

Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group

Parental Demand

Final Report
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1. Introduction, Aims and Objectives

QA Research was commissioned by Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group to undertake research with parents and carers across the borough. The research was concerned with establishing parents and carers' current use of childcare; the childcare needs they have and the barriers faced in accessing childcare.

The aims were to establish specifically:

- Type of childcare currently used;
- Satisfaction levels;
- Demand for childcare in the future;
- Reasons for not using formal childcare;
- Sufficiency of local childcare provision and how it could be improved;
- Employment / training details and impact on childcare responsibilities;
- Awareness and use of tax credits and other relevant schemes and services for parents;
- How parents would prefer to use their Nursery Education Grant / Free Entitlement;
- Where parents generally get information regarding childcare.

2. Background

Sunderland

Sunderland is situated in Tyne and Wear in the North East of England. It is the most deprived city in the North of England, with 11 of the 24 wards featuring in the list of the 2000 most deprived wards in England. The most deprived areas are Southwick and Thorney Close with high levels of unemployment.

In total 66% of men and 54.7% of women of working age within Sunderland are economically active, with 6.7% of men and 3% of women being unemployed and a further 12.2% of men and 8.6% of women being permanently sick or disabled.

In terms of ethnicity a majority of the population is White, with a small Asian and mixed-race population. According to the 2001 Census 8% of households in Sunderland are comprised of single parent families with dependent children, slightly higher than the national average of 6.5%.

The Health Profile for Sunderland for 2006 stated that the teenage pregnancy rate is significantly higher in the city compared to England as a whole. Life expectancies for males and females at birth are also lower than national average figures.

Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group

In relation to the development and support of childcare Sunderland's Extended Services and Attendance Group has three specific roles; delivering services for young children and their families; supporting children's learning and development and creating and sustaining childcare. These services are available through Children's Centres, Children's Information Service and the Sandhill Centre.

They develop education and childcare services including:

- The provision of free universal nursery education in accordance with national and local government direction;
- The entitlement of children in need and their families to services provided on an inclusive and equal basis;
- The development of childcare services for working and studying parents to enable parental access to employment and training and to support economic regeneration locally;
- The support of local community providers of valued childcare services (parent and toddler groups, playgroups for example) for non-working as well as working parents and their children.

The team also aim to achieve the above objectives by working to ensure that the services provided are:

- Affordable;
- Accessible;
- Of the highest quality.

The role of the research

Local authorities already work in partnership with the private, voluntary and independent sectors to shape and secure children's services and to provide sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents' needs.

Under the Childcare Act 2006 local authorities have a duty to guarantee sufficient childcare which meets the needs of working parents and parents making the transition to work. Childcare sufficiency assessments give local authorities the chance to work with local partners, filling gaps in the market and shaping childcare and services in their area. The ultimate aim is to provide the best possible childcare market for local families.¹

This research was thus important in terms of gathering the views and intentions of parents and carers with regards to childcare so Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group can subsequently assess whether the childcare facilities available at the moment will meet the needs of parents by April 2008, when any 'gaps' between supply and demand must be filled.

¹ <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/EA809E2B87C528D509FA1949AF1E0124.doc>

3. Methodology

A mixed methodology was adopted for this work to provide a mixture of quantitative robust data as well as more in-depth qualitative data.

To gather predominantly quantitative data QA conducted a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) survey with 454 local parents and carers using a bought-in database of likely parents. Calls were completed on weekday afternoons, evenings and on Saturdays to ensure that the research was as inclusive as possible.

Although young people aged 12-19 were covered in this research, survey respondents were screened to ensure that they also had children aged 0-11 that they could comment on. By boosting the sample of parents interviewed with children aged 0-11 Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group is provided with more statistically robust and meaningful data which will ultimately help to assess the sufficiency of childcare provision for this age group whilst also capturing information for the older age group.

In addition to the survey nine focus group discussions were held with children, young people, parents and carers. These groups included BME parents, parents of children with special educational needs and parents recruited through the survey. Two groups with young people also took place and children at an after school club were also consulted. The groups were concerned with gathering more qualitative information from parents. The groups enabled the issues covered within the survey to be explored in much greater detail with parents and carers being able to share their own opinions and experiences more fully.

The final element of the methodology included 33 semi-structured telephone interviews with a range of stakeholders including childcare providers and representatives from the local authority amongst others. Contact details were supplied by Sunderland City Council and the majority of interviews were audio recorded with the respondent's permission.

4. Summary Conclusions of Research

Current use of provision

In total, 57.5% of survey respondents were using some kind of provision for their children. Just over a third were using formal childcare (35.5% - equivalent to 161 parents) whilst 28.4% were using informal care; a further 15.6% use other provision for their children.

The most widely used registered provision was after-school clubs (24.5%) followed by day nurseries (16.1%); sports groups (14.9%) and breakfast clubs (11.9%).

The survey revealed that parents of children with disabilities or SEN were very unlikely to be using formal childcare provision. The focus group findings show that there is reliance upon informal care with family or friends who understand the individual needs of the child.

The survey findings show that the least used provision includes youth clubs and holiday clubs. The focus groups identified however that there is a perception that there is a lack of provision for young people in Sunderland.

Satisfaction

The survey data shows overall high levels of satisfaction with childcare provision, particularly with the quality and reliability of provision. Areas for improvement are mainly in relation to cost, location, premises and opening hours / times.

The findings from the focus groups support this in that although parents felt that provision was costly, they felt that the standard of care was high. Parents in the focus groups also expressed a preference for leaving their children with 'older' childcare workers.

It is evident from the survey and focus groups shows that parents of disabled / SEN children are less satisfied with the provision available. In particular, some parents were dissatisfied with the support workers provided and others had experienced problems accessing Children's Centre provision which they felt should be available for children over the age of 5 as well.

Although the survey data shows that demand is low for holiday and weekend provision, a lack of this type of provision seemed to be an issue for parents in the focus groups, especially parents with disabled / SEN children. The findings from the interviews with stakeholders also suggest that the uptake of holiday provision is erratic. This contradiction could suggest that there is some issue with the appropriateness of the provision or a lack of publicity.

Parents in the focus groups also referred to a lack of supervised play/leisure opportunities for children aged 5-11; this was also acknowledged by stakeholders.

The focus groups and stakeholder interviews also point towards some issues in relation to transport and pockets of sparse provision. Young people participating in the focus groups also experienced transport problems in relation to accessing clubs and activities. Some stakeholders were also conscious of a disparity of provision in certain areas. On the other hand, there was also some

concern about 'saturation' in some areas, arising in part from a lack of partnership working between the public and private sectors and the prohibitive conditions of some funding streams.

Reasons for not using provision

It is evident from the survey that the main reason for non-use of childcare was parents' preference for looking after their children themselves, especially those aged 0-4.

High cost was also a barrier to accessing provision (particularly for children aged 0-4). The high cost of private day nursery care was also acknowledged by stakeholders. The specific difficulties faced by lone parents and working parents of under 3's were highlighted. An expansion of free nursery provision was seen as the solution to the latter issue.

Black and minority ethnic parents that participated in the focus groups were satisfied with the way in which their cultural needs were taken into account by the providers that they had used and did not perceive unmet cultural needs to be a barrier to accessing childcare. They felt that lack of information was a more pressing need although it was clear that there was a general tendency for BME parents to prefer not to use any formal childcare provision.

Future use of provision

In total 116 people (25.6%) of survey respondents intended to use provision for their children in the next 12 months. Interestingly, further analysis shows that a significantly higher proportion of BME respondents plan to use provision than White British respondents (50.0% compared to 24.2%). However, focus group findings suggest that BME parents would be unlikely to want to use provision.

Parents in the South East of Sunderland were most likely to use provision in the next twelve months (33.0%) followed by Coalfields (28.8%); Central (27.3%); Sunderland North (20.0%) and Washington (20.0%). In total 69 out of the 202 parents with 0-4 year olds planned to use provision for these children in the next 12 months (34.1%). This equates to 75 of the 0-4 year olds covered by the research.

Although, generally, the data indicates that the demand for most types of childcare and related provision will fall within the next 12 months. After school clubs and day nurseries appear to be the type of provision most likely to continue being used. Again, reasons for future non-usage relate to parents' preference to care for their children themselves.

Employment

In total, 69% of survey respondents were working either full or part time. The majority of these had not been affected by childcare issues in relation to employment.

However, parents of disabled / SEN children were less likely to be working. The focus group findings highlight issues for parents of disabled children who wish to work; these include a perceived lack of support from the Jobcentre and concerns about lack of understanding from employers.

The survey data shows that just over half of those not working said that they intended to enter employment in the next three yrs (68 people in total); however responses were evenly split

between those requiring and not requiring childcare. Generally, it was more likely for single parents to state that they intended to enter employment.

Several of the parents in the focus groups expressed concern around combining childcare and work, particularly in terms of finding employment with flexible working hours. It is evident that some parents may not be aware of the right to request flexible working hours. Furthermore, some stakeholders interviewed felt that there was a lack of provision for shift workers.

Tax credits and childcare information

The survey findings showed high levels of awareness of Tax Credits; however awareness was lower for the Nursery Education Grant. Just over a third of respondents were aware of the CIS, however only 7% had used it. The focus group findings suggest that there may be a lack of understanding of the exact nature of the information / help available via the CIS. It was clear from the survey and focus groups that word of mouth and schools were the most popular information sources on childcare.

Over 70% of survey respondents were aware of children's centres; although awareness tended to be higher in the Coalfields cluster than in the South East. No clear pattern emerged in terms of parental preference for use of the NEG, although a number of stakeholders noted the insufficiency of this as a tool for supporting working parents as only children 3 and over are eligible, so it seemed that most parents tended to use the NEG as an opportunity for their child's social development and respite rather than a support mechanism for returning to work.

The findings from the stakeholder interviews suggest that there may be a lack of understanding about childcare vouchers amongst employers, particularly in relation to the benefits to the employer.

5. Executive Summary

5.1 Profile Information

- 5.1.1 In total, 454 parents / carers completed a survey whilst over 50 participants (including children and young people) took part in focus group discussions;
- 5.1.2 The number of completed interviews in each cluster area generally corresponds well with the actual make-up of Sunderland's population;
- 5.1.3 A majority of the respondents were female (78.0%) and most were White British (94.7%);
- 5.1.4 The largest proportion of respondents were 35-44 years of age (53.1%), followed by 25-34 year olds (28.7%); 45-54 year olds (13.0%) and 16-24 year olds (3.5%);
- 5.1.5 A large majority of respondents were either married or living with a partner (83.9%), 16.1% were single parents;
- 5.1.6 Thirty-five parents stated that they have a disability;
- 5.1.7 Whilst most respondents didn't wish to state which bracket their annual household income falls into, a fifth had an income of 20,000 - £30,000 (19.6%); 18.1% that had an income of £0-£14,000 whilst 13.5% of respondents had an annual household income of £14,000 - £20,000. A further 18.9% had an annual household income of £30,000 or more.

5.2 Number of children

- 5.2.1 Altogether the respondents had, or were expecting 880 children aged 0-19;
- 5.2.2 Four respondents were currently pregnant;
- 5.2.3 The 202 parents with 0-4 year olds had 251 children in this age group;
- 5.2.4 In total 347 people had 457 children aged 5-11;
- 5.2.5 In total, 123 parents had 137 12-16 year olds;
- 5.2.6 There were 31 17-19 year olds covered by this research.

5.3 Children with Special / Additional Needs or Disability

- 5.3.1 Overall 9.3% of all respondents had children with special / additional needs or a disability;
- 5.3.2 Nine respondents had 0-4 year olds with additional needs; 21 respondents had 5-11 year olds with additional needs; 13 parents had 12-16 year olds with additional needs whilst four parents had 17-19 year olds with additional needs;

5.3.2 Very little provision, either formal or informal is being used for these children. Just seven of the parents were using some kind of provision for these children;

5.4 Provision currently used

5.4.1 In total, 57.5% of respondents were using some kind of provision for their children. Just over a third use formal childcare (35.5% - equivalent to 161 parents) whilst 28.4% use informal care; a further 15.6% use other provision for their children;

5.4.2 Out of the 261 respondents who used some provision for their children, just under half were using informal family carers (46.4%). The most widely used registered provision was after-school clubs (24.5%) followed by day nurseries (16.1%); sports groups (14.9%) and breakfast clubs (11.9%);

5.4.3 A further 10.3% of these parents use toddler groups (10.3%) whilst 9.2% use drama / music classes. In total 20 parents were using childminders (7.7%); 7.3% use Children's Centre provision whilst the same proportion use informal friend / neighbour carers;

5.4.4. The types of provision which were least likely to be used by parents in Sunderland at the moment were youth clubs (6.1%) and holiday clubs (5.8%); two parents were using a special needs / day centre and one person was using a nanny;

5.4.5 However, focus group findings seemed to suggest a lack of suitable holiday provision, particularly for children with disabilities / SEN.

5.5 Satisfaction with Provision Used

5.5.1 The findings show that the childcare and related provision used for children and young people in Sunderland is rated very highly by those using it;

5.5.2 All those using childminders; the person using a nanny and the two people using a Special Needs / Day centre were satisfied with all aspects of these providers;

5.5.3 Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a high degree of satisfaction with provision used, the data suggests that the main areas of improvement are mainly in relation to a) cost (across all provider types an average of 96.4% were satisfied with the cost) b) location (across all provider types an average of 97.4% were satisfied with the location) c) premises (average of 97.6% satisfied) and d) opening hours / times (average of 97.8% satisfied);

5.5.4 The main areas where parents were more satisfied with provision are a) quality of care offered (average of 99.8% satisfied) b) childcarer / staff (99.4% average satisfaction) and c) reliability (99.5% average satisfaction);

5.5.5 Cost was also a significant issue within the focus group discussions along with transport issues and having to access preferred provision some distance away (see pages 58-60).

