cent) said they were very likely or fairly likely (Table 11-21).

Interestingly, lone mothers were much more likely than mothers with partners to say they were 'very likely' to study in the future. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of lone mothers fell into this category, compared with only 13 per cent of mothers with partners. Conversely, those who were 'not likely' to study or train in the future comprised 63 per cent of mothers in two-parent households compared with 50 per cent of lone mothers. This eagerness to work and train among lone mothers fits their profile established above. They appear more anxious to take advantage of childcare and study, train, or enter the labour force.

Table 11-21 Likelihood of studying by household structure

<i>Likelihood of studying</i>	Household Structure		<i>Column percentages</i>
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two-parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
Very likely	23	13	16
Fairly likely	25	24	24
Not very likely	26	29	28
Not at all likely	24	34	31
Don't know	2	1	1
Weighted base	485	967	1,452
Unweighted base	506	1,050	1,556

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those already enrolled on a course.

Qualifications

Unfortunately, the relationship between level of qualifications and interest in training contradicted what one would hope. Those with the lowest qualifications – or an entire lack thereof – were least interested in studying or training, while those with the highest qualifications were the most keen to start a course (Table 11-22). For instance:

- Among those with A-levels or higher, 20 per cent said they were very likely to study, compared with only 15 per cent of mothers with a GCSE or equivalent, and 16 per cent of mothers with no qualifications.
- The group least likely to study were non-working mothers with no qualifications (38 per cent). However, a significant portion of mothers with GCSEs or equivalents and those with first degrees or higher were also 'not at all likely' to study (upwards of 21 per cent). The latter group may feel they are already well qualified and have little to gain through further work or study.

The intention to study may mean different things to different people. Some mothers who express this intention may wish to improve their job readiness in order to secure paid employment. Alternatively, other mothers may simply wish to practice a hobby or learn a new skill for self-improvement, but have no intention of joining the labour force.

To check these possibilities, the intention to study can be compared with the time frame in which the mother hopes to enter paid work. It turns out that nearly half (46 per cent) of non-working mothers who are likely to study wish to enter paid labour between 2002 and 2004, indicating that their training will likely be aimed at job preparation.

Table 11-22 Likelihood of studying by qualifications

Likelihood of studying	Qualifications				
	None (%)	GCSE or equivalent (%)	A-level or equivalent (%)	First or higher degree (%)	All mothers (%)
Very likely	16	15	18	21	16
Fairly likely	18	27	30	27	24
Not very likely	27	29	30	22	28
Not at all likely	38	28	21	29	31
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1
Weighted base	430	721	132	143	1,452
Unweighted base	450	780	142	156	1,556

Base: All non-working mothers excluding those already enrolled on a course.

Note: Those with 'other' qualifications (n=22) and those who responded don't know/refuse (n=6) are not included due to insufficient cases.

Lastly, we can look at the combined work and study intentions of non-working mothers. Nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) intend to work, study, or do a combination of both, while 37 per cent plan to do neither (Table 11-23). The results are slightly different when we consider household structure. In this case, mothers with partners are less likely to seek a job or wish to study (57 per cent) than lone mothers (73 per cent). The discrepancy occurs largely because lone mothers are more likely to express interest in both work and study (40 per cent) compared with mothers in two-parent households (25 per cent).

Table 11-23 Preferences for work and study, by household structure

Activity preferences	Household Structure		
	Lone mothers (%)	Mothers in a two- parent household (%)	All mothers (%)
Work and study	40	25	30
Work	15	15	15
Study	18	17	17
Neither	26	42	37
Don't know	1	*	1
Weighted base	499	957	1,456
Unweighted base	561	1,088	1,649

Base: All non-working mothers

11.8 Summary

This chapter has provided insight into those mothers who stay at home rather than work. For some, this arrangement is a resolute choice: they prefer to stay at home rather than work and place their children in some form of childcare. For others, suitable work- and childcare-related arrangements would ease a welcome transition to work.

The work-related reasons for staying home were quite diffuse; no single reason was widely mentioned across the board. Instead, some mothers cited the demands of the job, while others cited financial reasons. Financial reasons were more commonly cited among lone mothers, those who lack a recent work history, mothers with few qualifications and those with low incomes. These mothers may welcome arrangements whereby working would be financially worthwhile.

Mothers in two-parent households were less likely to cite financial reasons for staying home. They were more likely to say they wanted to stay home to look after their children.

Of course the non-working mothers of particular interest are those who would partake of policies aimed at easing their transition to work. Nearly two-thirds of the non-working mothers in the sample said they would prefer to go out to work or study if they had access to 'good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare.' An even higher proportion of lone mothers was interested under these conditions, and they also expressed greater enthusiasm for the variety of specific arrangements tested to ease the transition to work.

Arrangements that tested especially well included term-time jobs, ensuring the children were safe and well looked after, and earning enough to make employment worthwhile. Some arrangements were especially popular among specific groups of mothers. Lone mothers were particularly concerned about not losing their benefits, working flexible hours, and having their employer provide or pay for childcare. Mothers with young children favoured childcare provided or subsidised by the employer, while mothers with older children favoured term-time employment.

Some mothers will make the transition to work more easily because they clearly intend to enter the labour force soon. Lone mothers and those with recent work experience were most likely to say they plan to look for a job in the next year. In addition, lone mothers that were anxious to begin work were predominantly interested in part-time employment, and nearly half (47 per cent) were interested in term-time employment.

12 STUDENT PARENTS AND THEIR USE OF CHILDCARE

12.1 Introduction

In designing the follow-up to the baseline survey of *Parents' Demand for Childcare*, researchers at the *National Centre* were asked to look in detail at the childcare demands of student parents. This direction was given in the light of current policy interest in the way that childcare can impact both on the ability of a parent to study, and on the likelihood of the parent entering study. In recent years a number of initiatives have been introduced – childcare bursaries etc. – aiming to assist students with childcare needs.

For the purpose of this study a student was defined as someone who was 'enrolled on a course which will lead to a qualification or a credit towards a qualification'. By taking a simple random sample of the population, the number of student parents that would have been identified was deemed insufficient to allow for a separate detailed analysis of these parents. Therefore their numbers were boosted via a doorstep screening exercise. As a result, households with student parents have been weighted to incorporate them into the main sample (see Appendix A for more details).

The total number of households interviewed that contained a student was 1,456 and this represented approximately a fifth (21 per cent) of the entire sample. In the majority of these households it was the main respondent who was studying. A total of 1,106 main respondents met the definition of a student parent, whilst 453 partners did likewise. In a small number of cases (104 interviews), both the main respondent and their partner were in study at the time of the interview.

Elsewhere in this report it has been shown that the status of the person with main or shared responsibility for making decisions about childcare has the greatest impact on a household's demand for childcare. The same applies with regard to the person studying in the household. In households headed by a couple, where only the partner studied, the amount and type of childcare used in these households was very similar to non-student households. In comparison, where the main respondent was enrolled on a course, these households looked very different from other households in terms of their demand for childcare. For this reason the analysis in this chapter concentrates on the main respondent.

The chapter commences by describing student parents, looking at where they studied, their status as a student and how this interacted with their work commitments, and finishing by looking at the qualifications they were aiming for.

Student parents' use of childcare is then reported, followed by a description of some of the difficulties they faced when having to balance their studies and childcare. The chapter then turns to the types of childcare arrangements which enable parents to enter into study. The final section reports on the number of student parents who received some assistance with their childcare arrangements from their colleges. This is followed by a summary of the main findings from this chapter.

12.2 Profile of student parents

Parents who were enrolled on a course of study were asked to describe the type of school or college they were attending. Table 12-1 shows the responses for the main respondent and partners. A majority of respondents (55 per cent) were enrolled at a Further Education college (FE) with around a fifth (22 per cent) at a Higher Education college (HE). Fewer partners were at FE colleges (38 per cent) but a similar proportion were studying at a HE college (24 per cent). A fifth of main respondents (21 per cent) and almost two-fifths of partners (37 per cent) could not classify their college as either HE or FE. Despite these parents being asked for further details about the establishment where they studied, the information provided was not sufficient to classify the course into either of these groups⁸³.

Table 12-1 Type of school or college attended by the parent

	<i>Column percentages</i>	
	Main respondent (%)	Partner (%)
Further Education College / 6 th -form College / Adult Education Centre	55	38
University or other Higher Education College	22	24
Other training College or establishment	21	37
Don't know	2	1
Weighted base	736	298
Unweighted base	1,106	453

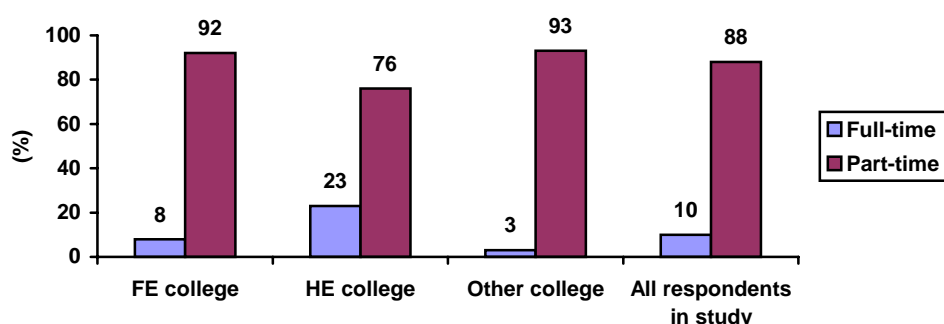
Base: All households with a student parent.

Most respondents who were student parents were studying part-time,⁸⁴ although this varied according to the type of college attended (Figure 12-1). They were more likely to be a full-time student if they were studying at a HE college, a quarter (23 per cent) of whom were full-time students. Relatively few respondents who attended a FE college or other college or training establishment were enrolled in full-time education (8 per cent and 3 per cent respectively). This is not surprising given that we would expect more FE students to have been combining this predominantly vocational education with work.

⁸³It appears that most of the non-classifiable courses were courses run by the workplace where the parent was working. Whilst a qualification was being attained and therefore the parent met the definition of being a student parent, it was clear that the course was neither FE or HE.

⁸⁴ Parents were asked to classify the status of the course they were enrolled on as either full or part-time. Independent of this, data was collected about the number of hours spent studying both on the course and at home.

Figure 12-1 Enrolment status of student parents, by type of school or college



Base: Main respondents who were student parents.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 1,106 households.

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to respondents answering "Don't know" with respect to their enrolment status.

Fewer than a fifth (16 per cent) of lone parents reported that they were enrolled as a student, which was no different from the proportion of main respondents in households headed by a couple who were students (16 per cent). In terms of the types of colleges they were attending, lone parents were marginally over-represented in FE colleges - 31 per cent of student parents in Further Education were lone parents compared with 23 per cent of students in Higher Education⁸⁵. Overall, a quarter of student parents (26 per cent) were lone parents.

Lone parents were more likely to have been enrolled on a full-time course than were respondents in households headed by a couple - the proportions studying full-time were 18 and 8 per cent respectively.

Work and study

A majority of student parents combined study with paid work, with the number of hours worked reflecting whether the course was full or part-time. Part-time students were more likely to be employed than full-time students, and student partners were more likely to be working than student main respondents.