5.6 Reasons for not currently using childcare

- 5.6.1 The 230 parents who don't use provision for some or all of their children were asked for their reasons for this;
- 5.6.2 The main reason is that parents prefer to care for their children themselves. In total, 60.0% gave this reason regarding their 0-4 year olds; 57.6% said this about their 5-11 year olds and 40.2% said this about their 12-16 year olds; 31.6% said this about their 17-19 year olds;
- 5.6.3 The second reason is that parents feel their children are too old so don't need it; this response was given 80 times in total. In total, 84.2% of those with 17-19 year olds said this was the case; 52.2% of those with 12-16 year olds said this;
- 5.6.4 Cost was mentioned as a barrier 25 times by parents overall, this was most likely to be stated as a reason for not using provision for 0-4 year olds compared with other age groups (12.5%);
- 5.6.5 A very small number of parents said they don't use provision due to reasons concerning availability; poor quality of care; location; not being available at specific schools; simply not having looked for information on provision; language barriers; due to children attending nursery classes in school or due to concerns about leaving children in formal care. It is acknowledged that these reasons can be based on parent's perceptions rather than reality;
- 5.6.6 The focus groups and stakeholder interviews support the fact that parents who do not use childcare provision simply prefer to care for their children themselves, particularly the 0-4 age group.

5.7 Future use of childcare

- 5.7.1 All parents surveyed were asked whether they intended to use formal childcare or respite / youth provision for their children in the next 12 months;
- 5.7.2 Generally, the data indicates that the demand for most types of childcare and related provision will fall within the next 12 months. The largest fall between current use and future demand relates to after-school clubs and sports groups. However, there is a slight increase in demand for childminders; holiday clubs and nannies (see page 40);
- 5.7.3 In total 116 people (25.6%) of respondents intend to use provision for their children in the next 12 months;
- 5.7.4 One of the four expectant parents that took part in this research intends to use provision for this child in the next 12 months;
- 5.7.5 In total 69 out of the 202 parents with 0-4 year olds plan to use provision for these children in the next 12 months (34.1%);
- 5.7.6 In total 65 parents out of the 347 with 5-11 year olds intend to use provision for this age group in the next 12 months (18.7%);

- 5.7.7 Just five parents were planning to use provision for their 12-16 year olds in the next 12 months;
- 5.7.8 The provision most likely to be used by parents are after-school clubs (39.7%); private day nurseries (30.2%) and breakfast clubs (22.4%). A further 19.8% will use childminders; 15.5% will use holiday clubs; 13.8% will use pre-school / playgroups whilst 12.9% will use sports groups; 9.5% will use drama / music groups;
- 5.7.9 A small number of parents are planning to use Children's Centre provision (10 parents; 8.6%); youth clubs (10 parents; 8.6%); three people will use a nanny / au pair and two will use a special needs / day centre.

5.8 Reasons why parents are not likely to use provision in the next 12 months

- 5.8.1 Respondents who did not intend to use any formal childcare; respite care for children with SEN / disability or provision for older children in the next 12 months were asked to give reasons for this;
- 5.8.2 The main reasons given reflect the ones discussed earlier by those not currently using provision for all or some children, namely a preference for caring for children themselves; children being too old for provision and not needing provision.

5.9 Improvements

- 5.9.1 Respondents were asked whether they felt that any changes could be made to childcare / youth and special needs provision in their area to help them enhance their lifestyle / working patterns. A majority of respondents didn't think any of the options mentioned in the survey would help them (54.2%), indicating satisfaction with their present situations;
- 5.9.2 The most popular option was to have more holiday provision (23.3%). It is acknowledged that there are currently 31 holiday schemes operating in Sunderland and some clubs have had to close due to a lack of take-up therefore this could suggest that whilst there is a demand for such provision this is not necessarily being followed-through;
- 5.9.3 The second most cited improvement was to have new or more facilities in schools (22.9%). The third most popular option was to have more flexible childcare, so earlier and later opening hours (16.3%);
- 5.9.4 A further 15.0% would like to see more places in existing facilities (single parents were again more likely to suggest this) whilst 14.3% would like to see emergency childcare; 14.1% would like to be able to use the Nursery Education Grant more flexibly;
- 5.9.5 Supervised youth provision was felt to be important by 13.2% whilst 10.8% felt that having provision available on an evening would be helpful;
- 5.9.6 In total 13 out of the 42 parents of children with SEN / disabilities felt that more trained staff for working with these children would help them (31.0%).

5.10 Employment, study and training

- 5.10.1 A majority of respondents were employed full-time (35.2%) whilst 33.5% were working part-time. A further 14.5% said their main activity was being a housewife/husband whilst 8.8% were currently unemployed but not looking for work; 3.1% were unemployed but looking for work;
- 5.10.2 A small number of respondents said their main activity was studying or training (2.6%); 2.0% were self-employed;
- 5.10.3 Parents who weren't currently working were also asked whether they intend to enter employment in the next three years. In total 51.5% (68 people) said they did, of these 28 people (41.2%) said that this would mean they would require formal childcare, 14.7% were unsure whilst 44.1% said they wouldn't require formal childcare;
- 5.10.4 All respondents were then asked if issues surrounding childcare had affected their own or their partners (if applicable) employment status / prospects as well as their ability to undertake training. A large majority of respondents said they hadn't experienced any issues in relation to childcare (81.7%);
- 5.10.5 Just over one in ten parents said they had experienced problems with regards to work however (11.0%). In total 6.2% said childcare issues had prevented an increase in the number of hours worked whilst 4.4% said it had prevented the take up of training / study; 4.0% said it had prevented the take-up of employment. Data from Jobcentre Plus regarding purely those parents that are currently economically inactive suggests that the main perceived barrier to getting back to work would be not having early morning / evening / weekend childcare (e.g. 35% of parents said this in December 2006).
- 5.10.6 12 parents said issues had prevented them from continuing to train (2.6%); seven parents each said childcare issues had prevented them from continuing to work (1.5%).

5.11 Childcare Information and Tax Credits

- 5.11.1 In total 96.3% of respondents were aware of Child Tax Credits with 70.9% of these people benefiting from them;
- 5.11.2 A majority were also aware of the Working Tax Credit (92.7%), 40.4% of these respondents had qualified for the tax credit;
- 5.11.3 Fewer than half of respondents were aware of the Nursery Education Grant / Free Entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds (41.0%), 11.3% of these parents had qualified for this. In actual terms there is a 97% take-up of Free Entitlement in Sunderland which suggests that parents aren't aware of the terms NEG/Free Entitlement or aware this is what they are using;

- 5.11.4 Just over a third of all respondents were aware of the local Children's Information Service (35.5%), 6.8% (11 people) reported using this service. Many parents did express interest in hearing more about this service however (21.6%);
- 5.11.5 Just 13.0% were aware of the Care2Learn programme this totals 59 respondents, just 3 of these were in the youngest and relevant age category of 16-24 however;
- 5.11.6 Children's Centres were known to 77.8% of respondents. In total, 15.0% of those aware of these centres were using them;
- 5.11.7 Just over a third of respondents were aware of Attendance Allowance (35.0%) with just 3.1% of these parents accessing it;
- 5.11.8 In terms of the number of days Free Entitlement is provided, 24.3% would like to see it available over five days (for three hours a day) whilst 22.8% would prefer it to be spread over three days, for five hours a day. Over half of the parents didn't have a particular preference for three or five days (53.0%);
- 5.11.9 In terms of the hours parents would prefer to use their Free Entitlement, again a majority didn't have a particular preference (49.0%) whilst 37.6% would prefer to use it in what would be school hours between 9am and 3pm. Fewer people wanted it over a longer period of time, between 8am and 6pm (13.4%);
- 5.11.10 A majority of parents / carers use informal means of finding out about childcare, namely family, parents and friends and through general word of mouth (39.4%). Over a third of parents get their information through schools (34.4%) whilst 14.3% get it through Sure Start Children's Centres;
- 5.11.11 A further 13.7% mentioned local advertising; 13.7% get their information from the council / Children's Information Service (25.8%) whilst 8.1% get their information through health visitors / clinics.

6 Key Findings – Parental Demand Survey

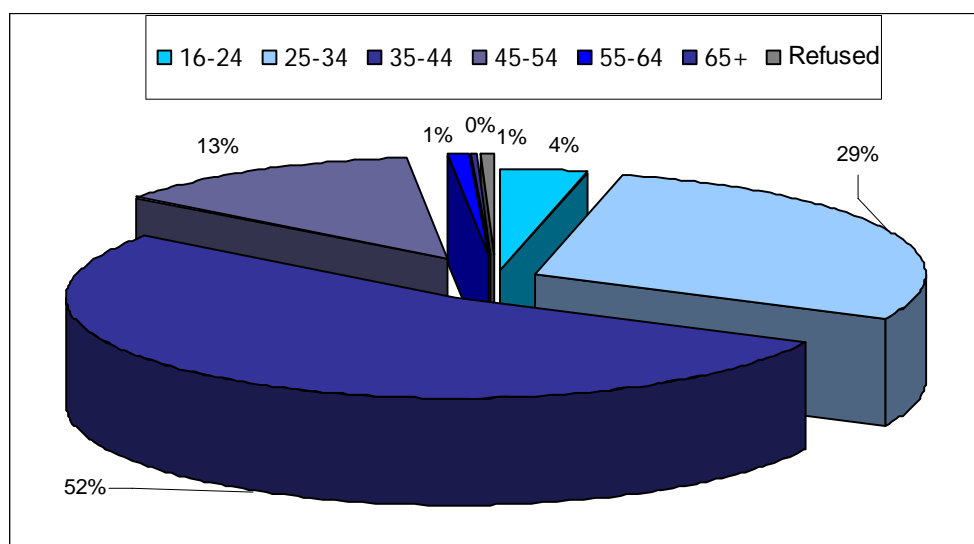
6.1 Profile Information

In total 454 CATI interviews were completed with parents and carers across Sunderland.

In total 446 of those interviewed were parents whilst 8 were carers, these were all grandparents except one who was a foster carer.

Over three quarters of the respondents were female (78.0%), although 22.0% were male. As can be seen in fig 6.1.1, in terms of age the largest proportion of respondents was 35-44 years of age (53.1%), followed by 25-34 year olds (28.7%); 45-54 year olds (13.0%) and 16-24 year olds (3.5%). Five respondents were aged 55 or over whilst three people didn't wish to give their age.

Figure 6.1.1 Breakdown of respondents by age



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454

Most respondents were either married or living with a partner (83.9%), 16.1% were single parents.

The following table (fig 6.1.2), shows the ethnicity of respondents compared to the actual make-up of Sunderland's population according to 2001 Census data. It shows that the ethnicity of respondents generally reflects the actual ethnic make-up of the area well.

Figure 6.1.2 Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnic Group	% Parents / Carers Surveyed	Actual % in Sunderland
White (British)	94.71	97.12
White (European) / White Other	1.10	1.02
White and Black Caribbean	0	0.08
White and Black African	0	0.06
White and Asian	0.22	0.16
Any other Mixed background	0	0.09
Indian	1.10	0.33
Pakistani	0	0.14
Bangladeshi	0.88	0.41
Any other Asian background	0.88	0.12
Black Caribbean	0	0.03
Black African	0.66	0.09
Any other Black background	0	0.01
Chinese	0	0.23
Other Ethnic Group	0.44	0.11

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454 & 2001 Census data.

35 parents stated that they have a disability.

The table below (fig 6.1.3) shows the number and proportion of interviews that were completed in each of five cluster areas. At least 80 surveys were completed in each area.

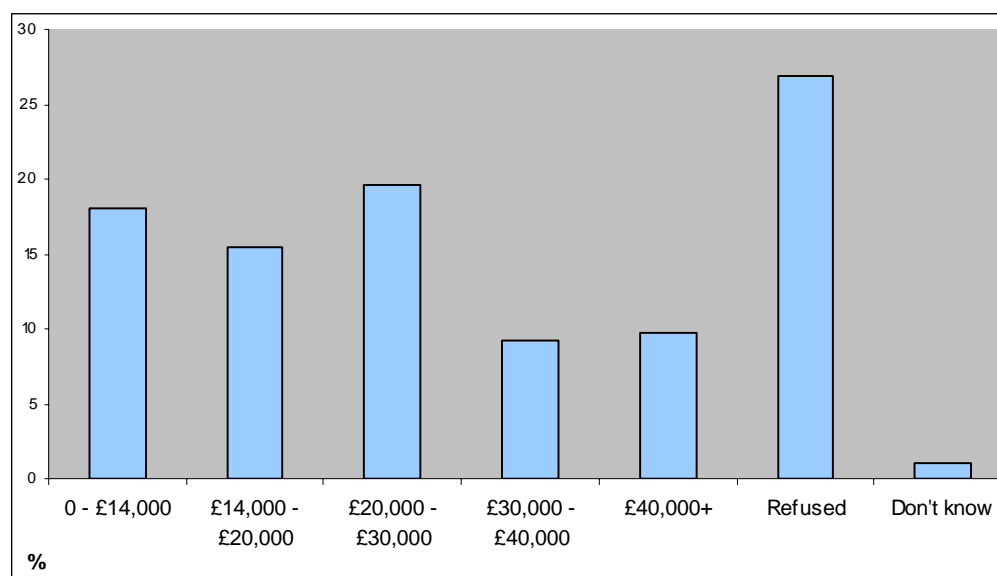
Figure 6.1.3 The number and % of interviews completed in each cluster area

Cluster Area	No.	% surveyed
Central Cluster	88	19.4
Coalfields	80	17.6
South East	91	20.0
Sunderland North	100	22.0
Washington	95	20.9
Total	454	100

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454

As part of the survey respondents were asked to state which bracket their annual household income falls into. This was in order to be able to compare the childcare experiences of lower income families with higher income families. Although the following chart (fig 6.1.4) shows that just over a quarter of respondents refused to answer this question (26.9%), the majority of those that gave a response had an annual household income of £20,000 - £30,000 (19.6%). This was followed by 18.1% that had an income of £0-£14,000 whilst 13.5% of respondents had an annual household income of £14,000 - £20,000. A further 18.9% had an annual household income of £30,000 or more.

When data has been analysed in terms of annual household income in this report, categories have been amalgamated. Any household with an annual income of less than £20,000 are classed as 'lower income families', with those earning £20,000 or more classed as 'higher income families'. These categories are in line with those used by the *DfES Parent's Childcare Survey*.

Figure 6.1.4 Annual household income of respondents

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454

6.2 Age of Children and Young People

Four respondents were currently expecting a child and 44.5% of those interviewed had children aged 0-4 years old. A large proportion had children aged 5-11 (76.4%) whilst 27.1% had young people aged 12-16; 6.2% had young people aged 17-19.

The table below (fig 6.2.1) shows that altogether the respondents had, or were expecting 880 children aged 0-19. Half of these children were aged 5-11 (457 of them); 251 of the children were aged 0-4. There were four expectant parents interviewed but all had other children. Although older age groups don't tend to use formal childcare as much as younger children, it was also ensured that the survey covered 12-16 year olds (with 137 young people being in this age group) and 17-19 year olds (31 young people in this age group).

Figure 6.2.1 Number of children in each age group

	No. of respondents	% of respondents	No. of children / young people in each age group
Expecting a child	4	0.9	4
0-4 years	202	44.5	251
5-11 years	347	76.4	457
12-16 years	123	27.1	137
17-19 years	28	6.2	31
Total number of children / young people	-	-	880

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454

6.3 Children with Special / Additional Needs or Disability

As part of the survey respondents were asked whether any of their children had any special / additional needs or disabilities. In total 42 parents did have children with additional needs which equates to 9.3% of all respondents.

As shown in the table below (fig 6.3.1), nine respondents had 0-4 year olds with additional needs; 21 respondents had 5-11 year olds with additional needs; 13 parents had 12-16 year olds with additional needs whilst four parents had 17- 19 year olds with additional needs.

Figure 6.3.1 No. of respondents with children with special / additional needs or disability

	No. of respondents
0-4 years	9
5-11 years	21
12-16 years	13
17-19 years	4

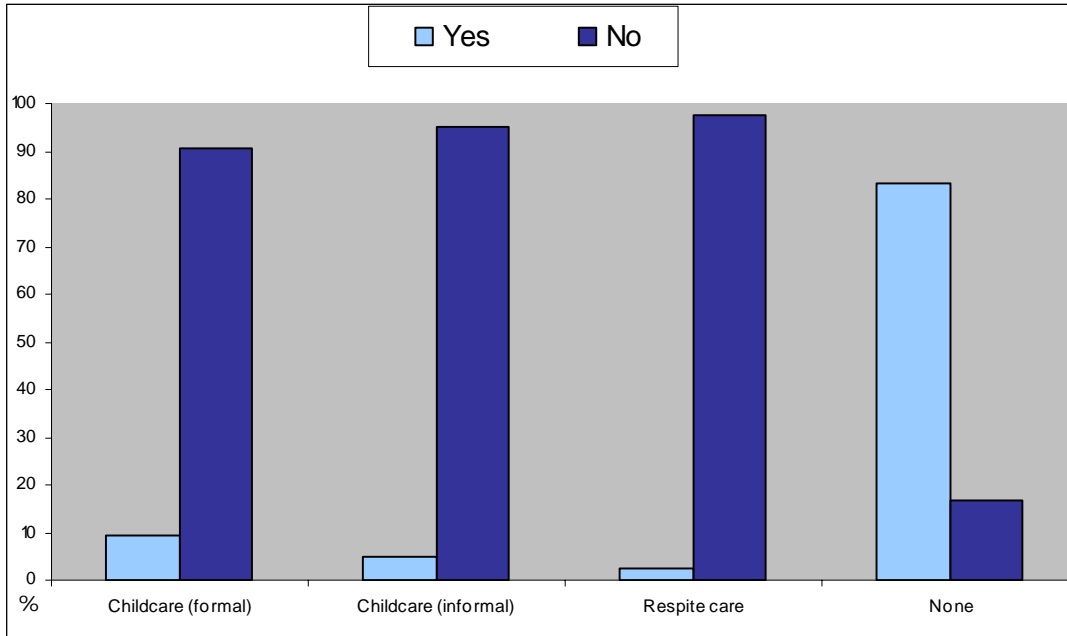
Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007

These 42 parents were asked whether they use any particular provision for their children with SEN. As the following chart (fig 6.3.2) shows, very little provision, either formal or informal is being used for these children. Just seven of the parents were using some kind of provision for these children.

Of these seven parents, one used respite care; two used informal care whilst four used formal care. One parent used a childminder whilst one used a nursery, another used a breakfast club; one parent mentioned their child attending The Close. One of these parents mentioned that their child attends a special needs school.

Although based on a small number of respondents, this data raises the question of whether these parents are isolated in caring for their children, with a lack of use of provision although it is acknowledged that the type and severity of SEN or disability is unknown.

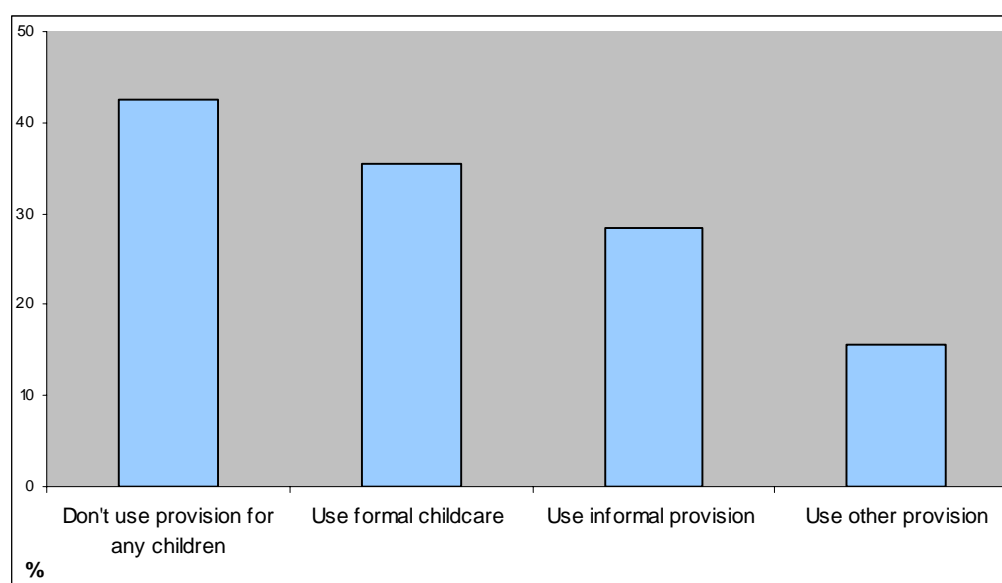
Figure 6.3.2 Care used for children with special / additional needs or disability



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base: 42

6.4 Childcare currently used

The questionnaire established whether parents are currently using any childcare or other related provision for their children. As can be seen in fig 5.4.1, in total 57.5% of respondents were using some kind of provision for their children. Just over a third use formal childcare (35.5% - equivalent to 161 parents) whilst 28.4% use informal care; a further 15.6% use other provision for their children.

Figure 6.4.1 Whether parents use childcare

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base = 454

N.B: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

Analysis by household income shows that families earning £20k plus in a year are significantly more likely to be using provision compared to lower income families (70.3% compared with 53.3%). Higher income families are also significantly more likely to be using different types of provision than lower income families (28.0% compared with 15.1%).

There is no statistically significant difference between the numbers of parents in each cluster area saying they use provision although the following table (fig 6.4.2) shows the overall breakdown of provision used by parents in each cluster. There is a small difference in the number of parents using formal childcare in each cluster, although those living in the Washington area were least likely to be. Parents in Sunderland North were least likely to be using informal care, with Coalfields parents being most likely. In terms of other provision such as sports groups; drama / music groups and so on, those living in the central area were least likely to use these. Overall, parents in the Washington area were least likely to be using some kind of provision, with parents in the South East area of Sunderland being most likely.

Figure 6.4.2 Use of provision by cluster area

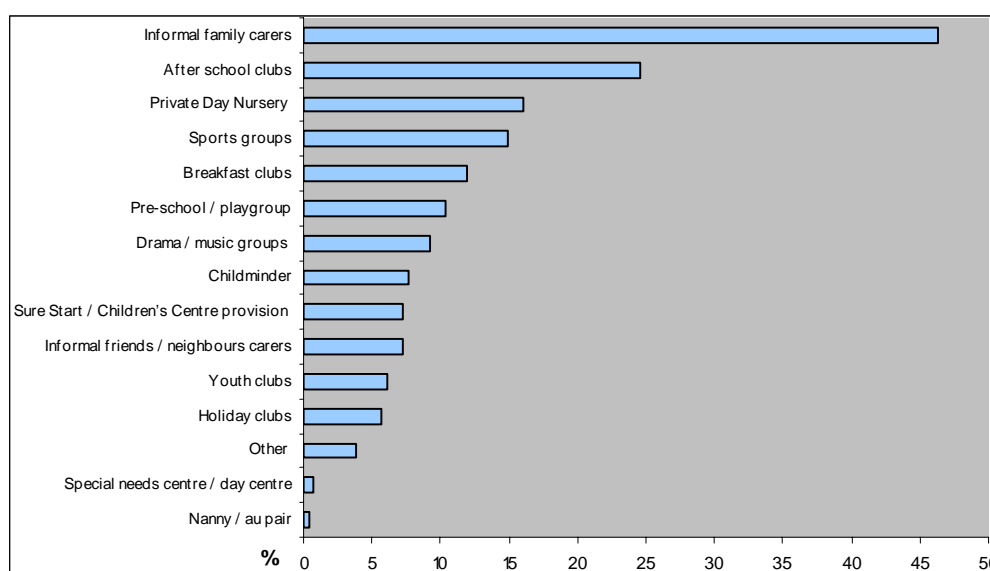
	Central	Coalfields	South East	Sunderland North	Washington
Use formal childcare	36.4	37.5	35.2	36.0	32.6
Use informal childcare	29.5	33.8	30.8	24.0	25.3
Use other provision	8.0	16.3	18.7	18.0	16.8
Don't use any provision	42.0	41.3	39.6	44.0	45.3

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Bases: Central: 88; Coalfields: 80; South East: 91; Sunderland North: 100; Washington: 95.

N.B: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

The following chart (fig 6.4.3) shows the different types of childcare currently used.

Figure 6.4.3 Childcare used by parents



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base = 261 (those parents who currently use provision).

N.B: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

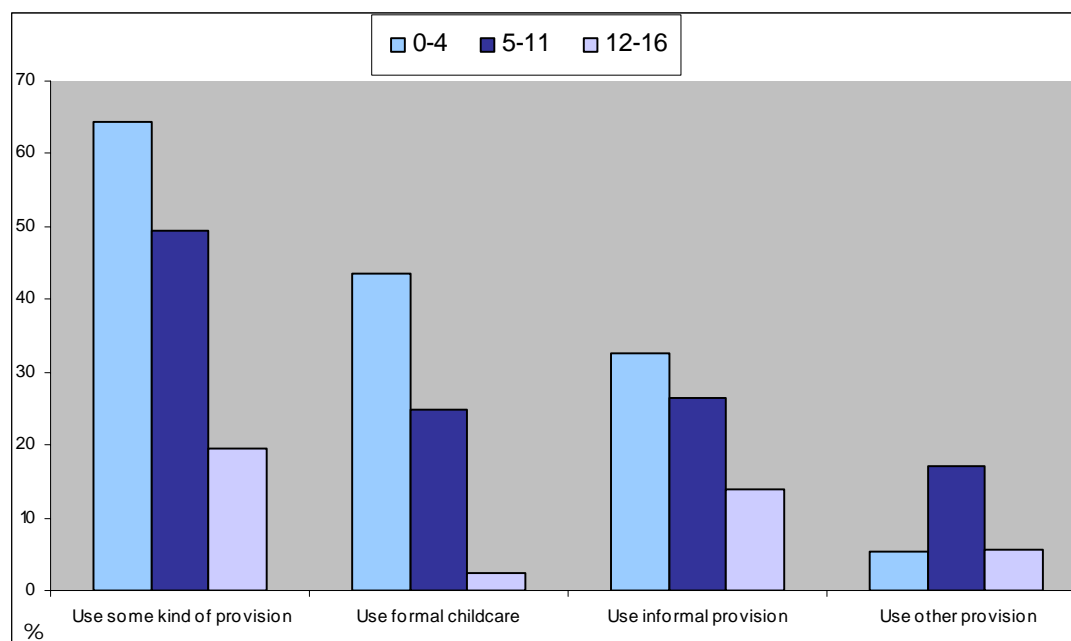
Out of the 261 respondents who used some provision for their children, just under half were using informal family carers (46.4%). The most widely used registered provision was after-school clubs (24.5%) followed by day nurseries (16.1%); sports groups (14.9%) and breakfast clubs (11.9%).