The majority of respondents (69 per cent) who were studying were employed either full-time (33 per cent) or part-time (36 per cent). There was, however, considerable variation in the respondent's employment status according to whether the course was being studied full or part-time. Under a third of respondents (31 per cent) who were enrolled on a full-time course were also in work, compared with almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of part-time students. Where they were working, respondents were evenly split between full and part-time work irrespective of the enrolment status of their course. Under half (44 per cent or 14 per cent of all student parents on a full-time course) of full-time students that worked, worked full-time compared with 47 per cent of respondents enrolled on a part-time course. Therefore part-time students are more likely to be in work but in the cases where students were in work

⁸⁵ A quarter (25 per cent) of families in the sample were headed by lone parents.

the proportions of students working full and part-time were very close, regardless of enrolment status.

Lone parents were less likely to be in work than main respondents who had a spouse or partner. Around three-quarters (74 per cent) of lone parents that were enrolled on a full-time course did not work, compared to two-thirds (65 per cent) of respondents in households headed by a couple. Half of lone parents enrolled on a part-time course did not work (48 per cent) compared with a fifth of respondents in households headed by a couple (20 per cent).

Student partners of the main respondent were more likely to be combining work and study than either lone parents or main respondents in couple households⁸⁶. Four-fifths (83 per cent) of part-time student partners were in full-time work, compared to a third (34 per cent) of respondents⁸⁷.

The number of hours that the respondent worked was different for FE and HE students (Table 12-2). Surprisingly the hours worked do not reflect the balance of full and part-time students in these establishments - we would expect HE institutions with higher numbers of full-time students to be less likely to work full-time. Respondents that attended FE colleges were less likely to be in full-time work than were those at HE colleges - just over a fifth (23 per cent) of respondents at FE colleges were in full-time employment compared with around two-fifths (44 per cent) enrolled at HE colleges. A similar pattern was evident with partners. However, this apparent anomaly is due to the large proportion of part-time students in HE establishment who work full-time - 53 per cent of part-time students in HE institutions work full-time, the figures for FE colleges and other colleges are 25 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

Table 12-2 Employment status of student parents, by type of school or college

	Type of school or college				Column percentages
	FE college (%)	HE college (%)	Other college (%)	Don't know (%)	All student parents (%)
In full-time employment	23	44	42	[67]	33
In part-time employment	38	30	38	[23]	36
Not in paid employment	38	26	19	[10]	31
Weighted base	404	163	157	13	736
Unweighted base	612	251	225	18	1,106

Base: Main respondents who were student parents.

Characteristics of courses

Most of the student parents that were interviewed had commenced their course in either 2001 or 2000, mostly in the 12 months prior to the survey. Around a fifth started prior to this time (21 per cent of respondents started before 2000 and 28 per cent of partners did likewise). Most of the courses (85 per cent) taken by

⁸⁶ This does not cover all partners that were enrolled on a course, only those that did full interview in person, rather than by proxy. Therefore result needs to be viewed with some caution.

⁸⁷ There were too few partners enrolled on full-time courses to analyse separately.

respondents and partners were expected to last no longer than three years. A quarter (25 per cent for both respondents and partners) were expected to finish in less than a year and around a third after about one year (34 per cent for respondents and 29 per cent of partners). Around one-in-ten student parents (9 per cent for both respondents and partners) thought their course would take three years to complete. Courses at FE colleges had a lower median expected duration than those at HE colleges – one year compared with three.

Respondents usually spent an average of six hours per week receiving tuition. Those enrolled at a FE college received fewer hours than HE students – 5.6 compared to 9.5 hours per week respectively. Not all student parents attended their college – around 15 per cent were ‘distance learners’⁸⁸.

Table 12-3 lists the qualifications respondents were attempting to gain. As would be expected, the type of college attended is closely related to the qualification. Students at HE colleges were mostly aiming for first or higher degree. In contrast, the majority of students in FE were studying for vocational qualifications such as NVQs.

⁸⁸ The number of distance learners may be somewhat higher as a further 7 per cent of respondents reported that they spent 0 hours per week at their college. Some of these may have been distance learners who were incorrectly classified by the interviewer. They may also be students who are being examined by dissertation, where the formal hours of tuition would often be zero.

Table 12-3 Qualifications aimed for, by type of school or college

	<i>Column percentages</i>			All student parents (%)
	Type of school or college FE college (%)	HE college (%)	Other college (%)	
GCSE	5	-	1	3
GCE A-Level / SCE Higher	3	1	1	2
Level 1 NVQ or equivalent	10	1	8	7
Level 2 NVQ or equivalent	10	2	11	9
Level 3 NVQ or equivalent	9	2	8	7
Level 4 NVQ or equivalent	3	8	2	4
Level 5 NVQ or equivalent	*	-	*	*
NVQ / SVQ - level not known	3	*	1	2
City and Guilds Part 1/RSA Cert.	12	-	4	7
BTEC or equivalent	6	4	2	5
BTEC National Certificate or equivalent	7	9	4	7
BEC (Higher) or equivalent	3	4	*	2
First degree	3	37	2	10
Higher degree	1	20	*	5
None ⁸⁹	9	3	29	12
Other specific answer	2	2	2	3
Don't know	1	1	1	1
Weighted base	404	163	157	736
Unweighted base	612	251	225	1,106

Base: Main respondents who were student parents.

Parents were asked about the timing of the tuition they received, which was expected to influence the type and amount of childcare used. For example, a parent who studied in the evenings was expected to have different childcare requirements compared with a parent who studied during the day.

Of respondents who received tuition at their college, under three-quarters (71 per cent) attended classes during the day-time whilst under half (44 per cent) attended classes in the evenings (Table 12-4). Where they were enrolled on a full-time course, day-time tuition was more widespread. Over five-out-of-six (86 per cent) on full-time courses received their tuition exclusively in the daytime.

Evening only sessions were most common where the respondent was in full-time employment – two-fifths of these parents (36 per cent) received only evening tuition and a further fifth (21 per cent) received both daytime and evening sessions. Around a half (52 per cent) of the student parents in part-time employment received daytime only sessions compared to 70 per cent of those not in work.

⁸⁹ Student parents were shown a list of qualifications and were asked to match their qualification with one of the categories on the list. Where the parent could not do this, they were asked to describe the course. However, in a small number of cases this information was not collected and hence the classification 'None of these'.

Across teaching establishments there were some differences in the timing of the tuition received at the college. A third (33 per cent) of respondents attending FE colleges were attending taught sessions in the evenings only, compared with a fifth or fewer for the other teaching establishments. Universities and other HE institutions offered more taught sessions both in the evening and during the day, with almost a third (30 per cent) of main respondents that attended a HE college attending sessions in both daytime and evenings.

Table 12-4 Timing of tuition received at school or college, by enrolment status of respondent

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Enrolment status of main respondent		All student parents
	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	(%)
Daytime only tuition	86	49	53
Daytime and evening tuition	12	18	17
Evening only tuition	2	30	27
Don't know / not answered	-	3	2
Weighted base	73	595	674
Unweighted base	112	896	1,015

Base: All households where main respondent was a student parent who spent some time at their college.

Age and number of children in student households

Student parent households were not significantly different from other households in terms of the number of dependent children they had. On average they had 1.8 children, which was the same as in non-student households. They were also similar in terms of the ages of the children in the household. In a fifth (21 per cent) of student parent households there were no children attending school, which was no different from all other families (20 per cent). A slightly higher proportion had all their children at school (58 per cent compared with 53 per cent), but they were less likely to have had children in both these situations (22 per cent and 26 per cent respectively). Given that the composition of student parent households was not appreciably different from that of other households, this cannot be used to explain differences in their use of childcare relative to other households.

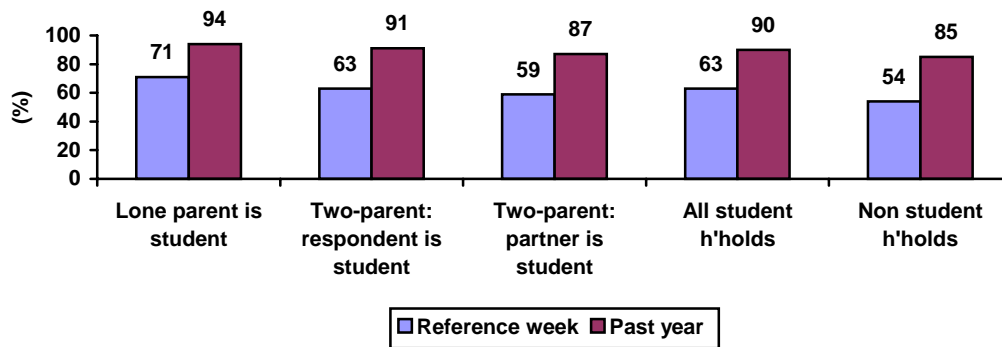
12.3 Usage of childcare by student parents

This section focuses on the use of childcare by student parents, and shows that in general student parents used more childcare than other families. The amount of care used varied slightly according to the type of college attended and whether the parent was enrolled on a full or part-time course.

Generally, student parents were more likely to use childcare than other families (Figure 12-2). Just under two-thirds (63 per cent) of households with a student parent used childcare in the reference week compared with just over half of all other households (54 per cent). In terms of childcare used in the preceding year, again

student parents were more likely to have used childcare, 90 per cent having done so compared with 85 per cent of other families. Lone parents that studied were more likely to have used childcare than were couple households – 71 per cent of student lone parents used childcare in the reference week compared with 62 per cent of couples where at least one parent was studying. However, among couples where the main respondent was studying, the likelihood of using childcare was increased, albeit still significantly less than for a student lone parent.

Figure 12-2 Use of childcare in the past year and the reference week, by enrolment status of the household

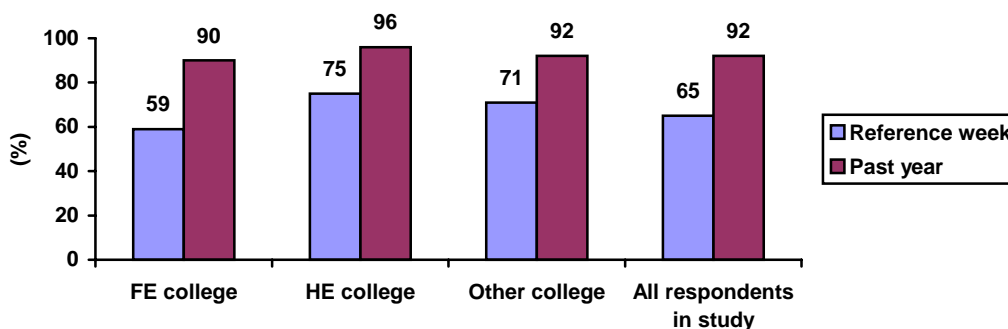


Base: All households.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 5,416 households.

How does the use of childcare vary across different types of students? Figure 12-3 shows that parents enrolled on HE courses were more likely to use childcare in either the reference week (75 per cent) or the past year (96 per cent) than those parents enrolled at a FE college where the proportions using childcare were 59 and 90 per cent respectively.

Figure 12-3 Use of childcare in the past year and the reference week, by type of college respondent attended

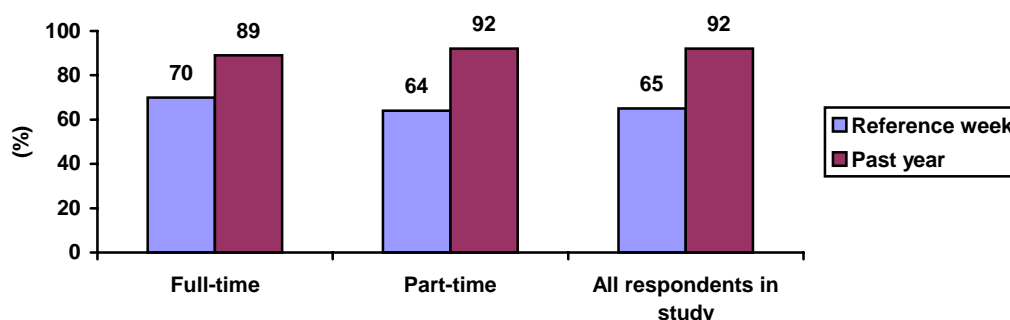


Base: All households where main respondent was a student parent.

Figures are weighted and based on responses from 1,106 households.

Figure 12-4 illustrates differences in the proportion of student parents that had used childcare over the two reference periods according to their enrolment status. Whilst there was little difference in terms of their use of childcare in the past year, respondents who were enrolled on a full-time course were significantly more likely to have used childcare in the reference week than parents on part-time courses – 70 per cent having done so compared with 64 per cent. This may indicate a more frequent and regular use of childcare by these parents.

Figure 12-4 Use of childcare in the past year and the reference week, by type of course enrolled



Base: All households where main respondent was a student parent.
 Figures are weighted and based on responses from 1,105 households.

As shown in Section 12.2, many parents combined study with work, and in these situations families were more likely to have used childcare. Table 12-5 shows that where the respondent was enrolled on a course, they were more likely to have used childcare than similar parents who worked the same type of hours but who were not studying. For example, 69 per cent of student parents who were currently employed full-time used childcare in the reference week, compared with 65 per cent of respondents who did not study but who were also working full-time. The same is true of parents working part-time – 63 per cent who were studying used childcare in the reference week compared with 58 per cent who were not. The difference is much greater among those parents not in work – 63 per cent who were students used childcare compared with less than half (42 per cent) who were neither working or studying. These differences are reflected, although less dramatically, when looking at the use of childcare over the past year.

Table 12-5 Use of childcare in the reference week and the past year, by respondent's work and study status

	Student parents			Other parents			All households
	Working full-time (%)	Working part-time (%)	Not working (%)	Working full-time (%)	Working part-time (%)	Not working (%)	
Childcare used in the reference week	69	63	63	65	58	42	56
Childcare used in the past year	93	93	89	88	91	77	86
Weighted base	241	267	228	972	1,414	1,496	4,619
Unweighted base	363	399	344	1,121	1,587	1,602	5,416

Base: All households

Hours of care used

The previous section showed that student parents were more likely than other parents to have used childcare in either the reference week or in the past year. Table 12-6 shows that student parents also used greater quantities of childcare than other families. An average of 13.9 hours of childcare was used by households with a student parent compared with 11.4 hours in all other households. Student lone parents used an average of 19.1 hours of childcare in the reference week, which was significantly higher than all other lone parents, who used on average 13.2 hours of childcare in the reference week. In households headed by a couple, the number of hours of childcare used was higher where the main respondent was the student (13.3 hours) compared with where the partner was a student (11.6 hours) and where neither studied (10.7 hrs).

Just over one-in-ten households with a student parent (11 per cent) used more than 40 hours of childcare in the reference week, compared with 8 per cent of all other households. Lone parent students were most likely to use greater quantities of childcare: 16 per cent had used over 40 hrs a week, of which just over one in ten (11per cent) used over 50 hrs.

Table 12-6 Number of hours of childcare used in the reference week, by type of household

Column percentages

	Student parent households				Non student households			All households (%)
	Lone parent (%)	Two-parent Respondent enrolled (%)	Partner enrolled (%)	All student households (%)	Lone parent (%)	Two-parent (%)	All non student households (%)	
None	29	37	41	37	45	47	46	44
Up to 10	23	26	24	25	17	22	20	21
11 to 20	16	12	13	13	13	12	12	12
21 to 30	10	8	9	8	7	7	7	7
31 to 40	5	7	4	6	8	6	7	7
41 to 50	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4
More than 50	11	5	4	6	5	3	4	4
Mean	19.1	13.3	11.6	13.9	13.2	10.7	11.4	12.1
Weighted base	193	544	300	969	980	2,669	3,649	4,619
Unweighted base	294	812	455	1,457	1,089	2,870	3,959	5,416

Base: All households.

The mean number of hours of childcare was higher for full-time students than for students enrolled on part-time courses (Table 12-7). Full-time students used an average of almost 20 hours of childcare (19.6 hours) in the reference week, which was five more than the average for students studying part-time (14.3 hours). This difference is reflected in a higher proportion of full-time students using more than 30 hours of childcare in the reference week – around a quarter had done so (24 per cent) compared with less than a fifth (17 per cent) of students studying part-time.

Table 12-7 Number of hours of childcare used in the reference week, by type of course enrolled

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Enrolment status of main respondent		All households
	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	(%)
None	30	36	35
Up to 10	16	26	25
11 to 20	17	12	13
21 to 30	13	8	9
31 to 40	8	6	7
41 to 50	7	5	5
More than 50	9	6	6
Mean	19.6	14.3	14.9
Weighted base	77	649	736
Unweighted base	119	975	1,106

Base: All households where main respondent was a student parent.

The average number of hours of childcare was higher for parents attending HE colleges than for those at a FE college. HE students used an average of 17.9 hours of childcare in the reference week compared with 12.4 for those at a FE college.

Parents who spent over 20 hours in classes or tutorials a week used more hours of childcare than did other student parents. Just over a fifth (22 per cent) used 50 or more hours of childcare in the reference week, compared to just 5 per cent of respondents who usually attended classes for 20 or fewer hours in a week.

Types of childcare provision used by student parents

The types of providers used by student parents were similar to those used by other parents (Tables 12-8 and 12-9). As in all households, grandparents were the most common provider used in the past year, with around two-thirds of student parent households (64 per cent) having used a grandparent in that period; however only 56 per cent of non-student households used a grandparent in the last year. Friends and relatives were also widely used (43 per cent), along with out-of-school clubs (20 per cent) and crèches or nurseries (19 per cent). However, whilst the overall pattern of use was similar, each of these providers was used by proportionately more student parents than non-student parents. The proportion of non-student households using these providers in the past year was 35 per cent, 12 per cent and 15 per cent

respectively. In respect of other providers, student and non-student families looked similar.

In terms of childcare use in the reference week, the patterns were much the same. Grandparents were the most commonly used provider by student parent families (28 per cent), followed by friends and relatives (13 per cent), crèches or nurseries (13 per cent) and out-of-school clubs (8 per cent). Again, these levels of usage were all higher for student parent families than for non-student families.

Table 12-8 Type of childcare used in the past year, by enrolment status of the household

	<i>Column percentages +</i>		
	Student households (%)	Non- student households (%)	All households (%)
No childcare used	10	15	14
Childminder	10	8	9
Daily nanny	1	1	1
Live-in nanny or au-pair	1	1	1
Babysitter	13	10	10
Crèche or nursery	19	15	16
Playgroup	11	11	11
Nursery / reception class	12	12	12
Family Centre	1	*	*
Out-of-school club	20	12	14
Ex-partner	7	8	7
Grandparent	64	56	58
Older sibling	9	7	7
Other friend / relative	43	35	37
Other	5	4	4
Weighted base	969	3,649	4,619
Unweighted base	1,457	3,959	5,416

Base: All households.

+ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Table 12-9 Type of childcare used in the reference week, by enrolment status of the household

	<i>Column percentages⁺</i>		
	Student households (%)	Non- student households (%)	All households (%)
No childcare used	37	46	44
Childminder	6	4	5
Daily nanny	*	1	1
Live-in nanny or au-pair	*	*	*
Babysitter	3	2	2
Crèche or nursery	13	9	10
Playgroup	6	6	6
Nursery / reception class	6	7	7
Family Centre	*	*	*
Out-of-school club	8	5	6
Ex-partner	3	4	4
Grandparent	28	23	24
Older sibling	3	2	3
Other friend / relative	13	9	10
Other	2	2	2
Weighted base	969	3,647	4,619
Unweighted base	1,457	3,957	5,416

Base: All households.

⁺ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Early years education and formal childcare

As well as using more childcare than other parents, student parents were also found to have used different types of childcare providers. Proportionately more student parents had used early years education and other formal provision in the past year and the reference week than had other parents. They were also more likely to use informal childcare. Almost three-fifths (59 per cent) of student parent households had used some early years education or other formal childcare in the past year compared with a half of other families (49 per cent). The difference in terms of informal care was similar – 79 per cent of student parent households used an informal provider in the past year compared with 71 per cent of other families (Table 12-10).

Table 12-10 Type of childcare used in the past year and the reference week, by enrolment status of the household

Column percentages

	Student parent households				Non student households			All households (%)
	Lone parent (%)	Two-parent Respondent enrolled (%)	Partner enrolled (%)	All student households (%)	Lone parent (%)	Two-parent (%)	All non student households (%)	
<i>Used childcare in the past week</i>								
Early years education and formal childcare only	17	22	24	21	16	20	19	20
Mixture	17	15	13	14	10	11	11	12
Informal childcare only	37	27	22	28	29	22	24	24
None	29	37	41	37	45	47	46	44
<i>Used childcare in the past year</i>								
Early years education and formal childcare only	10	12	11	12	12	14	14	14
Mixture	47	49	44	47	30	37	35	38
Informal childcare only	38	29	32	32	40	35	36	34
None	6	9	13	10	18	15	15	14
Weighted base	193	544	300	969	980	2,669	3,649	4,619
Unweighted base	294	812	445	1,457	1,089	2,870	3,959	5,416

Base: All households.

The pattern was repeated in terms of childcare used in the reference week. Proportionately more student parents used early years education and other formal childcare (35 per cent) and informal childcare (42 per cent) than did families where neither parent was enrolled in study (30 and 35 per cent respectively).

There was some variation in the use of early years education and other formal childcare according to which type of college the student attended. Parents attending a HE college were more likely to have used some early years education and other formal childcare in the past year than were FE students. Seven out of ten (70 per cent) respondents attending a HE college had done so, compared with 55 per cent of FE students. The results were similar in terms of childcare used in the reference week - 42 per cent of HE students had used some early years education or other formal childcare, compared with just under a third (30 per cent) of students in FE.

Student parents were asked about the times at which they received their tuition at their college, from which it was possible to see whether there was a relationship between these timings and the type of childcare they used (Table 12-11). It may have been expected that parents who studied in the evening may have been more likely to: a) use childcare, and b) require different types of childcare; however, such differences were not apparent. Respondents who attended their college for lessons exclusively in the evenings were no different from other students in terms of their use of formal and informal providers. This result is consistent with both couples and for lone parents.

Table 12-11 Type of childcare used in the past year and the reference week, by enrolment status of the household

	Time of day tuition received			All
	Daytime only	Evening only	Both daytime and evening	households
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<i>Used childcare in the past week</i>				
Early years education and formal childcare only	21	19	17	20
Mixture	14	18	17	15
Informal childcare only	31	27	28	30
None	34	36	38	35
<i>Used childcare in the past year</i>				
Early years education and formal childcare only	13	10	11	11
Mixture	46	51	54	49
Informal childcare only	33	31	27	31
None	8	8	8	8
Weighted base	360	179	117	674
Unweighted base	535	273	179	1,015

Base: All households where main respondent was a student and where some study done at the college.

Note: There were 28 cases where the respondent did not give details about the timing of the course. These do not appear in the table but have been included in the total column.