A further 10.3% of parents who use provision use pre-school / playgroups (10.3%) whilst 9.2% use drama / music classes. In total 20 parents were using childminders (7.7%); 7.3% use Children's Centre provision whilst the same proportion use informal friend / neighbour carers. The types of provision which were least likely to be used by parents in Sunderland at the moment were youth clubs (6.1%) and holiday clubs (5.8%); two parents were using a special needs / day centre and one person was using a nanny.

Childcare accessed by age of child

The following chart (fig 6.4.4) shows a breakdown of the proportion of parents accessing provision by the age of child.

Figure 6.4.4 The proportion of parents using childcare (formal and informal) for their children by age of child



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. N.B.: The base varies depending on the age group of children, base for 0-4: 202, base for 5-11: 347, base for 12-16: 123; base for 17-19: 28

Six out of ten respondents with 0-4 year olds use provision for their children (64.4%), whilst half of parents use childcare for their 5-11 year olds (49.3%). A fifth of parents with 12-16 year olds use childcare for these children (19.5%). No one was using provision for 17-19 year olds.

In terms of formal childcare, 43.6% of parents were using this for 0-4 year olds; 24.8% for 5-11 year olds and 2.4% for 12-16 year olds. Parents of 0-4 year olds and BME parents were significantly more likely to be using formal childcare than parents of 5-12 year olds and White British respondents.

BME respondents were also significantly more likely to be using just formal childcare rather than a combination of informal and formal care compared to White British respondents (45.8% compared with 20.0%).

Informal provision was being used by 32.7% of parents with 0-4 year olds; 26.5% of those with 5-11 year olds and 13.8% of those with 12-16 year olds. Analysis by ethnicity suggests that White British parents are more likely to be using informal care compared to BME respondents (29.5% compared to 8.3%).

Other provision being used was mostly for the 5-11 year olds (17.0%).

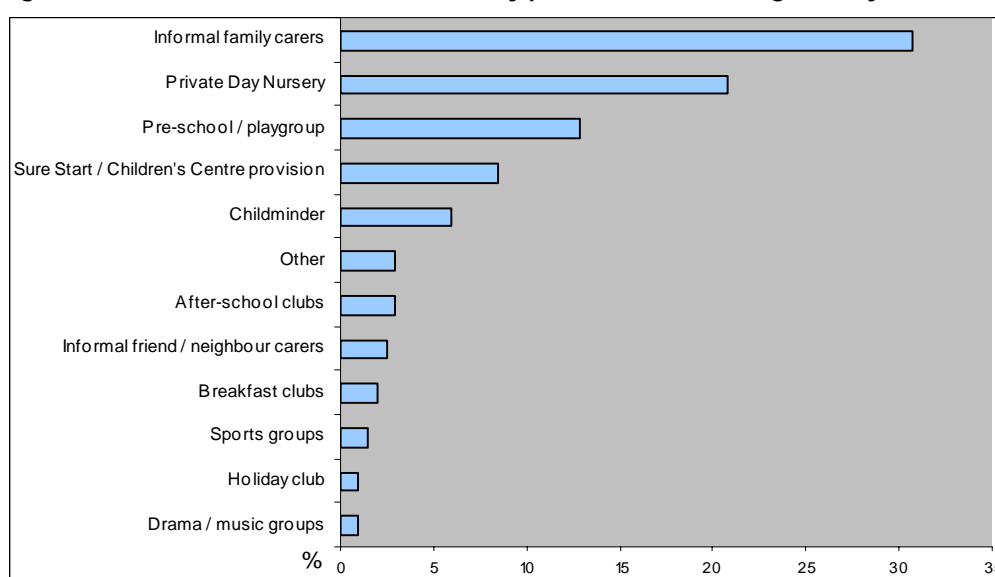
Parents of children with SEN / disabilities were significantly less likely to be using a mixture of different provision than those whose children didn't have SEN.

0-4 year olds

Over half of respondents use some form of provision for their 0-4 year olds (64.4%). Whilst 43.6% of the 202 parents with 0-4 year olds use formal childcare for these children; 32.7% use informal care.

The following chart (fig 6.4.5) shows the proportion of parents accessing particular types of childcare for their 0-4 year olds.

Figure 6.4.5 Particular childcare accessed by parents of children aged 0-4 years



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 202 (parents with children aged 0-4 years).
 N.B: This was a not mutually exclusive response question; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

The most popular childcare for the 0-4 age group is informal family care, used by 30.7% of respondents. A further 20.8% of parents use day nurseries for this age group whilst 12.9% use pre-school / playgroups. Fewer than one in ten of these parents / carers use Children's Centres (8.4%); a small number use after-school clubs (3.0%); informal friend / neighbour carers (2.5%) and breakfast clubs (2.0%). Just three parents use sports groups for their 0-4 year olds, two use holiday clubs and two use drama / music groups. This data raises the question of whether parents recognise what wrap-around-care is and whether they're aware of the full range of services that Children's Centres provide.

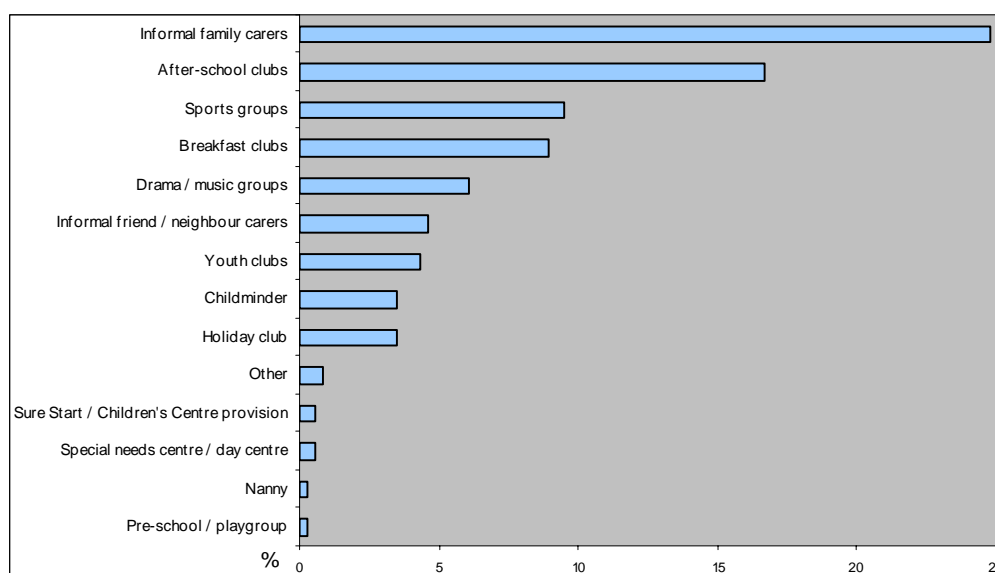
5-11 year olds

Of the 347 respondents with children aged 5-11, 49.3% use some form of provision for these children.

As the following chart (fig 6.4.6) shows, informal family carers are once again the most widely used childcare option for these children (24.8%). This is followed by after-school clubs (16.7%); sports groups (9.5%) and breakfast clubs (8.9%).

A small number of parents with 5-11 year olds use drama / music groups (6.1%) and informal friend / neighbour carers (4.6%). A further 4.3% use youth clubs; 3.5% use childminders and 3.5% use holiday clubs. Two people use Children's Centre provision for their 5-11 year olds; two use a special needs / day centre; one uses a nanny and one uses a pre-school / playgroup.

Figure 6.4.6 Particular childcare accessed by parents of children aged 5-11 years

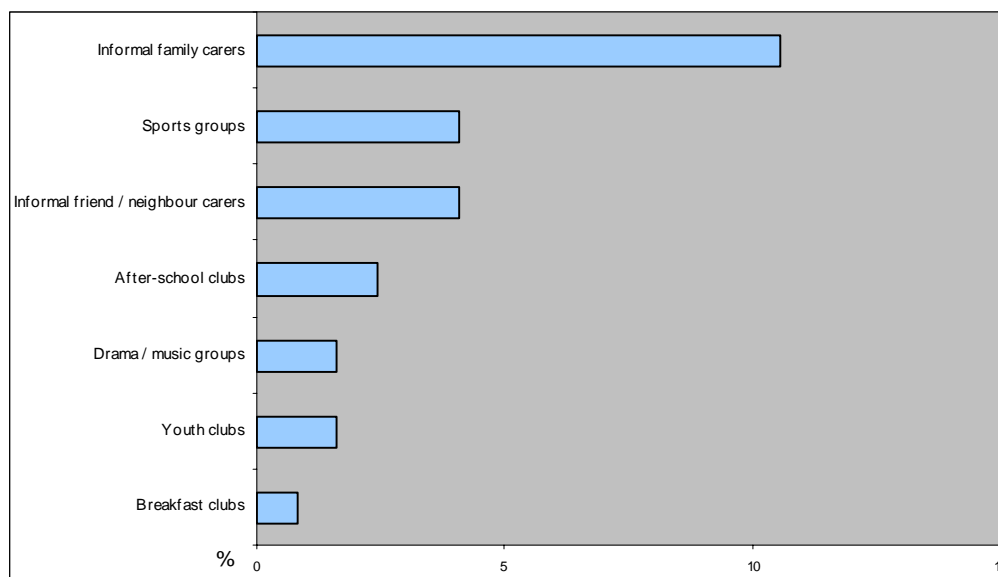


Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 347 (parents with children aged 5-11 years).
 N.B: This was a not mutually exclusive response question; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

12-16 year olds

Of the 123 respondents with 12-16 year olds, 19.5% of them were using provision for them. Thirteen of these parents use informal family carers for these young people (10.6%); five parents use sports groups (4.1%); five also use informal friend / neighbour carers (4.1%); three use after-school clubs (2.4%). Two of these parents use drama / music groups (1.6%); two use youth clubs (1.6%); one uses a breakfast club.

Figure 6.4.7 Particular childcare accessed by parents of children aged 12-16 years



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 123 (parents with young people aged 12 -16 years).

N.B: This was a not mutually exclusive response question; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

17-19 year olds

No one was using any provision, either formal or informal, for young people aged 17-19.

Number of Children

The following table breaks down the current use of childcare and other provision by actual number of children accessing them. **Please note that the calculations made to produce the following chart are based on the number of actual children in each age group, therefore percentages will differ from those presented in charts 6.4.5 to 6.4.7 which are based upon number of parents with children in each age group.**

Figure 6.4.8 Number of actual children in each age group accessing provision

	0-4 year olds		5-11 year olds		12-16 year olds	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Childminder	13	5.8	13	2.8	2	1.5
Private Day Nursery	47	18.7	0	0	1	0.7
Pre-school / playgroup	0	0	1	0.2	0	0
Breakfast clubs	29	11.6	2	0.4	0	0
After-school clubs	4	1.6	36	7.9	1	0.7
Holiday clubs	6	2.4	80	17.5	3	2.2
Children's Centre	2	0.8	21	4.6	0	0
Informal family carers	17	6.8	5	1.1	1	0.7
Informal friend / neighbour carers	72	28.7	111	24.3	14	10.2
Sports groups	5	2.0	20	4.4	5	3.6
Youth clubs	3	1.2	42	9.2	6	4.4
Drama / music groups	1	0.4	19	4.2	3	2.2
Special needs centre / day centre	2	0.78	26	5.7	2	1.5
Other	0	0	2	0.4	0	0

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. N.B. The base is 251 for 0-4 year olds; 457 for 5-11 year olds; 137 for 12-16 year olds and 31 for 17-19 year olds. This was not a mutually exclusive question therefore totals may exceed the total number of children.

6.5 Satisfaction with provision used

Parents who used childcare provision for their children were asked about their satisfaction levels in terms of the following: hours of opening; location; cost and fees; quality of care offered; premises / environment; childcarer / staff; reliability and flexibility. In some cases respondents felt it wasn't applicable to give a rating, for example rating the cost for a provider that is free, these cases have been excluded therefore the base figures for each type of provision may vary slightly from that stated. The results are shown below (fig 6.5.1):

Figure 6.5.1 Proportion of parents satisfied with childcare used (%)

	Opening hours / times	Cost / fees	Location home, work	Quality of care offered	Premises environment	Childcarer or staff	Reliability	Flexibility
Childminder	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Private day nursery	100	85.4	100	100	97.6	100	100	100
Nanny	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Pre-school / playgroup	96.2	100	100	100	100	100	100	92.6
Breakfast club	93.3	93.3	100	100	100	100	100	96.6
After-school club	96.8	96.3	96.8	100	95.2	100	98.4	98.4
Holiday club	100	92.3	92.9	100	92.9	100	100	100
Children's Centre	94.4	93.3	88.9	100	100	100	94.4	100
Sports groups	97.4	100	94.7	97.4	97.4	97.4	100	94.7
Youth clubs	100	100	100	100	87.5	100	100	100
Drama / music groups	95.8	95.7	95.8	100	100	95.8	100	100
Special needs / day centre	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Base varies for each provider type: Childminder: 20; Private Day Nursery: 42; Nanny: 1; Pre-school / playgroup: 27; Breakfast club: 31; After-school clubs: 62; Holiday Club: 15; Children's Centre: 19; Sports groups: 39; Youth Clubs: 16; Drama / music groups: 24; Special needs / day centre: 2.