As shown in chapter 5, it is possible to look separately at formal childcare as defined in the National Childcare Strategy: registered childminders, crèche/nurseries and out-of-school clubs (including holiday clubs). Use of these providers was much higher among student parent families than for other families. One out of four (24 per cent) student parent families used one of these formal providers in the reference week, compared with 17 per cent of non-student parent families. This pattern was repeated with respect to use over the past year - 42 per cent of student parents used this care in the past year, compared with 30 per cent of other families.

Cost of childcare

Households with a student parent were as likely as other households to have made some payment towards the cost their childcare. Half (50 per cent) had made a payment for the childcare they used in the reference week, compared with 52 per cent of all other households.

Student parent households were more likely to have received some financial assistance with their childcare than were other households, although the number doing so was relatively small. Less than one-in-ten (8 per cent) households with a student parent reported that someone from outside of their household had made a contribution towards their childcare costs in the reference week - 5 per cent of non-student households reported likewise. This financial support came from a variety of sources (e.g. an employer, their college), not all of which appeared to be linked to the fact that the parent was a student.

The greater use of childcare by student parents relative to other parents is reflected in their weekly childcare costs (Table 12-12). Their median weekly cost of childcare was £4 higher than that of other families that had used childcare in the reference week - £24 per week compared with £20. Fewer student parents (37 per cent) paid less than £20 per week for their childcare than did other parents (43 per cent). On the whole, however, the distribution of weekly childcare costs between these two types of families was generally similar.

Table 12-12 Childcare costs in the past week by presence of student parents in the household

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Enrolment status of household		All households
	Student households	Non-student households	
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Less than £20	37	43	42
£20 to less than £40	20	17	18
£40 to less than £70	18	16	17
£70 to less than £100	8	9	9
£100 to less than £150	7	6	6
£150 or more	4	4	4
One off or unspecified amount	5	4	4
Mean	£43	£39	£40
Median	£24	£20	£21
Weighted base	264	838	1,101
Unweighted base	402	961	1,363

Base: All households with one or two children who paid some money to providers.

Around a third (36 per cent) of student parent households said that they had experienced some difficulties meeting their weekly childcare costs, which was not significantly different from the number of other parents that reported likewise (34 per cent). As shown in Chapter 8, lone parents were more likely to have experienced difficulties meeting their childcare costs than were couple families. Where the lone parent was a student the proportion reporting some difficulties was even greater. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of lone parents that studied had some difficulties meeting their weekly childcare costs compared with just under half (47 per cent) of other lone parents. Whether or not there was a student parent in the household did not appear to affect the likelihood of the reporting of difficulties in households headed by a couple.

12.4 Difficulties with childcare faced by student parents

Student parents were asked a number of questions about how they combined study and childcare and whether this had caused them difficulties. Specifically, they were asked:

- whether they had to look after their children whilst studying; and
- whether they had missed a class or lecture because of problems with their childcare.

As with other parents, students were also asked about any unmet demand for childcare they may have experienced in the past year as well as whether their childcare had ever broken down. This section reports the results from these questions.

Of the main respondents who were identified as a student, four-fifths (79 per cent) reported that they normally spent some time each week studying at home. Respondents at Higher Education colleges (98 per cent) were more likely to have studied at home than were FE students (78 per cent). The pattern for student partners was very similar, with 93 per cent of HE students usually doing some study at home compared with 67 per cent of partners at FE colleges. Around four-fifths of part-time students (79 per cent) studied at home compared with 90 per cent of full-time students.

Where the student usually studied at home, they were asked if they usually had to look after their children at the same time. Around three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) said this was the case. The proportion was much higher among lone parents (85 per cent) than for respondents in households headed by a couple (67 per cent). Partners that studied were less likely to have to combine study with childcare, with just over two-fifths having done so (43 per cent).

Whilst they were not asked whether they would have liked to have had some childcare to cover these times, it is possible to investigate whether these parents were any more likely to have had some unmet demand for childcare.

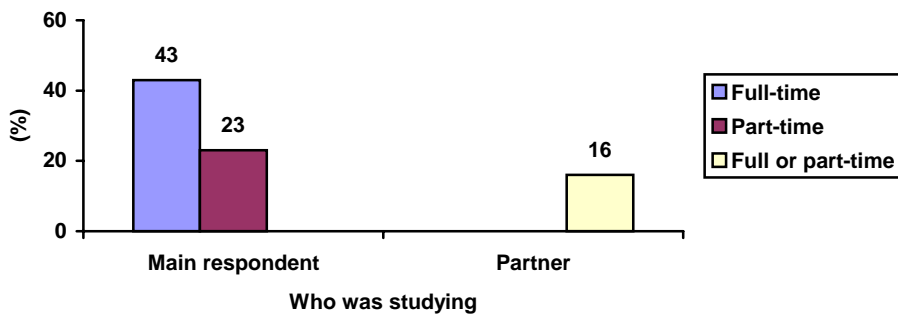
In general, households with a student parent were more likely to have experienced some unmet demand for childcare in the past year than were other households – a third (32 per cent) having done so in the past year compared with just over a fifth (22 per cent) of other households. However, where the student parent indicated that they had to look after their children whilst studying, proportionately more of these parents recorded some unmet demand than those who did not look after their children whilst studying. Two-fifths (39 per cent) of student parents who looked after their children whilst studying at home reported some unmet demand compared with a quarter (27 per cent) of students who either did not look after their children whilst studying or who did not study at home.

All parents were asked to explain the circumstances for their unmet demand, and we found that student parents that looked after their children whilst studying were significantly more likely to have given an answer relating to their study than were other student parents. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) said they had experienced unmet demand when they wanted or needed to do additional study whilst a fifth (19 per cent) said their unmet demand occurred when they wanted to start studying. By way of comparison, relatively few student parents who did not look after their children whilst studying gave these responses – 8 and 12 per cent respectively. It is likely that this is an area of unmet demand for childcare. In summary, households with a student parent were more likely to have experienced some unmet demand than were other households.

Missed lessons due to problems with childcare were another difficulty experienced by student parents. A quarter (25 per cent) of main respondents reported that they had missed a class or lecture in the past year for this reason. Where it was the respondent's partner that was enrolled, the proportion was somewhat less (16 per cent). Full-time students were more likely to have experienced such a difficulty than were other students (Figure 12-5) and the same was true of lone parents – 35 per cent had missed a class compared with a fifth (22 per cent) of respondents that lived in a

household headed by a couple. No significant differences were reported between FE and HE students in terms of the proportions having missed a class because of childcare problems – 29 and 31 per cent of main respondents having done so in the past year.

Figure 12-5 Proportion of parents that missed a class because of problems with childcare, by type of course enrolled



Base: All households where respondent or partner was a student parent. Figures are weighted and based on responses from 1,106 main respondent and 309 partner interviews.

Whether the childcare was formal or informal did not appear to be related to the parents' chances of experiencing missed classes or lessons. What was evident was that there was a relationship between families experiencing these difficulties and families that used more than one provider. Where a single provider was used in the past year, a fifth of main respondents (19 per cent) said they had missed a class compared with a quarter that had used two or more providers (26 per cent).

Whilst three-quarters of main respondents who were studying reported never having missed a class because of their childcare, those that did appeared to do so on a regular basis (Table 12-13). Just under a third (31 per cent) said they had missed at least one class every month and almost one-in-ten (9 per cent) missed classes every fortnight. Missing classes was much more of a problem for lone parents with just under a half (45 per cent) reporting that they had done so as least once a month compared with around a quarter (24 per cent) of respondents that were in households headed by a couple.

Table 12-13 How frequently classes were missed, by household structure

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Household structure		All
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	households (%)
At least once a week	8	2	4
At least once a fortnight	8	4	5
At least once a month	29	18	22
At least once every six months	43	49	47
At least once a year	13	27	22
Weighted base	67	117	185
Unweighted base	103	179	282

Base: All households where main respondent was a student parent who had missed a class in the past year because of their childcare.

In general it appears that lone parents who were enrolled on a course found balancing their studies and childcare arrangements more difficult than did student parents in couple households. They were more likely to study and look after their children at the same time and were also more likely to have reported missing a class or lecture. These difficulties were confirmed in their responses to a question about how well they had managed to keep up with the requirements of their course (Table 12-14). Just over half (55 per cent) could not keep up with their course requirements all of the time compared with just under half (48 per cent) of respondents in couple households. In general it appears that lone parents are more vulnerable than other parents in terms of childcare having an impact on whether they complete their studies.

Table 12-14 Ability to keep up with course requirements, by type of family

<i>Are you able to keep up with the requirements of the course?</i>	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	Family status		All
	Lone parent (%)	Couple (%)	households (%)
... all the time,	45	52	50
most of the time,	32	31	31
some of the time,	16	12	14
never?	4	2	2
Don't know	3	2	2
Weighted base	193	544	736
Unweighted base	294	812	1,106

Base: All households where main respondent was a student parent.

12.5 Arrangements which aid study

During the course of the interview student parents were shown a list with nine different childcare arrangements and were asked which of these enabled them to

study. Where more than one response was given, they were also asked which was the most important arrangement. Separate questions were asked of lone parents and couples and the responses are reported below.

Starting with lone parents, around four-fifths (77 per cent) said that at least one of the childcare arrangements they were shown helped them to go out to study (Table 12-15). The availability of relatives (40 per cent) or friends (18 per cent) to help with childcare was the most common response, with almost half of lone parents (45 per cent) giving either response. Around two-fifths of lone parents (38 per cent) said that they were able to go to college because of circumstances involving their children. A third said their children were at school (34 per cent) and a tenth reported that their children were old enough to look after themselves (11 per cent). Just under two-fifths (37 per cent) of lone parents gave responses which related to the type of childcare they were using. A quarter (24 per cent) said the low cost of their childcare helped them to study, a fifth (19 per cent) mentioned the quality of their care and a similar proportion (16 per cent) said it was the flexibility of their childcare arrangements that enabled them to study. Very few student lone parents (6 per cent) reported that the assistance they received with childcare from their college enabled them to study.

Table 12-15 Childcare arrangements that enable lone parents to study

	<i>Column percentages⁺</i>	
	Types of arrangements (%)	Most important arrangement (%)
Relatives are able to help with childcare	40	20
My child(ren) is/are at school	34	18
I have reliable free/cheap child care	24	11
I have good quality child care	19	7
I have child care which fits with my hours of studying	16	6
My child(ren) is/are old enough to look after themselves	11	4
Friends are able to help with the child care	18	3
The college / school provides/pays for some/all child care	6	3
Ex-partner is able to help with childcare	8	2
None of these reasons	23	23
Irrelevant answer, response does not match question	1	1
Weighted base	193	193
Unweighted base	294	294

Base: All lone parents who were enrolled on a course that would lead to a qualification.

⁺ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

In terms of the main response given to this question, the availability of relatives to help with childcare was the most common childcare arrangement that helped lone parents study – 20 per cent having answered in this way. However, it should be noted that more parents (23 per cent) said that none of the arrangements listed on the card helped them study⁹⁰.

⁹⁰ Presumably for these parents childcare was not an important factor in terms of what enabled them to study.

For couples the story was somewhat different (Table 12-16). Respondents were most likely to say that it was the help their partner gave with childcare that enabled them to study, around a third responding in this way (34 per cent). In addition, just under a quarter (23 per cent) reported that they only studied when their partner was not at work. Compared with lone parents, fewer couples said the help of relatives (24 per cent) or friends (7 per cent) enabled the respondent to study. It is likely that the help of their partner reduced the need to use these other sources of childcare.

Factors related to the type of childcare used, its cost and the quality of the childcare were mentioned by fewer respondents in households headed by a couple than lone parent households. Around one-in-ten couples (11 per cent) thought that the reliability and low cost of their childcare enabled the respondent to study. A similar proportion (11 per cent) thought it was having good quality childcare that mattered.

As with lone parents, few respondents (1 per cent) in households headed by a couple reported assistance from their college as a source of help which enabled them to study.

Table 12-16 Childcare arrangements that enable couples to study

	<i>Column percentages⁺</i>	
	Types of arrangements (%)	Most important arrangement (%)
My partner is able to help with child care	34	19
My child(ren) is/are at school	33	17
I study when my [spouse/partner] is not working	23	12
Relatives are able to help with child care	24	8
We have reliable free/cheap child care	11	5
We have good quality child care	11	5
We have child care which fits with my hours of study	13	4
My child(ren) is/are old enough to look after themselves	11	4
We have child care which fits partner's working hours	7	2
Friends are able to help with the child care	7	1
My college provides/pays for some/all child care	1	1
My partner's employer contributes to childcare	1	*
Other specific answer, cannot be coded into frame	*	*
None of these reasons	20	20
Don't know	1	1
Weighted base	544	544
Unweighted base	812	812

Base: All respondents in households headed by a couple who were enrolled on a course that would lead to a qualification.

⁺ The columns show all the influences selected and therefore percentages add up to more than 100.

Where both the main respondent and their partner were in full-time work, the respondent was most likely to say that it was the help of their partner that enabled them to study – just under two-fifths (38 per cent) answered in this way. Where one

of the couple was either not in work or was working part-time, significantly fewer (30 per cent) reported that the help of their partner was important. For these families the age of their children was more often offered as the factor that help them to study. These parents were also more likely to have mentioned factors relating to their childcare (cost, quality etc.) than were families where both were in full-time work.

In terms of the main response given to this question, the help that partners gave with childcare was the most common factor that enabled the main respondent to study. As with lone parents, around a fifth (20 per cent) of respondents in couple households said that none of the childcare arrangements they were shown helped them to study. We infer that for these parents, childcare was not an important factor in deciding whether or not they studied.

These figures (the main responses) were also analysed with respect to parents' patterns of work. Starting with couples, where the main respondent was in work, they were more likely to say that help from their spouse or partner was important in allowing them to study. A quarter (26 per cent) of respondents working full-time gave this reason, compared to 18 per cent of part-time workers and 12 per cent of those who did not work. For non-working parents, having children at school was an important aid to helping them study. A quarter (26 per cent) said this was an important reason, compared to a fifth (20 per cent) of part-time workers and 9 per cent of respondents who worked full-time. However, having older children was important in aiding study to more full-time workers (8 per cent) than part-time or non-working parents (2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively). Free, cheap and reliable childcare was more important to respondents who did not work. The flexibility of being able to study whilst their partner or spouse was around was more important to part-time workers (15 per cent) than full-time workers (11 per cent).

For lone parents there is a slightly different pattern of important sources of childcare. Good quality care is most important to parents working full-time. As with couples, having older children was more likely to be stated as an important aid to study by parents who work full-time. Lone parents who do not work said relatives helping out, free reliable childcare and having children at school were the most important aids which helped them study.

In conclusion, it appears that informal childcare arrangements were generally the most helpful in terms of enabling a parent to study. This applied to parents working full and part-time, as well as for non-working parents. For a lone parent it was the help of their friends or relatives that mattered whilst for couples, the parent who studied needed the assistance of their partner. We suggest that there is likely to be at least two reasons why informal sources are most helpful – informal care is usually free (as shown in Chapter 8) and it is usually more flexible, thus allowing the parent to study additional hours at short notice.

12.6 Childcare help from colleges and other assistance

In recent years a number of initiatives have been introduced to help support student parents with their childcare needs. The aim of this support is essentially twofold:

- to attract parents into study who otherwise would have been put off because of difficulties in arranging suitable childcare whilst they are studying; and
- to help student parents to remain in education who otherwise may not because of difficulties with their childcare which make studying untenable.

Around a third of Higher Education (36 per cent) and Further Education (37 per cent) students reported that their college had childcare facilities that were available to students. Just under 10 per cent (7 per cent FE and 10 per cent HE) said they didn't know whether such facilities existed; however, these were disproportionately students that had very few hours of tuition at the college.

Most student parents did not have access to their college's childcare facilities at short notice (Table 12-17). Only 8 per cent of FE students and 6 per cent of HE students reported such access. A significant proportion of parents who knew their college had childcare facilities did not know if they could be used at short notice (32 per cent of FE students and 22 per cent of HE students). In total, this means that around a fifth of student parents enrolled at either a FE or HE college either didn't know if their college had childcare facilities that they could use or didn't know whether they were available at short notice.

Table 12-17 Availability of childcare places at short notice, by type of school or college

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Type of school or college FE college (%)	HE college (%)	Other college (%)	All (%)
Childcare places available at short notice	8	6	4	7
Childcare places not available at short notice	17	22	4	15
Don't know if available	12	8	2	9
No childcare places	57	54	85	63
Don't know if childcare places	7	10	6	7
Weighted base	404	163	157	736
Unweighted base	612	251	225	1,106

Base: Main respondents who were student parents.

It was rare for student parents to use their college's childcare facilities. Overall 5 per cent of respondents who were enrolled on a FE course were currently using their college's childcare, while somewhat fewer HE students (2 per cent) were doing likewise. In addition, very few students reported having ever used these facilities – 8 and 4 per cent in FE and HE respectively.

The number of parents using college run childcare was too small to assess whether students who used their college facilities were any more or less likely to have missed a class or lesson because of problems with their childcare.

Student parents were asked whether they were receiving any support from the following sources:

- Government Access or Hardship Funds, including bursaries (FE or HE);
- Non-government help for students with childcare costs in the form of grants;
- Hardship funds from universities.

Only 4 per cent of households with a student parent reported receiving assistance from any of these sources⁹¹.

12.7 Summary

In this chapter we have reported findings from a study of student parents. When designing the sample for the Repeat Study of Parents' Demand for Childcare, student parents were purposefully over-sampled in order to make possible a separate analysis of their childcare demands. A total of 1,456 student parent households was identified.

Generally, student parents used more childcare than non-student households did. Just under two-thirds (63 per cent) of households with a student parent used childcare in the reference week, compared with just over half (54 per cent) of other households that used childcare. Lone parents who studied were more likely to have used childcare than were couples who studied.

Proportionately more student parent households (59 per cent) used formal childcare in the past year, including early years education, than did non-student households (49 per cent). In terms of the *amount* of childcare used, households with a student parent used more childcare than did other households. They used an average of 13.9 hours of childcare in the reference week compared with 11.4 hours in all other households.

Student parents were asked about some of the difficulties they experienced while combining study with bringing up a family. A majority (72 per cent) of student parents had to look after their children whilst studying at home. A possible consequence of this is greater levels of unmet demand for childcare. They were more likely to have recorded unmet demand for childcare (39 per cent having done so) than other student parents (27 per cent) and significantly more than parents who did not study (22 per cent).

Following on from this, we also found that a quarter (25 per cent) of main respondents and around one-in-six partners (16 per cent) reported that they had missed a class or lecture in the past year because of problems with their childcare arrangements. This did not appear to be related to whether the childcare was formal or informal. However, it was more likely to occur where more than one provider had been used in the past year.

⁹¹ Not possible to do further analysis of these families because of small numbers.

Informal childcare arrangements such as the help of the respondent's partner or help from friends or relatives were the most commonly reported childcare arrangements that enabled the respondent to study.

Around a third of Higher Education (36 per cent) and Further Education (37 per cent) students reported their college had childcare facilities that were available to students. Most student parents did not have access to their college's childcare facilities at short notice. Only 8 per cent of FE students and 6 per cent of HE students reported such access. A fifth of student parents either did not know whether their college had any childcare available to students or did not know that it was available at short notice.

Few student parents used their college's childcare facilities - 5 per cent of all respondents enrolled on a FE course and 2 per cent on HE courses were currently using their college's childcare.

APPENDIX A TECHNICAL REPORT

As explained in the Introduction to this report, the survey consisted of two types of sample: the national sample and a booster sample in which parents of a certain type were over sampled.

In Section A1 the sample design is presented. Section A2 provides information on the fieldwork and the response rates for both the National and Booster samples. The procedures for weighting the data are details in Section A3. Section A4 gives an overview of the issues covered in the survey interview, while Section A5 deal with data processing issued. The final section includes a glossary of terms used throughout the report and the classifications used in analysis.

The survey documents have not been included here. These are available on request from the sponsoring Department (address is given below) and at the National Centre's web site: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/pdc>

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Analytical Services
Level 6S
Sanctuary Buildings
Great George Street
London SW1H 9NA

A1 Sample design

The sample for both the "National" and "Booster" samples were selected to be representative of parents of children aged 0-14 who were living in England. The names and addresses were selected from Child Benefit (CB) records which are held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP, formerly the DSS). The sample frame provided a very high coverage of the targeted population, as the take up of CB is close to 100 per cent. All CB recipients in England with children in the specified age group were treated as eligible, except for those with a claim 'in action' (i.e. where special arrangements were being made by the Benefits Office). The numbers in this 'in action' group were considerably larger in 2001, compared with the baseline survey because of a widening of the definition of such cases. A separate analysis of these excluded families was undertaken to see whether their exclusion in any way affected the representativeness of the survey findings. This was done by comparing the basic characteristics of these families - age of parent, number of children, region of residence - with the selected sample. No significant differences were discovered. In addition, checks were also made with other surveys - General Household Survey, Labour Force Survey - to see how the findings reported here compared with these surveys. Again no significant differences were discovered when making comparisons on a range of basic sample characteristics (e.g. the numbers of lone parents, the proportion of families in work, ethnicity, number of children aged 0-14).

The sample was geographically clustered to achieve efficient fieldwork. To select the sample the following stages were followed:

- all recipients of CB with at least one child aged 0-14 were identified;
- these were sorted in order of postcode sector within regions;
- a systematic random sample was drawn down the list, using an interval of N/c , where N was the total number of recipients on the list, and c the desired number of sample clusters;
- for each recipient upon which the sampling interval alighted, that postcode sector was included;
- from each sampled sector, 54 recipients were selected.

The combination of the final two stages of this procedure resulted in each CB recipient having an equal probability of selection.

Each selected address was then allocated in turn to either the 'national' or the booster sample upon which a screening exercise was to take place.

There were three groups of parents that we were interested in finding through the screening exercise. They were:

- parents who are students
- parents who use out-of-school clubs as childcare
- and recipients of childcare tax credit.

Students were identified by the following question:

Are you (or your partner) currently enrolled in a course that will lead to a qualification or to a credit towards a qualification?

It did not matter that the parent (or their partner) may not have been studying at the time of the interview. They simply had to be enrolled on a course, and that course had to lead to a qualification or to a credit towards a qualification.

Parents who use out-of-school clubs as childcare were identified by the following question:

In the past twelve months, have any of your children aged 14 or under gone to an out-of-school club? That includes clubs before or after the school day, or during school holidays.

Parents who receive the childcare tax credit were identified by the following two questions:

Do you (or your partner) currently receive Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC)?

and

Are you receiving the childcare tax credit component within WFTC?

In the next section we report the number of families that were screened via this exercise.