As the table above (fig 6.5.1) highlights, there is a high level of satisfaction with the provision used by parents and carers in Sunderland. All those using childminders; the person using a nanny and the two people using a special needs / day centre were satisfied with all aspects of these providers.

In terms of day nurseries a small number of people were dissatisfied with the cost (six people) whilst one person wasn't satisfied with the premises. A small number of those using pre-school / playgroups for their children were dissatisfied with the provision in terms of opening hours / time (one person) and the flexibility of provision (two people).

In terms of breakfast clubs, of the 31 people using them for their children dissatisfaction was only expressed in terms of the opening hours (two people); the cost (one person) and the flexibility of

provision (one person). For after-school clubs at least one person was dissatisfied with each aspect of provision with the exception of quality of care and staff. The only dissatisfaction regarding holiday clubs was in terms of cost (one person); location (one person) and premises (one person).

The 19 people using Children's Centre provision were all satisfied with the quality of care provided and staff at the centres as well as the premises and flexibility of provision. A very small level of dissatisfaction was noted in terms of opening hours (one person); cost (one person); location (two people) and reliability (one person).

In terms of sports groups used, everyone was satisfied with the cost of these as well as the reliability. Again a very small number of these parents were dissatisfied with the sports provision used in terms of opening hours / times (one person); location (two people); quality of care (one person); premises (one person); staff (one person) and flexibility (two people).

16 respondents were using youth clubs for their children, of these just two parents expressed dissatisfaction, this was in terms of the premises / environment. Of the 24 people using drama / music groups all were satisfied with the quality of care; premises; reliability and flexibility of this provision. Only a minority of these parents were dissatisfied in terms of opening hours (one person); cost (one person); location (one person) and the staff (one person).

Overall these findings are extremely positive. Although the above statistics are based on small base numbers in some cases (so should be treated with caution), the data could suggest that the areas of improvement are mainly in relation to:

- a) Cost (across all provider types an average of 96.4% were satisfied with cost);
- b) Location (average satisfaction is 97.4%);
- c) Premises (average satisfaction is 97.6%);
- d) Opening hours / times (average satisfaction is 97.8%).

The main areas where parents were satisfied with provision were:

- a) Quality of care offered (average satisfaction is 99.8%);
- b) Child carer/ staff (average satisfaction is 99.4%);
- c) Reliability (average satisfaction is 99.5%).

6.6 Reasons for not currently using provision

In total 193 respondents said they don't use provision for any of their children (42.5%). This leaves over half (57.5%) using some kind of provision for all of their children. A further 37 parents use provision for some children but not others. The 230 parents who don't use provision for some or all of their children were asked for their reasons for this.

As can be seen in the table below (fig 6.6.1), the main reason cited for not using childcare is that parents prefer to care for their children themselves. In total, 60.0% gave this reason regarding their 0-4 year olds; 57.6% said this about their 5-11 year olds and 40.2% said this about their 12-16 year olds; 31.6% said this about their 17-19 year olds.

The second most cited reason for not using provision is that parents say their children are too old so don't need it, this response was given 80 times in total. In total, 84.2% of those with 17-19 year olds said this was the case; 52.2% of those with 12-16 year olds said this, fewer parents of 5-11 year olds and 0-4 year olds mentioned this although conversely very few parents felt their children were too young to access provision.

Figure 6.6.1 Reasons for not using provision for different age groups

	% 0-4 year olds	% 5-11 year olds	% 12-16 year olds	% 17-19 year olds
Availability	1.3	1.2	1.1	0
Cost	12.5	7.0	3.3	0
Poor quality of care	1.3	0.6	0	0
Location	1.3	0.6	0	0
Not available at my child's school	1.3	0.6	0	0
Have not looked for childcare information	1.3	1.7	1.1	0
Language barriers	0	0.6	0	0
Attends nursery classes in school	3.8	1.2	0	0
Concerned about leaving my child in formal childcare	1.3	1.2	0	0
Child is too young	6.3	0	0	0
Child is too old – doesn't need it	1.3	8.7	52.2	84.2
Don't want to use childcare, prefer to look after child (ren) myself	60	57.6	40.2	31.6
Other	33.8	41.3	21.7	10.5

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, bases: 0-4: 80 (number of respondents who don't use childcare for all or some of their 0-4 year olds); 5-11: 172 (number of respondents who don't use childcare for all or some of their 5-11 year olds); 12-16: 92 (number of respondents who don't use childcare for all or some of their 12-16 year olds); 17-19: 19 (number of respondents who don't use childcare for all or some of their 17-19 year olds).

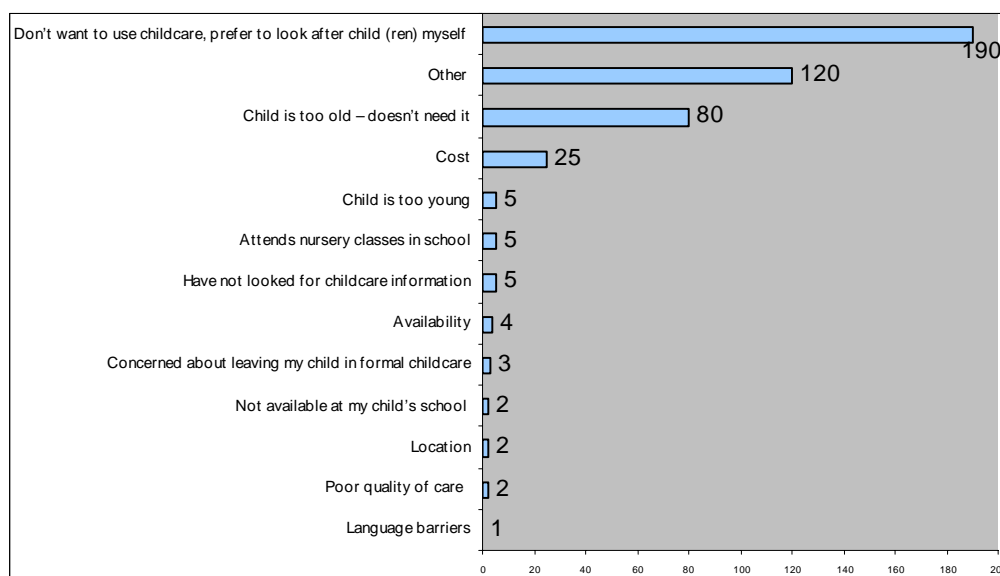
N.B: This was a not mutually exclusive response question; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

As can be seen in the chart below (fig 6.6.2), cost was mentioned as a barrier 25 times by parents overall, this was most likely to be stated as a reason for not using provision for 0-4 year olds compared with other age groups (12.5%).

A very small number of parents said they don't use provision due to reasons concerning availability (two parents mentioned this, both living in Sunderland North); poor quality of care; location; not being available at specific schools; simply not having looked for information on provision; language barriers; due to children attending nursery classes in school or due to concerns about leaving children in formal care.

None of the parents interviewed said that they didn't use provision due to any of the following reasons: lack of transport; opening times available; cultural issues; lack of special needs facilities or lack of places at preferred provider.

Figure 6.6.2 Reasons for not using provision – total number of times each reason was mentioned



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007

Some respondents also gave 'other' reasons for not using provision. This included parents who said they didn't need any provision, often when children are at school or because the parent isn't working. A few parents mentioned they are able to work flexibly so manage without childcare.

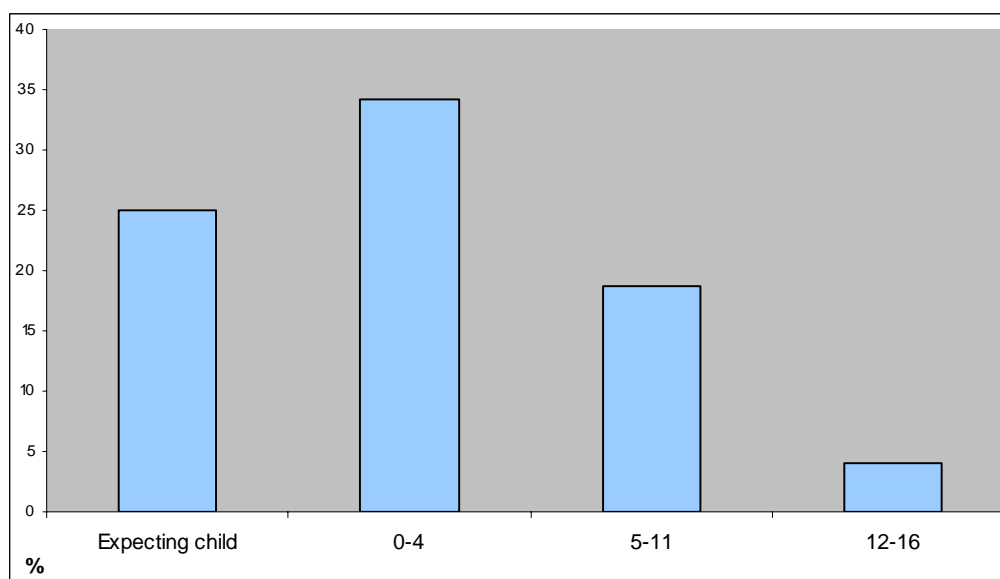
6.7 Future use of childcare

All parents surveyed were asked whether they were likely to use formal childcare; other supervised facilities for older children or respite care for any children with special / additional needs or disabilities in the next 12 months.

In total 116 respondents (25.6%), intend to use provision for their children in the next 12 months.

The following chart (fig 6.7.1) shows the proportion of parents intending to use provision for different age groups, with parents of 0-4 year olds being most likely to use provision in the next 12 months.

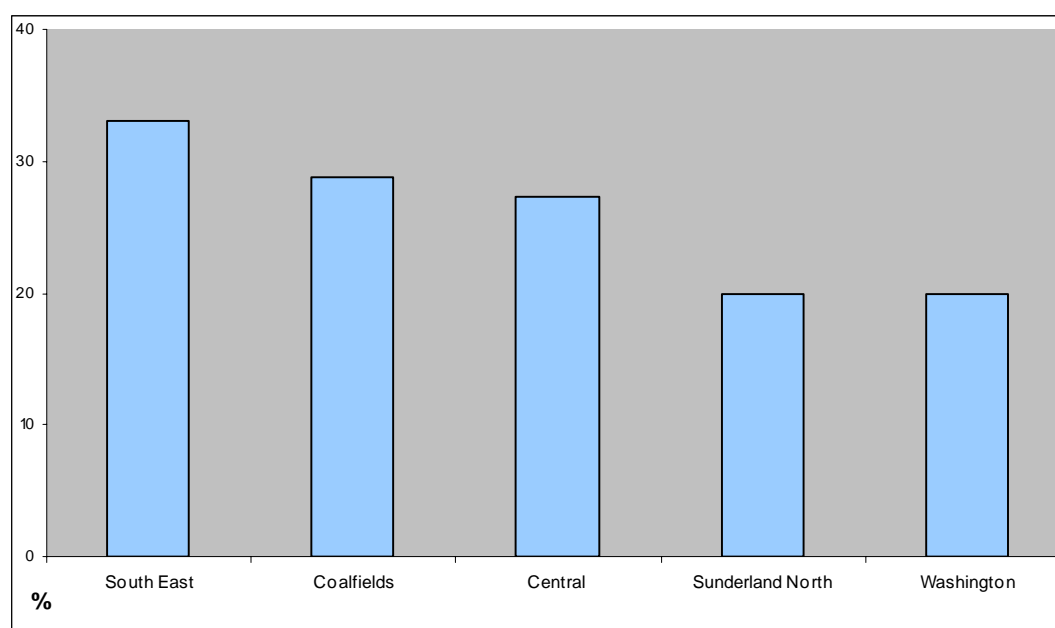
Figure 6.7.1 Likely use of provision in the next 12 months by age of child



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Bases: expecting: 4; 0-4: 202; 5-11: 347; 12-16: 123; 17-19: 28

Further analysis shows that a significantly higher proportion of BME respondents plan to use provision than White British respondents (50.0% compared to 24.2%).