A2 Fieldwork and response

All of the named persons in the selected sample were sent a letter by the *National Centre* on the behalf of the DWP (the holders of Child Benefit records) to inform them about the study, invite them to take part in the survey and give them the opportunity to opt-out, if they wished to do so. The letter was addressed to the person recorded as the recipient of CB. A total of 1,056 parents (9 per cent of the sample) opted out, which left us with 10,629 sample cases issued to interviewers. There was no difference in the opt-out rate between the national and booster samples.

Computer-assisted personal interviews were carried out at the address of the CB recipients either with the recipient him/herself or with the other parent/guardian or foster parent who had main or shared responsibility for childcare decisions. A total of 260 interviewers were used and they were all personally briefed by the researchers. Interviewing commenced at the end of February and was completed by early June 2001. A number of addresses, 45 in total, could not be visited by interviewers due to the outbreak of foot and mouth.

A total of 5,416 interviews were carried out across both the main and booster samples. For the national sample, interviews were achieved in 67.4 per cent of the addresses selected, or 75.7 per cent of those for whom an address could be located. Excluding parents which opted-out of the survey (i.e. those that contacted the *National Centre* prior to the interviewer visiting the household) we are left with a response rate of 83.4 per cent.

For the booster sample, the screening exercise was conducted in 4,577 households (response rate 90.8 per cent) of which 1,044 were eligible for interview (screening rate of 22.8 per cent) and 938 of these agreed to be interviewed (response rate of 89.8 per cent).

A full summary of response is given in Tables A-1 and A-2.

Apx. Table A.1 Response summary, national sample.

	Number of cases	% of total	%of contact
Sample drawn	6,642	100.0	
<i>Ineligible addresses</i>			
No children 0-14	32	0.5	
Total eligible for survey	6,610	99.5	
<i>Non-contact with sample member</i>	691	10.4	
Insufficient address	2	0.0	
Not traced	14	0.2	
Empty	95	1.4	
Derelict / demolished	5	0.1	
Business / industrial (no private dwelling)	4	0.1	
Foot and mouth	23	0.3	
Other	6	0.1	
Non-contact 4+ calls	101	1.5	
Mover - follow-up address not known	412	6.2	
Other non-contact	29	0.4	
Contacted families	5,919	89.1	100.0
<i>Refusal to participate in the study</i>	614	9.2	10.4
Opt-out	538	8.1	9.1
Late opt-out	14	0.2	0.2
HQ refusal	51	0.8	0.9
Refusal of information about occupant	11	0.2	0.2
<i>Total refusal of eligible respondents</i>	595	9.0	10.1
Refusal to main interview - in person	381	5.7	6.4
Refusal to main interview - by proxy	61	0.9	1.0
Broken appointment, no re-contact	153	2.3	2.6
<i>Total other reasons for no interview with eligible respondent</i>	232	3.5	3.9
Ill/away during fieldwork	36	0.5	0.6
Inadequate English / senile	34	0.5	0.6
Other non-interview	162	2.4	2.7
Main interviews achieved	4,478	67.4	75.7
In full	4,469	67.3	75.5
In part	9	0.1	0.2

Apx. Table A.2 Response summary, booster sample.

	Number of cases	% of total	% of contact	% of eligible
Sample drawn	5,042	100.0		
<i>Ineligible addresses</i>				
No children 0-14	2	0.0		
Total eligible for survey	5,040	100.0		
<i>Non-contact with sample member</i>	463	9.2		
Insufficient address	4	0.1		
Not traced	11	0.2		
Empty	65	1.3		
Derelict / demolished	4	0.1		
Business / industrial (no private dwelling)	-	-		
Foot and mouth	20	0.4		
Other	6	0.1		
Non-contact 4+ calls	63	1.2		
Mover - follow-up address not known	282	5.6		
Other non-contact	8	0.2		
Contacted families	4,577	90.8	100.0	
<i>Refusal to participate in the study</i>	588	11.7	12.8	
Opt-out	518	10.3	11.3	
Late opt-out	6	0.1	0.1	
HQ refusal	13	0.3	0.3	
Refusal of information about occupant	9	0.2	0.2	
Refusal to screener	42	0.8	0.9	
<i>Families screened</i>	3,989	79.1	87.2	
<i>Ineligible families</i>	2,945	58.4	64.3	
Families eligible for interview	1,044	20.7	22.8	100.0
<i>Total refusal of eligible respondents</i>	72	1.4	1.5	6.9
Refusal to main interview - in person	40	0.8	0.9	3.8
Refusal to main interview - by proxy	8	0.2	0.2	0.8
Broken appointment, no recontact	24	0.5	0.5	2.3
<i>Total other reasons for no interview with eligible respondent</i>	34	0.7	0.7	3.3
Ill/away during fieldwork	7	0.1	0.2	0.7
Inadequate English / senile	7	0.1	0.2	0.7
Other non-interview	20	0.4	0.4	1.9
Main interviews achieved	938	18.6	20.5	89.8
In full	935	18.5	20.4	89.6
In part	3	0.1	0.1	0.3

A3 Weighting

Where the household contained more than two eligible children, two were randomly selected by the CAPI programme to be covered in the interview. This selection process was carried out for the 17 per cent of households that included more than two eligible children. Since details of the quantity of childcare were only collected for up to two children in a household, it was necessary to weight these data in order to produce an estimate of the total quantity of childcare which would have been used by the household. The weighting factor was calculated as the total number of eligible children in the household divided by the number of children for whom data were collected. If the number of children in the household was one or two, the selected number was equal to the eligible number and so the weight was equal to one, that is, no adjustment was required. If the eligible number was greater than the selected number, then the weight was greater than one and the effect of the weight would be to increase the estimates. Table A.3 details the different values of weights and their incidence.

Apx. Table A.3 Weighting for child level data.

Number of eligible children in household	Number of selected children per household	Child selection weight	Number of unweighted cases	Number of weighted cases
1	1	1	2181	2181
2	2	1	2340	2340
3	2	1.5	659	989
4	2	2	180	360
5	2	2.5	40	100
6	2	3	13	39
7	2	3.5	2	7
9	2	4.5	1	5
Total			5416	6020

With the majority of households having fewer than five children, 99 per cent of these child level weights have a value of 2 or less. A small number of very large weights can adversely effect the data analysis and make the sample less efficient, and for this reason, the large weights have been trimmed. As a result of this exercise, there are no child selection weights with a value greater than 2.

As discussed earlier, the sample design also included three boost samples; households with student parents, households with children attending out of school clubs and families in receipt of childcare tax credit. Because of the over-representation of these cases, these boost samples were weighted so as to enable them to be included in the main analysis.

The weight for the boost sample was calculated to take into account the different selection probabilities of the boost sample and the main sample. Student parents, households in receipt of childcare tax credit and families with children attending out of school clubs have been down-weighted. The result is a weight of 0.6432 for respondents who fulfil the boost sample criteria and a weight of 1 for the remainder.

The booster weight was used for analysis at the household level to account for the boost samples. Analysis at the child level used the product of the trimmed child selection weight and the boost weight, which therefore accounted for the differential child selection probabilities and the boost samples.

Non-response weighting

Almost all survey research suffers from non-response so it is likely that there is some non-response bias in this survey. Unit non-response, where no information at all is collected from a respondent, can result in a biased sample as respondents may differ systematically to those who refused. It is likely households where both parents were in full time employment that were under represented, simply because these households were busy and less likely to be at home.

There are methods which can be applied to correct for non-response bias but many may not be applicable to this survey. To study the nature of non-response it is necessary to compare respondents and non-respondents. To do it is necessary to have information about non-respondents. However the sampling frame for this survey contains little information about non-respondents. Geographic information and interviewer observation can sometimes be utilised but there is still little to go on. The population data and the sample data must also be compiled in the same way otherwise the weights will cause an increase in the bias, instead of a reduction. Surveys of non-respondents are sometimes the solution to this problem, however by their very nature they suffer from high non-response, also a respondent's wish to opt out must be respected.

The survey achieved a good response rate; the main sample had a response rate of 84 per cent and the booster sample screener was conducted in 4,579 households (response rate 91 per cent) of which 1,046 were eligible for interview (screening rate of 21 per cent) and 938 of these agreed to be interviewed (response rate of 90 per cent). Since these response rates are high it is likely that non-response bias is minimal and non-response weighting not required.

A4 The interview

By and large the interview was very similar to that of the baseline survey due to the need to track changes in parents' use of childcare over time. However, there were a number of instances where it was decided that it was necessary to make changes – sometimes to the way in which questions were asked and also to the questionnaire content.

The main respondent interview lasted an average of 60 minutes and covered the following areas:

- An overview of childcare use (for the selected children) in the previous year, including type of provider used, for what period(s), factors influencing the choice of provider, instances of broken childcare arrangements and unmet childcare demand.

- Detailed information about childcare use (for the selected children) in the reference week, including: hours and days different providers were used; cost of childcare and rating of providers in terms of value for money.
- Parents' general attitudes on and awareness of information available on local childcare provision and the amount of childcare available. Information was also collected on parents' 'ideal' provider and the reasons why they were not able to use their preferred type of childcare.
- Demographic data on the household and all its members. These included: household structure, income, the receipt of state benefits or tax credits, access to a car, means of occupying their accommodation. Information on age, sex and disability was collected for all household members, including children. The respondent and their partner (where present) were asked about their ethnicity. Questions were also asked about the parents' employment status and working patterns (e.g. shift working, hours of work), socio-economic group, access to family-friendly working arrangements, participating in training or learning, and division of childcare responsibilities in the home.
- All parents in work outside the home were asked which factors influenced their decision to work. These factors included financial reasons, work orientation, employment conditions and the availability of childcare. Employment and childcare arrangements which would help parents to combine paid work with caring responsibilities were also explored.
- Non-working parents were asked about the factors that influenced their decision not to do paid work. Factors enquired about included: financial considerations, work orientation, perception of employability, the availability of flexible working arrangements, as well as access to childcare and children's life cycle stage.

A5 Telephone survey of providers

Formal childcare providers, except nannies / au-pairs and babysitters - a total of 4,265 - were to be contacted by the National Centre's telephone unit to confirm the way in which they were classified by parents and to collect some other basic details. These details included:

- when they first opened;
- whether they charge any fees and if they do, how much;
- the staff to children ratio;
- their accreditation status; and,
- the types of activities put on by out-of-school clubs.

The full provider interview is shown in Appendix B.

Interviewers were required to ask parents for contact details which consisted of a name, address and telephone number. In just under a third of these cases (31 per cent) parents did not give any details, usually because they did not know of any. Closer inspection of these cases shows that these were more likely to be providers that they did not currently use. In a further 15 per cent of cases the parent refused to

give details. This was most common where the provider in question was a childminder – details were refused for a quarter of these providers. There was also a small number of cases (1 per cent) where the parent informed the interviewer that the provider was no longer in business.

In total, contact was made with 51 percent of the providers parents had used in the past year. Most of those spoken to agreed to be interviewed, the response rate being 90 per cent. A discrepancy between the parental classification and the classification obtained directly from the provider was found in 19 per cent of cases checked. Table A.4 shows how the classification of providers was affected by the classification check.

Apx. Table A.4 Formal childcare services' classification check.

Provider type	Base	%* reported by parent	%* after telephone check
Childminder	565	4.5	4.2
Crèche	172	1.4	1.2
Nursery school	436	3.5	2.6
Day nursery	466	3.7	4.3
Playgroup or pre-school	635	5.1	5.0
Nursery class attached to a primary school	313	2.5	2.8
Reception class attached to a primary school	355	2.9	2.9
Family centre	22	0.2	0.2
Out of school club	907	7.3	7.0
Holiday club	394	3.2	2.7
Total	4,265	34.3	32.9

* Percentages are calculated out of all childcare providers and not only those subsequently checked and reported in the table.