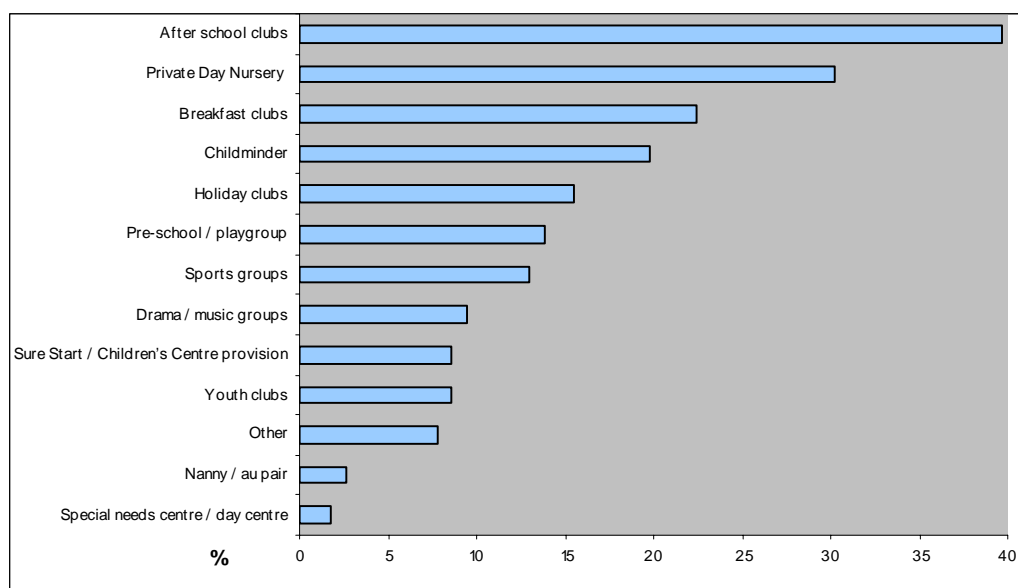
The following chart (fig 6.7.2) shows the proportion of parents in each cluster area that said they were likely to use provision in the next 12 months. Parents in the South East of Sunderland were most likely to use provision in the next 12 months (33.0%) followed by Coalfields (28.8%); Central (27.3%); Sunderland North (20.0%) and Washington (20.0%).

Figure 6.7.2 Likely use of provision in the next 12 months by cluster area

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Bases: Central: 88; Coalfields: 80; South East: 91; Sunderland North: 100; Washington: 95.

The following chart (fig 6.7.3) shows which types of provision parents are intending to use over the following 12 months. Of the 116 intending to use provision, 46 will use after-school clubs (39.7%); 30.2% will use day nurseries; 22.4% will use breakfast clubs. A further 19.8% will use childminders with further analysis suggesting that single parents are significantly more likely to be using childminders than married / co-habiting parents. A further 15.5% will use holiday clubs; 13.8% will use pre-school / playgroups whilst 12.9% will use sports groups; 9.5% will use drama / music groups. A small number of parents are planning to use Children's Centre provision (10 parents; 8.6%); youth clubs (10 parents; 8.6%); three people will use a nanny / au pair and two will use a special needs / day centre.

Figure 6.7.3 Provision likely to be used by parents over the next 12 months



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base: 116. N.B.: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

Likely use of childcare by expectant parents over the next 12 months

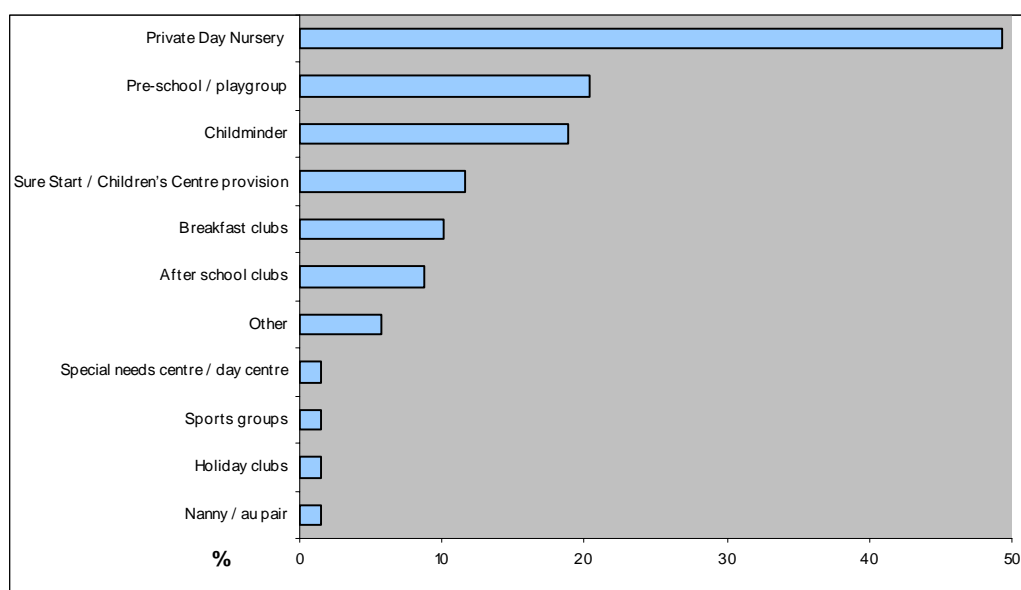
One of the four expectant parents that took part in this research intends to use provision for this child in the next 12 months. They plan to use a private day nursery for the child.

Likely use of childcare by parents of 0-4 year olds over the next 12 months

In total 69 out of the 202 parents with 0-4 year olds plan to use provision for these children in the next 12 months (34.1%). This equates to 75 of the 0-4 year olds covered by the research.

As the following chart (fig 6.7.4) shows, day nurseries are most likely to be used by the parents / carers of 0-4 year olds that plan to use childcare (49.3%). This is followed by pre-school / playgroups (20.3%); childminders (18.8%) and Children's Centres (11.6%). A further 10.1% of these parents plan to use breakfast clubs whilst 8.7% will use after-school clubs. One person said they would use each of the following for their 0-4 year old in the next 12 months: special needs centre; sports groups; holiday clubs and a nanny / au pair.

Figure 6.7.4 Particular childcare likely to be used by parents of children aged 0-4 years in the next 12 months

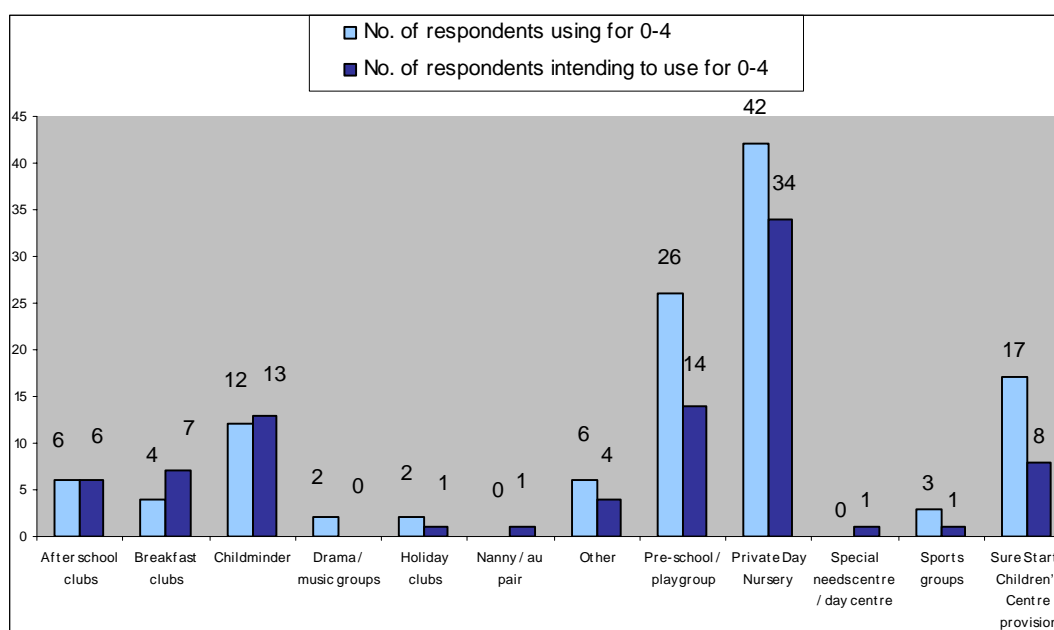


Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base = 69 (parents with 0-4 year olds that intend to use provision).

N.B: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

The following chart breaks the data down further, to highlight the current use of childcare by 0-4 year olds compared to future intended use. This data is indicative rather than conclusive. It shows that as these children become older and enter mainstream education there will be less demand for day nurseries and Children's Centre provision as well as pre-schools and playgroups. Three more parents intend to use breakfast clubs as their 0-4 year olds get older, although the demand for after-school clubs; childminders and holiday clubs looks set to remain consistent for these parents.

Figure 6.7.5 Current use of childcare compared to future demand, 0-4 year olds



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007.

N.B: This was not a mutually exclusive question, so respondents may have chosen more than one option.

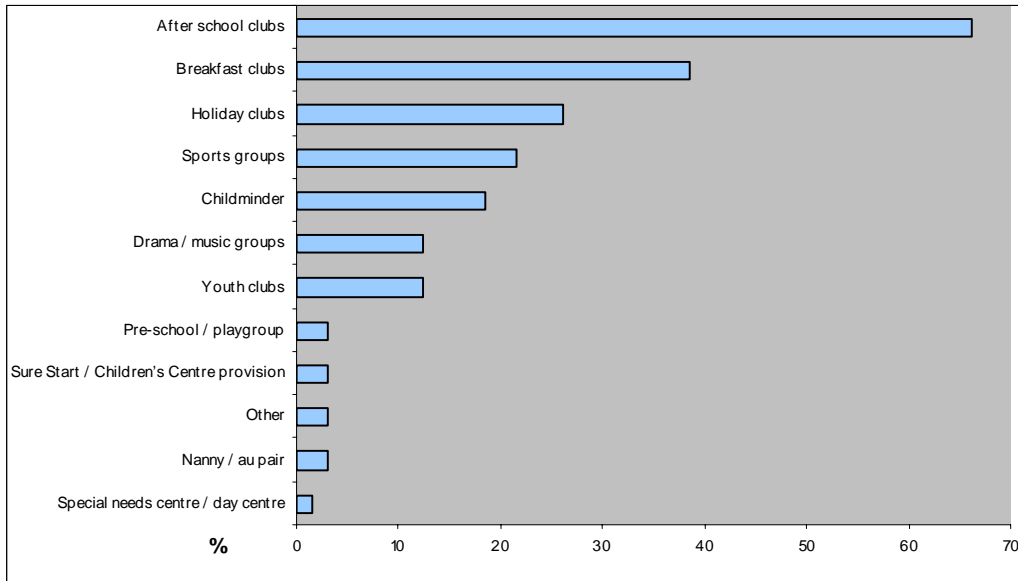
Likely use of childcare by parents of 5-11 year olds over the next 12 months

As can be seen in the chart below (fig 6.7.6), in total 65 parents out of the 347 with 5-11 year olds intend to use provision for this age group in the next 12 months (18.7%), for 91 children in total.

Parents of 5-11 year olds that plan to use provision in the next 12 months mostly reported intending to use after-school clubs (66.2%); breakfast clubs (38.5%); holiday clubs (26.2%); sports groups (21.5%) and childminders (18.5%).

Eight parents each planned to use drama / music groups for these children and youth clubs (12.3%). Two parents planned to use pre-school / playgroups; Children's Centres; and nannies / au pairs for these children. One parent will use a special needs / day centre.

Figure 6.7.6 Particular childcare likely to be used by parents of children aged 5-11 years in the next 12 months

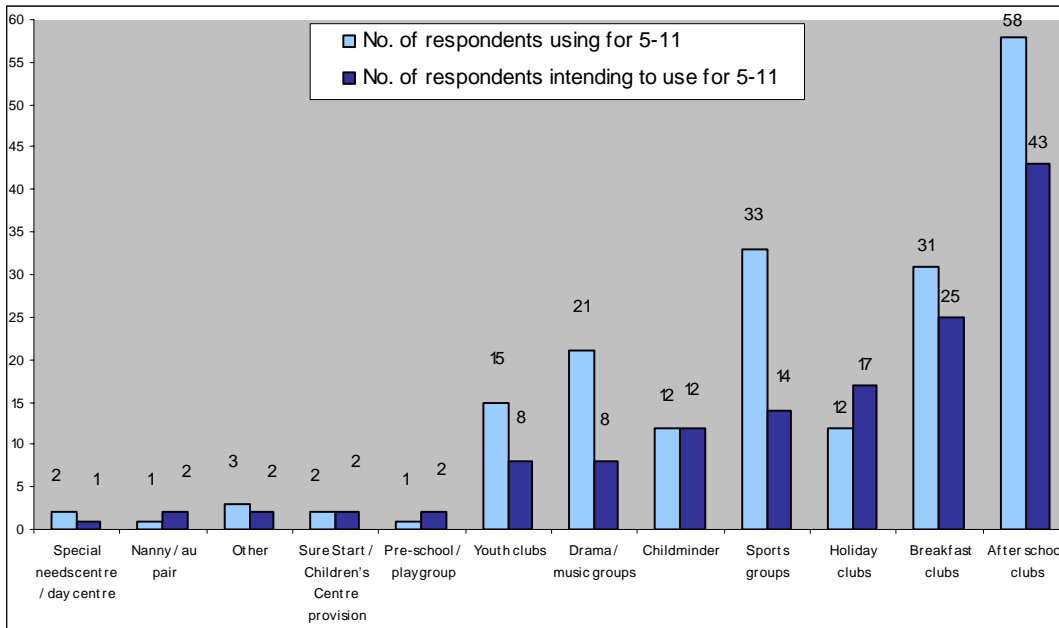


Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base = 65 (parents with 5-11 year olds that intend to use provision).

N.B: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

The following chart (fig 6.7.7) presents current use and future demand for childcare for 5-11 year olds by number of parents. As these children get older the data suggests less demand for different types of provision, there is however an apparent increased level of demand for holiday clubs for these children.

Figure 6.7.7 Current use of childcare compared to future demand, 5-11 year olds



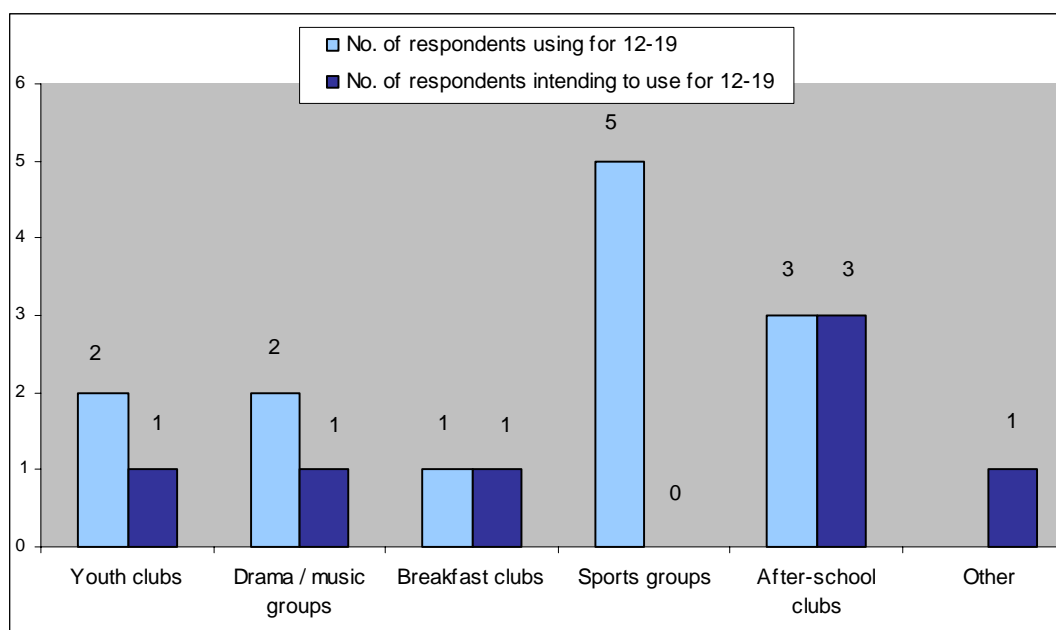
Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007.

N.B: This was not a mutually exclusive question, so respondents may have chosen more than one option.

Likely use of provision by parents of 12-16 year olds over the next 12 months

Just five parents were planning to use provision for their 12-16 year olds in the next 12 months, for 6 young people in total. The following chart (fig 6.7.8), shows that whilst five parents use sports groups for their 12-16 year olds now, they are unlikely to do so in the next 12 months. The demand for breakfast and after-school clubs is likely to stay the same.

Figure 6.7.8 Current use of childcare compared to future demand, 12-16 year olds



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007.

N.B: This was not a mutually exclusive question, so respondents may have chosen more than one option.

Likely use of provision by parents of 17-19 year olds over the next 12 months

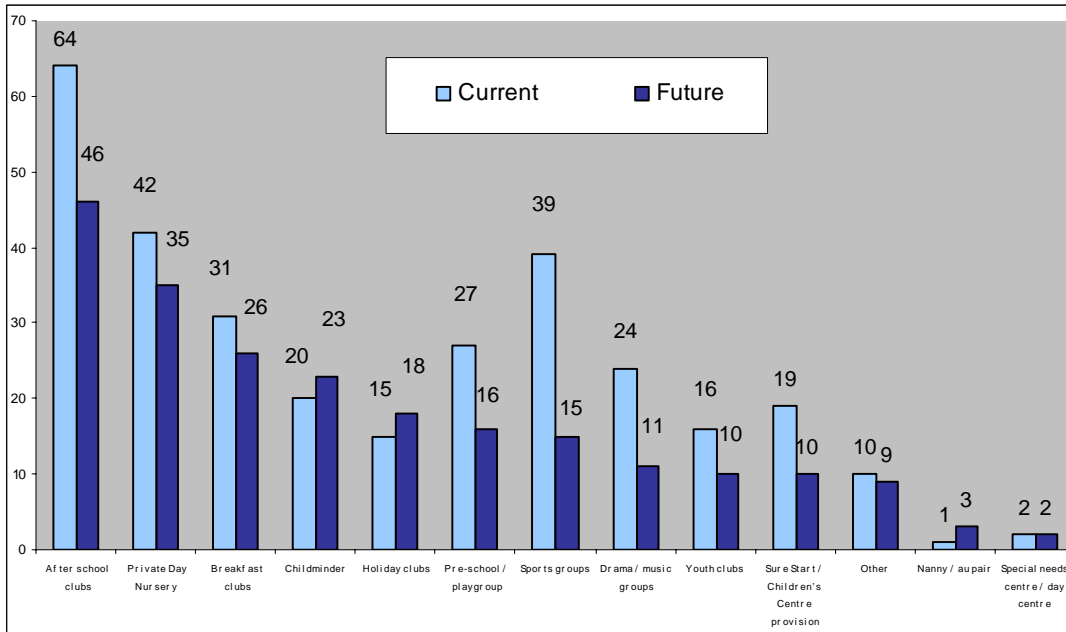
None of the parents with 17-19 year olds were likely to use provision for these young people in the next 12 months.

Current use versus future demand for provision by type of childcare

The following chart (fig 6.7.9) demonstrates the number of respondents accessing each type of childcare provision now, and the number of respondents that are expected to be accessing these providers over the next 12 months regardless of age.

As can be seen the data indicates that the demand for most types of childcare and related provision will fall within the next 12 months as the children move up the age groups. For example whilst 64 respondents currently use after-school clubs, only 46 plan to use them in the next year. Similarly whilst 39 parents currently use sports groups for their children, this falls to 15 in the next 12 months. There is a slightly higher level expected use for childminders; holiday clubs and nannies / au pairs in the next 12 months.

Figure 6.7.9 Current use of provision by number of respondents compared to future demand, regardless of age



N.B: This was not a mutually exclusive question, so respondents may have chosen more than one option.

6.8 Reasons why parents are not likely to use formal childcare in the next 12 months

Respondents who did not intend to use any formal childcare; respite care for children with SEN / disability or provision for older children in the next 12 months were asked to give reasons for this.

The main reasons given reflect the ones discussed earlier by those not currently using provision for all or some children, namely a preference for caring for children themselves; children being too old for provision and not needing provision.

Figure 6.8.1 Reasons why parents are unlikely to use provision in the next 12 months by age group (%)

	Expecting	0-4 year olds	5-11 year olds	12-16 year olds	17-19 year olds
Don't want to use formal childcare - prefer to look after child myself	0	64.7	61.0	51.7	39.3
Don't need to use childcare, do not intend to go out to work or study	0	10.5	11.0	6.8	14.3
Prefer for friends and family to look after my children	0	27.1	31.6	14.4	7.1
Cheaper for friends and family to look after my children	0	15	12.8	3.4	0
Child is too old for formal childcare	0	3	8.9	22.9	28.6
Child is too young for formal childcare	0	4.5	0.7	0	0
Can't afford formal childcare	33.3	5.3	5.0	2.5	0
Cannot find suitable childcare	0	0.8	2.1	0.8	0
No availability of suitable childcare locally or at senior school	0	1.5	2.5	3.4	0
Lack of facilities / trained staff for children with special needs	0	0.8	1.1	0	0
Don't know / not specified	66.7	10.5	10.6	19.5	25

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Bases: Expecting: 3; 0-4: 133; 5-11: 282; 12-16: 118; 17-19: 28

N.B: Not a mutually exclusive response question therefore figures may not add up to 100%

Most of those who gave a comment about their answer said that they did not require formal childcare because they either did not work or fit work around the children, often with the help of grandparents:

"My wife only works part time so is around to pick the kids up from school after work so there isn't really any need for formal care. I have nothing against formal care just don't think that it is right for us"

"I work part-time, so my parents and I alternate to look after my youngest child when I'm at work. When it is school holidays I am off too as I work at a school."

"I work evenings so my husband takes over (i.e. to look after the children) when I am at work."

"My parents look after my child when I'm at work, and she is out of school."

"I work as a childminder and when I'm childminding my children are with me, so I do not need any childcare."

A few comments centred on the cost of childcare being too high whilst some others highlighted how some parents are wary of using formal provision. A selection of comments follows:

"More help should be offered to those who cannot afford childcare."

"Childcare is too expensive; my parents help me with looking after my child when I am at work."

"I am very wary of whom I leave my children with."

"I only trust my family with my children."

6.9 Improvements

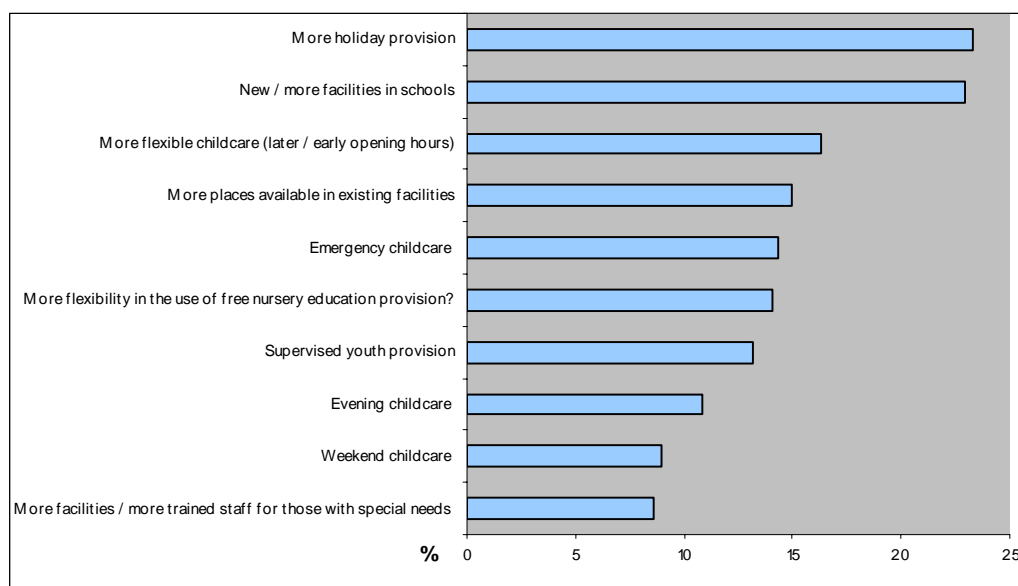
Respondents were asked whether they felt that any changes could be made to childcare / youth and special needs provision in their area to help them enhance their lifestyle / working patterns. Over half of respondents didn't think any of the options mentioned in the survey would help them (54.2%), indicating satisfaction with their present situations.

Further analysis of the data suggests that parents of children with SEN / disabilities were more likely to state there could be improvements than those without (52.4% of those with SEN stating there should be at least one improvement compared with 45.1%). This is indicative rather than conclusive however as it is not a statistically significant difference.

The older the children, the less likely parents were to feel that improvements would help them (e.g. 51.5% of those with 0-4 year olds said no changes would help them, this increases to 64.3% for those with 17-19 year olds).

The chart below (fig 6.9.1) shows how the remaining respondents felt changes could help them.

Figure 6.9.1 What changes could be made to local childcare / youth and special needs provision



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Base: 454.

N.B: Not a mutually exclusive response question therefore figures may not add up to 100%

The most popular option was to have more holiday provision (23.3%). Analysis by marital status shows that single parents were significantly more likely to state that more holiday provision would help them compared to married / co-habiting parents (34.2% compared with 21.3%).

The second most cited improvement was to have new or more facilities in schools (22.9%).

The third most popular option was to have more flexible childcare, so earlier and later opening hours (16.3%).

A further 15.0% would like to see more places in existing facilities (single parents were again more likely to suggest this) whilst 14.3% would like to see emergency childcare; 14.1% would like to be able to use the Nursery Education Grant more flexibly. Supervised youth provision was felt to be important by 13.2% whilst 10.8% felt that having provision available on an evening would be helpful.

The options which fewest people felt would help them were weekend childcare (9.0%) and having more facilities / more trained staff for those with special needs (8.6%). In total 13 out of the 42 parents of children with SEN / disabilities felt that more trained staff for working with these children would help them (31.0%).

There were no statistically significant differences in results by cluster area.

Many respondents elaborated further on areas for improvement. In particular, many of the comments related to the fact there should be more flexible provision available, for earlier in the morning, later in the evening and particularly in school holidays. Many comments also related to the cost of childcare being too high as well as a lack of things for young people to do and a lack of

childminders. Again it needs to be acknowledged that in some cases these improvements are what parents perceive is needed rather than what could actually be the case, for example despite some parents discussing a lack of childminders there are currently places with childminders available.

In several cases parents were expressing what they felt would improve situations for parents generally rather than being things that would improve their own situations specifically.