A6 Data processing

Interviewers in the field carry out most of the validation of data in CAPI surveys. Interviewer checks in the CAPI program allow interviewers to clarify and query any data discrepancies directly with the respondent. The CAPI program ensures that the correct routing is followed (assuming the planned specification and implementation were correct) through the questionnaire. It also applies range and consistency error checks and both types of checks were used extensively throughout the questionnaires. Where a check was triggered the interviewer often opened and recorded a note explaining the respondent's situation. These notes are recorded alongside the data, and can be inspected in the office.

However, some checks on the data were thought to be too complex to be carried out in the field. More complex checks, based on the responses from multiple questions, are time consuming and may prove detrimental to the successful completion of the interview. As a result, a separate 'in-office' editing and coding process was required. This involves a coder working through each interview in turn, using a modified version of the CAPI programme.

An experienced Data Processing Team carried out coding and editing of questionnaires at the *National Centre's* Brentwood offices. Researchers at the *National Centre* were continuously involved in more complex editing decisions.

All edit checks and coding instructions were agreed by the survey sponsor (DfES).

The work involved in turning a productive interview into useable data for analysis purposes is summarised under the following headings:

- Fact sheets;
- Editing of questionnaires; and
- Coding of open and 'other specify' answers.

Fact sheets

Fact sheets provide a concise summary of a productive interview. They are used by editors to alert them to possible errors or inconsistencies to be dealt with at a later stage. A typical fact sheet will contain a listing of respondent details, key data items, open and "other specify" responses, interviewer comments and results to pre-defined edit checks (i.e. whether they have passed or failed the check).

Examples of how the fact sheets were used on this study were were:

- coders first recorded all open codes in addition to SOC90 classifications onto the paper Fact Sheets, to be entered on the CAPI programme at a later date;
- unlikely combinations of childcare arrangements given the ages of the children. This would usually be passed to the researcher to look at;
- unusually high levels of earnings. This may have been due to a keying error, an incorrect period for which the payment applied being coded (i.e. weekly rather than monthly).

Where errors were identified, in the absence of a pre-defined rule, these cases would be passed to the researchers to resolve, who in turn would return the fact sheet, with instructions to the Brentwood DP team about how to implement editing decisions.

Editing the questionnaire

In addition to the edit checks that were specified on the Fact Sheets, a further 18 checks were programmed into the CAPI edit programme. The majority of these were consistency checks where responses in different parts of the questionnaire were unlikely to occur or were not logically possible according to some pre-defined rule. Where the editor was notified of such a problem, he/she was instructed to look for an interviewer note to help with its resolution. If none were forthcoming, editors would follow a rule, set by the research team, or would suppress the check and flag it for further consideration by the researchers.

Coding of open and 'other specify' questions

The number of verbatim questions to be coded was as follows:

	Main respondent	Partner interview
Open	8	4
Other specify	37	15

The code frames used on this study were developed by *National Centre* researchers from a listing of responses to the relevant questions from the first 500 completed interviews.

Coding was recorded on the paper Fact Sheets, with the results being entered through the CAPI Blaise programme by the Brentwood DP team.

Data availability

A data set will be deposited in the Economic and Social Research Council Data Archive at the University of Essex by Autumn 2002.

A7 Classifications used in analysis

In this section, the classifications used in the analysis and some of the key terms used throughout the report are described in detail. They are presented below in alphabetical order.

Asian group

This group includes people who classified themselves as: Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi.

Atypical work patterns

Atypical work patterns include: shift-working, working irregular hours and/or days, working at weekends.

Chief income earner

The chief income earner was defined as the household member with the highest gross income.

Child level data

The base of child level data include all selected children and the unit of analysis is the child.

Childcare

See *Childcare providers*.

Childcare providers

Respondents were asked to classify the providers used for the selected children choosing from the list below. The definition of *childcare* was very comprehensive. It included all care the selected children received, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The only times excluded by our definition of childcare were: (a) when the child was at school, and (b) when the respondent or his/her current spouse or partner was taking care of the child. Providers numbered one to 13 below were classified as *formal providers* while 14 to 18 were classified as *informal providers*.

Formal providers

1. Childminder
2. Nanny or au pair
3. Baby-sitter who came to the home
4. Crèche
5. Nursery school
6. Day nursery
7. Playgroup or pre-school
8. Nursery class attached to a primary school
9. Reception class attached to a primary school
10. Family Centre
11. Out of school club (e.g. before/after school, during school holidays)
12. Holiday club/scheme

Informal providers

13. My ex-spouse or ex-partner
14. The child's grandparent(s)
15. The child's older brother/sister
16. Another relative
17. A friend or neighbour
18. Other

Disability

A person was classified as having a disability if they had any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity (of at least a year).

Ethnic groups

Parents were classified into one of nine ethnic groups using the 1991 Census categories, that is:

- white
- black - African
- black - Caribbean
- black - other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Mixed race

Formal childcare provider

See *Childcare providers*.

Free childcare

Free childcare was classified to cover situations where no payment for fees or wages was made to the provider.

Full-time work

Paid employment of 30 or more hours per week, including self-employment.

Household gross income

The household income was obtained by asking respondents to select from a list of income bands the category which represented their total income from different sources and before any deductions.

Household level data

The base of the household level data includes all respondents and the unit of analysis is the household/family.

Indices of Deprivation 2000: Ward Level Presentations

The Index has been constructed by the Index Team at Oxford University for the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (formerly DETR). The overall IMD 2000 has two strands of data. The first is the Index of Multiple Deprivation Score and the second is the Rank of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The ward with a rank of 1 is the most deprived, and 8414 the least deprived, on this overall measure. The IMD 2000 was constructed by combining the six transformed domain scores, using the following weights: - Income (25%) - Employment (25%) - Health Deprivation and Disability (15%) - Education, Skills and Training (15%) - Housing (10%) - Geographical Access to Services (10%)

Logistic regression

Logistic regression is a multivariate statistical technique that uses a set of independent variables to predict the probability for an event to occur. It is a regression technique in which the odds of having some characteristic (e.g. childcare provision or not) are modelled. Sub-groups are compared using the 'odds ratio'. Odds are calculated as $p/(1-p)$, where p is the proportion or percentage having the characteristic of interest. For example, if 40 per cent of a specified group received childcare, then the odds of receiving childcare for members of this group are: $0.4/0.6=0.67$ (or 0.67:1). If we were comparing this sub-group with another sub-group for which the percentage receiving childcare is 70 per cent, then the odds for this latter group would be $0.7/0.3=2.33$. Therefore the odds of receiving childcare is 3.5 ($=2.33/0.67$) times higher for the second group relative to the first. This ratio is usually termed the 'odds ratio'.

Reference week (use of childcare)

The reference week was defined as the last full week before the interview, however, if this was a school holiday, the week before that was used instead. Throughout the report the terms 'reference', 'previous' and 'past' week are used interchangeably.

Long (working) hours

Long hours are defined as an average working week of more than 45 hours.

Paid childcare

Paid childcare was classified when a payment for fees or wages was made to the provider.

Part-time work

Paid employment of less than 30 hours per week, including self-employment.

Provider level data

The base of the provider level data includes all childcare providers used in the past year or the reference week and the unit of analysis is the provider.

Respondent level data

See *Household level data*.

Selected children

If a household had more than two dependent children in the 0-14 age group, two were selected at random by the CAPI programme during the course of the interview.

Sessions of childcare

Parents were asked to provide details of each session of childcare they used in the reference week for the selected children, noting the time the provision started, the time it ended and the identity of the provider. This information allows two measures of the quantity of childcare used per week to be derived, the number of hours of care and the number of sessions of care. The measures need not be closely related to each other since the term 'session' does not imply a fixed period of time but was simply defined by when a continuous period of childcare started and finished. Thus a session could last for as little time as a few minutes or, at the other extreme, for longer than a day if a child was looked after overnight.

Sessions were subsequently coded into six categories, as follows:

- weekday early morning sessions: any session covering the period between 06:00 and 08.59
- weekday daytime sessions: any session covering the period between 09:00 and 15.29
- weekday late afternoon sessions: any session covering the period between 15:30 and 17.59
- weekday evening sessions: any session covering the period between 18:00 and 21.59
- weekday night sessions: any session covering the period between 22:00 and 05.59
- weekend sessions: any sessions on a Saturday or a Sunday

Special needs

Children were classified as having special needs if they had 'any special educational needs or other special needs'. If the child had special needs information was also collected on whether she or he had a 'statement of needs'.

Unmet demand

Households were classified as having unmet childcare demand if there had been any time in the past year when they had needed or wanted childcare for their children, but had been unable to get it. Respondents were asked to think about work and non-work situations where they might have wanted childcare.

APPENDIX B PROVIDER INTERVIEW

Study of Parents' Demand for Childcare – Provider questionnaire

ASK

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is _____ from the *National Centre for Social Research*. We are conducting a study for the Department for Education and Employment and as part of this are calling providers of childcare. We would like to ask a number of quick questions so that we can classify the type of service you provide. **If necessary:** This study will report on what types of childcare parents use – it will not mention the names of any providers.

Q.1 INTERVIEWER: DID YOU MAKE TELEPHONE CONTACT WITH THIS PROVIDER?

Yes, interview started	51	GO TO Q.2	
Yes, but they refused to speak to me	71		
No, no (correct) telephone number	72	END	(19-20)
No, could not make contact (with the right person)	73		

Q.2 [TAKE AGE OF FIRST CHILD FROM LABEL 2 ON FRONT OF ARF]

I am going to read out a list. Please give me your answer when you have heard all the options. Which of the following best describes the service provided at this location for a child who is ... [1st CHILD'S AGE]

READ OUT ALL CODES
CODE ALL THAT APPLY **FOR**
CHILD OF SELECTED AGE

... a childminder*	01	
a creche*,	02	
a nursery school*,	03	
a day nursery*,	04	
a playgroup or pre-school*,	05	
a family centre*,	06	
a nursery class attached to a primary school,	07	(21-30)
a reception class attached to a primary school,	08	
an out of school childcare club (e.g. before or after school, during school holidays),	09	
a holiday club/scheme,	10	
or, something else? (WRITE IN BELOW)	11	
<hr/>		
(We don't cater for this age)	12	

Q.3 **In what year did [you / name of provider] first start providing [childcare/nursery education] for a [1st CHILD'S AGE] year old?**

Before 1990	1		
1990-1992	2	GO TO Q.4	(31)
1993-95	3		
1996-98	4		
1999	5		
2000	6	GO TO Q.5	
2001	7		

Q.4 **Has the number of [childcare/nursery education] places [you / name of provider] offer for a [1st CHILD'S AGE] year old increased, decreased or has it stayed the same in the past two years?**

READ OUT ALL CODES

- ... Increased, 1
 ... decreased, 2 (32)
 ... stayed the same? 3

Q.5 **How many children would there normally be in a group that a [1st CHILD'S AGE] year old could attend?**

(33-35)

Q.6 **And how many staff would there normally be looking after a group that a [1st CHILD'S AGE] year old could attend?**

(36-38)

Q.7 **Do you charge fees for any of the [childcare/nursery education] that you provide for a [1st CHILD'S AGE] year old?**

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|------|
| Yes | 1 | GO TO Q.8 | (39) |
| No | 2 | GO TO Q.13 | |

Q.8 **We would like to find out a little about how much [you/name of provider] charges for [childcare/nursery]. Do you charge ... READ OUT ...:**

PRIORITY CODE

ONE CODE ONLY

- | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|------|
| ... by the hour, | 1 | GO TO Q.10 | (40) |
| by the session, | 2 | | |
| by the day, | 3 | GO TO Q.9 | |
| by the week, | 4 | | |
| by the term, | 5 | GO TO Q.10 | |
| OR, by some other period? (PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW) | 6 | GO TO Q.10 | |

Q.9 **How many hours of childcare are there in a usual [session / day / week]?**

Hours Minutes

(41-45)

Q.10 **And how much money do you charge for this period for a child who is [1ST CHILD'S AGE] years old?**

£ pence

(46-50)

Q.11 **Can parents receive Childcare Tax Credit (a component of Working Families Tax Credit) if they use [you / name of provider]?**

Yes	1	ASK Q.12	(51)
No	2	GO TO Q.13	
Don't know	3		

Q.12 **Do you advise parents about Childcare Tax Credit?**

Yes	1	(52)
No	2	

Q.13 Do you/does [name of provider] **receive a nursery education grant?**
[prompt if necessary: 'This provides nursery education funding for 3 and 4 year olds and is awarded by the LEA']

Yes	1	(53)
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q.14 *IF PROVIDER IS AN OUT OF SCHOOL OR HOLIDAY CLUB,
CODE 9 OR 10 AT Q.2*

X ASK Q.15

ALL OTHERS

Y GO TO Q.16

Q.15 **Is the out of school club / holiday scheme funded by the New Opportunities Fund?**

Yes	1	(54)
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q.16 *IF PROVIDER IS AN OUT OF SCHOOL CLUB,
CODE 9 Q.2*

X ASK Q.17

ALL OTHERS

Y GO TO Q.18

Q.17 **Does the out of school club offer any of the following ... READ OUT ...:**

	Yes	No	
... the chance to do homework,	1	2	
sports activities,	1	2	
play activity (inside and outside),	1	2	(55-61)
arts and craft activity,	1	2	
drama and/or music activities,	1	2	
study support/group learning activities,	1	2	
none of these	1	2	

Q.18 INTERVIEWER: IS THERE ANOTHER AGE LISTED ON THE ARF LABEL

Yes	1	GO TO Q.19	(62)
No	2	END	

Q.19 [TAKE AGE OF SECOND CHILD FROM LABEL 2 ON FRONT OF ARF]

I now want to ask you about a child that is [2nd CHILD'S AGE] years old.

Which of the following best describes the service provided at this location for a child who is[2ND CHILD'S AGE]

READ OUT ALL CODES

CODE ALL THAT APPLY FOR
CHILD OF SELECTED AGE

... a childminder*	01	
a creche*,	02	
a nursery school*,	03	
a day nursery*,	04	
a playgroup or pre-school*,	05	
a family centre*,	06	
a nursery class attached to a primary school,	07	(63-72)
a reception class attached to a primary school,	08	
an out of school childcare club (e.g. before or after school, during school holidays),	09	
a holiday club/scheme,	10	
or, something else? (WRITE IN BELOW)	11	

(We don't cater for this age)	12	

Q.20	IF PROVIDER CLASSIFICATION SAME FOR SECOND CHILD AS FOR CHILD 1 AND NO MORE CHILDREN LISTED ON ARF	1	END	
	IF PROVIDER CLASSIFICATION SAME FOR SECOND CHILD AS FOR CHILD 1, AND ANOTHER CHILD LISTED ON ARF	2	GO TO Q. 37	(73)
	IF PROVIDER CLASSIFICATION DIFFERENT FOR SECOND CHILD	3	GO TO Q. 21	

Q.21 In what year did [you / name of provider] first start providing [childcare/nursery education] for a [2nd CHILD'S AGE] year old?

Before 1990	1		(74)
1990-1992	2	GO TO Q.22	
1993-95	3		
1996-98	4		
1999	5		
2000	6	GO TO Q.23	
2001	7		

Q.22 **Has the number of [childcare/nursery education] places [you / name of provider] offer for a [2nd CHILD'S AGE] year old increased, decreased or has it stayed the same in the past two years?**

READ OUT ALL CODES

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|------|
| ... Increased, | 1 | |
| ... decreased, | 2 | (75) |
| ... stayed the same? | 3 | |
| same as for children of other age | 4 | |

Q.23 **How many children would there normally be in a group that a [2ND CHILD'S AGE] year old could attend?**

(76-78)

Q.24 **And how many staff would there normally be looking after a group that a [2ND CHILD'S AGE] year old could attend?**

(79-81)

Q.25 **Do you charge fees for any of the [childcare/nursery education] that you provide for a [2nd CHILD'S AGE] year old?**

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|------|
| Yes | 1 | GO TO Q.26 | (82) |
| No | 2 | GO TO Q.31 | |

Q.26 **Do you charge ... READ OUT ...:
PRIORITY CODE
ONE CODE ONLY**

- | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|------|
| ... by the hour, | 1 | GO TO Q.28 | |
| by the session, | 2 | | |
| by the day, | 3 | GO TO Q.27 | |
| by the week, | 4 | | (83) |
| by the term, | 5 | GO TO Q.28 | |
| OR, by some other period? (PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW) | 6 | GO TO Q.28 | |

Q.27 **How many hours of childcare are there in a usual [session / day / week]?**

Hours Minutes

(84-88)

Q.28 **And how much money do you charge for this period for a child who is [2ND CHILD'S AGE] years old?**

£ pence

(89-93)

Q.29 **Can parents receive Childcare Tax Credit (a component of Working Families Tax Credit) if they use [you / name of provider]?**

Yes	1	ASK Q.30	(94)
No	2	GO TO Q.31	
Don't know	3		

Q.30 **Do you advise parents about Childcare Tax Credit?**

Yes	1	(95)
No	2	

Q.31 Do you/does [name of provider] **receive a nursery education grant?**
[prompt if necessary: 'This provides nursery education funding for 3 and 4 year olds and is awarded by the LEA']

Yes	1	(96)
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q.32 *IF PROVIDER IS AN OUT OF SCHOOL OR HOLIDAY CLUB,
CODE 9 OR 10 AT Q.2*

X ASK Q.33

ALL OTHERS

Y GO TO Q.34

Q.33 **Is the out of school club / holiday scheme funded by the New Opportunities Fund?**

Yes	1	(97)
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q.34 *IF PROVIDER IS AN OUT OF SCHOOL CLUB,
CODE 9 Q.2*

X ASK Q.35

ALL OTHERS

Y GO TO Q.36

Q.35 **Does the out of school club offer any of the following ... READ OUT ...:**

	Yes	No	
... the chance to do homework,	1	2	
sports activities,	1	2	
play activity (inside and outside),	1	2	(98-104)
arts and craft activity,	1	2	
drama and/or music activities,	1	2	
study support/group learning activities,	1	2	
none of these	1	2	

Q.36 INTERVIEWER: IS THERE ANOTHER AGE LISTED ON THE ARF LABEL

Yes	1	GO TO Q.37	(105)
No	2	END	

Q.37 [TAKE AGE OF THIRD CHILD FROM LABEL 2 ON FRONT OF ARF]

I now want to ask you about a child that is [3rd CHILD'S AGE] years old.

Which of the following best describes the service provided at this location for a child who is ... [3rd CHILD'S AGE]

READ OUT ALL CODES
CODE ALL THAT APPLY FOR
CHILD OF SELECTED AGE

... a childminder*	01	(106-117)
a creche*,	02	
a nursery school*,	03	
a day nursery*,	04	
a playgroup or pre-school*,	05	
a family centre*,	06	
a nursery class attached to a primary school,	07	
a reception class attached to a primary school,	08	
an out of school childcare club (e.g. before or after school, during school holidays),	09	
a holiday club/scheme,	10	
or, something else? (WRITE IN BELOW)	11	

(We don't cater for this age)	12	

Q.38	IF PROVIDER CLASSIFICATION SAME FOR THIRD CHILD AS FOR CHILD 1 OR CHILD 2 AND NO MORE CHILDREN LISTED ON ARF	1	END	(118)
	IF PROVIDER CLASSIFICATION DIFFERENT FOR THIRD CHILD	3	GO TO Q. 39	

Q.39 In what year did [you / name of provider] first start providing
[childcare/nursery education] for a [3rd CHILD'S AGE] year old?

Before 1990	1	(119)	
1990-1992	2		GO TO Q.40
1993-95	3		
1996-98	4		
1999	5		
2000	6	GO TO Q.41	
2001	7		

Q.40 **Has the number of [childcare/nursery education] places [you / name of provider] offer for a [3rd CHILD'S AGE] year old increased, decreased or has it stayed the same in the past two years?**

READ OUT ALL CODES

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------|
| ... Increased, | 1 | |
| ... decreased, | 2 | |
| ... stayed the same? | 3 | (120) |
| same as for children of other age | 4 | |

Q.41 **How many children would there normally be in a group that a [3rd CHILD'S AGE] year old could attend?**

(121-123)

Q.42 **And how many staff would there normally be looking after a group that a [3rd CHILD'S AGE] year old could attend?**

(124-126)

Q.43 **Do you charge fees for any of the [childcare/nursery education] that you provide for a [3rd CHILD'S AGE] year old?**

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|-------|
| Yes | 1 | GO TO Q.44 | (127) |
| No | 2 | GO TO Q.49 | |

Q.44 **Do you charge ... READ OUT ...:**

PRIORITY CODE

ONE CODE ONLY

- | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|-------|
| ... by the hour, | 1 | GO TO Q.46 | |
| by the session, | 2 | | |
| by the day, | 3 | GO TO Q.45 | (128) |
| by the week, | 4 | | |
| by the term, | 5 | GO TO Q.46 | |
| OR, by some other period? (PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW) | 6 | GO TO Q.46 | |

Q.45 **How many hours of childcare are there in a usual [session / day / week]?**

Hours Minutes

(129-133)

Q.46 **And how much money do you charge for this period for a child who is [3rd CHILD'S AGE] years old?**

£ pence

(134-138)

Q.47 **Can parents receive Childcare Tax Credit (a component of Working Families Tax Credit) if they use [you / name of provider]?**

Yes	1	ASK Q.48	(139)
No	2	GO TO Q.49	
Don't know	3		

Q.48 **Do you advise parents about Childcare Tax Credit?**

Yes	1	(140)
No	2	

Q.49 Do you/does [name of provider] **receive a nursery education grant?**
[prompt if necessary: 'This provides nursery education funding for 3 and 4 year olds and is awarded by the LEA']

Yes	1	(141)
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q.50 *IF PROVIDER IS AN OUT OF SCHOOL OR HOLIDAY CLUB,
CODE 9 OR 10 AT Q.2*

X ASK Q.51

ALL OTHERS

Y GO TO Q.52

Q.51 **Is the out of school club / holiday scheme funded by the New Opportunities Fund?**

Yes	1	(142)
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Q.52 *IF PROVIDER IS AN OUT OF SCHOOL CLUB,
CODE 9 Q.2*

X ASK Q.53

ALL OTHERS

Y END

Q.53 **Does the out of school club offer any of the following ... READ OUT ...:**

	Yes	No	
... the chance to do homework,	1	2	
sports activities,	1	2	
play activity (inside and outside),	1	2	(143-149)
arts and craft activity,	1	2	
drama and/or music activities,	1	2	
study support/group learning activities,	1	2	
none of these	1	2	

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR GIVING YOUR TIME TO HELP US.

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