A variety of comments that were given are presented below, a full list can be found in the appendices:

More flexible provision:

"I think earlier opening hours would be helpful." (Coalfields)

"Later opening hours will be helpful for those parents with work. There should be more weekend activities for children or they just sit in front of the computer. I think there should be more facilities for the disabled. And it would be beneficial if there is support for the cost of equipment." (Central)

"I have to work Saturday mornings but there is no childcare facilities I can use. And I don't understand why I have to pay extra for childcare during school holidays; I don't get paid extra for holiday". (Central)

"It would be nice to have the option of emergency childcare if something came up, even if it was just for half an hour." (South East)

"Sometimes we are stuck and there is nothing available. Emergency childcare will be helpful." (North)

Cost of childcare too high:

"I think we need more activities near to hand at reasonable prices. Anything that comes into the local area is too expensive with three children. I think if they brought in more family prices rather than individual prices that would be better." (Washington)

"If childcare were to be cheaper then I would use it more, its not that I don't want to use it it just seems pointless to earn money if are then going to spend it on childcare." (South East)

"Me and my husband both work full time but if we had had to pay for childcare, it would not be worth going to work as it is so expensive. The government want you to go to work but childcare is too expensive for most." (Central)

Lack of things for young people to do:

"Should be more youth clubs for young children in Hetton because there are a lot of children hanging around on the streets. I have put my daughter in classes to keep her off the streets. There isn't much to do round here. There is nothing for the kids and it is frightening. They are drinking on the streets." (Coalfields)

"The age for the holiday club only goes up to 11yrs because of insurance issues this means that my 12yr old cannot go anymore. It would be good if they increased the age so my 12yr old could go with the youngest." (Coalfields)

"It would be good to have more activities offered for the 6 week holiday so that my children would not get stuck without much to do." (Coalfields)

"Sports teams, e.g. football clubs would help to bring the local children together and keep them occupied." (Washington)

"I think the youth provision is important because the youth centres rely a lot on volunteers. We have been talking about raising money off our own backs to hire a youth worker to work with the kids. There is a lot of good will out there that could be harnessed by local communities, just a little extra support in getting youth provision sorted out." (Washington)

Lack of childminders:

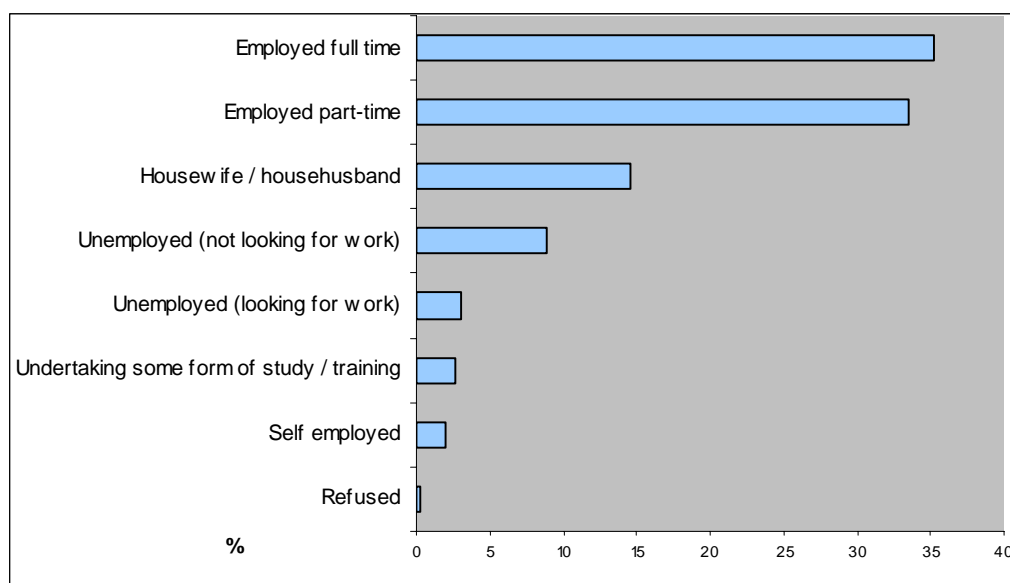
"It would be better if there were more childminders about the fact is that there isn't many at all, and if it wasn't for my friends and family being there I would have real problems." (Central)

"I think grandparents should get an allowance if they take care of children because at the moment my parents spend a lot of time looking after mine but they don't receive anything for their work." (Washington)

6.10 Employment, study and training

One aim of the research was to try and establish whether parents had experienced any difficulties with employment or training because of childcare issues. Respondents were therefore asked about their **main** activity.

As shown in fig 6.10.1, just over a third of respondents were employed full-time (35.2%) whilst 33.5% were working part-time. A further 14.5% said their main activity was being a housewife/husband whilst 8.8% were currently unemployed but not looking for work; 3.1% were unemployed but looking for work. A small number of respondents said their main activity was studying or training (2.6%); 2.0% were self-employed.

Figure 6.10.1 Employment status of respondents

Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 400

Further analysis of the data reveals that parents of children with SEN / disabilities were significantly more likely to state their main activity was; housewife / househusband, unemployed not looking for work, or undertaking study or training, compared to those without children with SEN / disabilities. Parents aged 16-24 were also significantly more likely to say their main activity was being a housewife / husband compared to older parents aged 25-44.

Parents who weren't currently working were also asked whether they intend to enter employment in the next three years. In total 51.5% (68 people) said they did, of these 28 (41.2%) said that this would mean they would require formal childcare, 14.7% were unsure whilst 44.1% said they wouldn't require formal childcare. This indicates that despite intending to enter employment, a majority of parents plan to do this without using formal childcare provision.

Data from Jobcentre Plus regarding currently economically inactive parents suggests that the main perceived barrier to work is having no early morning/ evening or weekend childcare (approximately a third of parents give this reason each quarter). The second most prevalent barrier for these parents is cost with approximately 25% of parents citing this barrier to employment each quarter.

Further analysis suggests that single parents who are not currently working are more likely to plan to enter work in the next three years compared to their married / co-habiting counterparts (in total, 69.7% of unemployed single parents plan to start work compared to 45.5% of unemployed married / co-habiting parents).

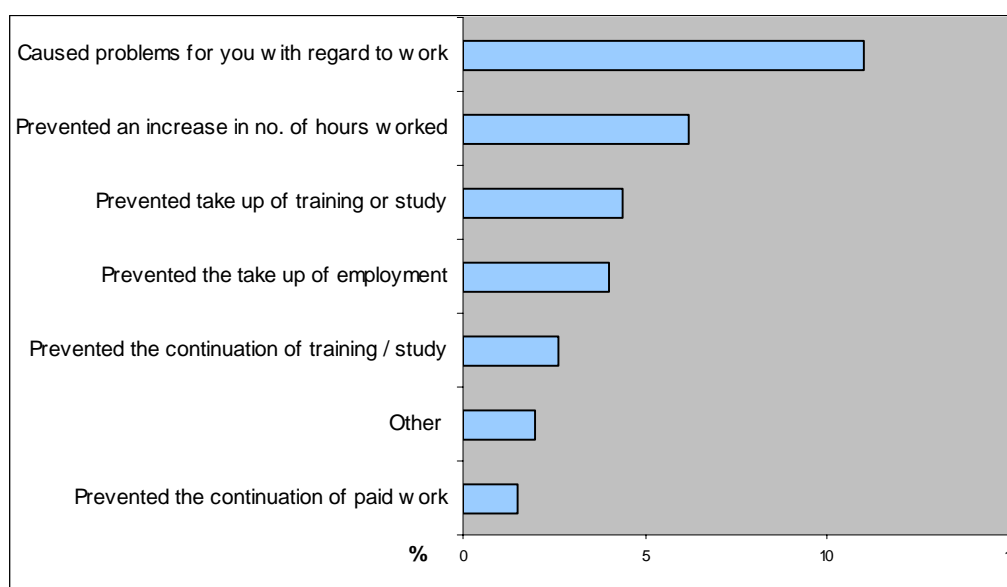
Over half of the parents with children with SEN / disabilities who don't currently work, also don't plan to / are unsure whether they will work in the next three years (61.5%), this compares with 45.3% of unemployed parents who do not have children with any Special Educational Needs or disabilities.

All respondents were then asked if issues surrounding childcare had affected their own or their partner's (if applicable) employment status / prospects as well as their ability to undertake training. Eight out of ten respondents said they hadn't experienced any issues in relation to childcare (81.7%).

Although not a statistically significant difference, parents of children with SEN / disabilities and single parents were less likely to state they hadn't faced any issues compared to those without children with SEN / disabilities and married / co-habiting parents.

As shown in the chart below, (fig 6.10.2) just over one in ten parents said they had experienced problems with regards to work (11.0%). Childcare issues had prevented an increase in the number of hours worked for 6.2%, whilst 4.4% said they had prevented the take up of training / study; 4.0% said they had prevented the take-up of employment. 12 parents said childcare issues had prevented them from continuing to train (2.6%); seven parents each said issues had prevented them from continuing to work (1.5%).

Figure 6.10.2 Extent to which lack of childcare has hindered employment/study or training opportunities



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454. N.B: This is not a mutually exclusive response; therefore figures may not add up to 100%

Comments made about other problems surrounding childcare include difficulties during school holidays and when children are ill. Another problem mentioned was that childcare is expensive.

Respondents were also invited to give any other comments they wished to make about combining work / study with childcare responsibilities. A full list of responses can be found in the appendices. Many comments highlighted the fact that parents simply work and plan around their children to try and avoid any issues. However some comments highlighted that parents can struggle to combine work and study when children are ill or if there is an issue with the provider or school meaning they can't go to work.

"When there's a sudden problem, like when the heating goes at school, then I've got a problem, I think there should be more emergency childcare, a nursery that's Ofsted approved that you can take your child to at short notice"

"The only thing that has cropped up is term time illness. This cannot be avoided though it doesn't normally happen until you are about to walk out the door, then its just all hands to the deck and you do the best that you can do"

"My wife works flexi time so she can get away with it but it still does cause a few problems"

"I've taken time off work to look after my child if he's poorly although I wouldn't want him/her to be anywhere apart from home in these circumstances"

"It's a major pain in the backside for alternative childcare at short notice."

"Because he is autistic if he kicks off then either my wife or myself have to leave where ever we are to tend to him. In the past this has caused problems as work because sometimes we do have to just leave and be with him till it is all sorted out."

"My job has very flexible hours so it's not a problem"

Parents also discussed the difficulty of sourcing evening or holiday childcare. Some respondents felt that the cost of childcare was too high to make them want to go out to work.

"The main problems are when they're on school holidays"

"It stopped me from getting a job, as I couldn't find a carer who started earlier enough."

"Just because I work unsociable hours, you don't want to have to rely on family all the time, so if there was some later provision in the area that might work out better"

"My wife cannot go to work because the cost of childcare is too much, which is a shame as she would really like to go back to work. More free childcare is needed in the Sunderland area as it is a shame for those who cannot afford the costs"

"Its not so much that childcare isn't there, although I don't think that the school they attend has breakfast and after school clubs, it's that they just won't go!"

"I wanted to do a foundation degree but I'm not able to because I can't get anyone to look after my daughter. I don't think any of the colleges offer any evening childcare at all."

6.11 Childcare Information and Tax credits

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of, had used or qualified for tax credits and other relevant schemes and information sources.

In total 96.3% of respondents were aware of Child Tax Credits with 70.9% of these people benefiting from them.

A majority were also aware of the Working Tax Credit (92.7%), 40.4% of these respondents had qualified for the tax credit.

Two fifths of respondents were aware of the Nursery Education Grant / Free Entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds (41.0%), 11.3% of these parents had qualified for this.

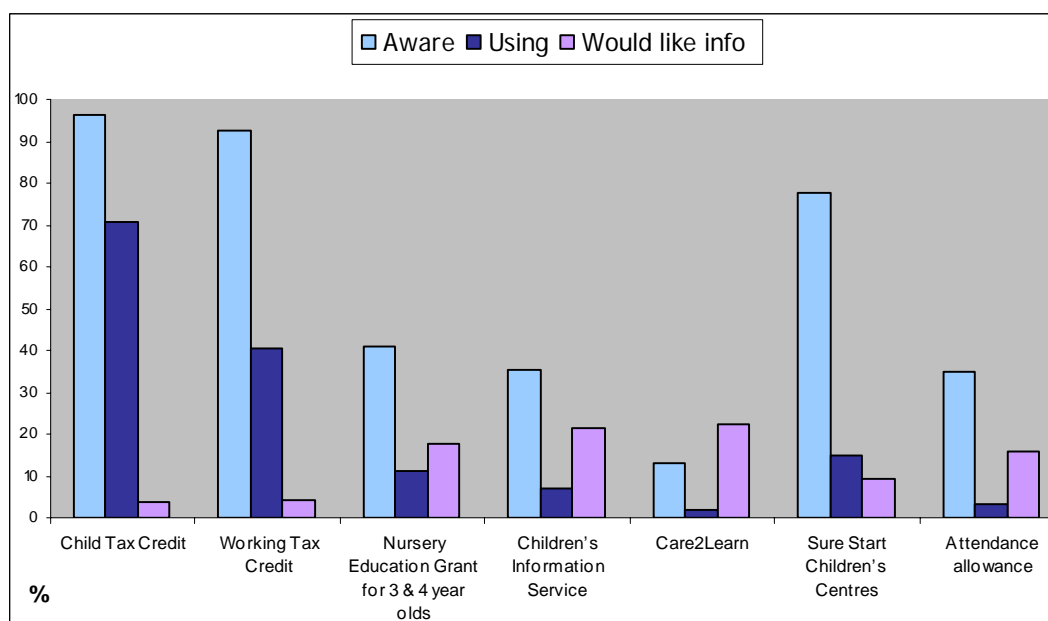
Just over a third of all respondents were aware of the local Children's Information Service (35.5%), 6.8% (11 people) reported using this service. However many parents did express interest in hearing more about this service (21.6%).

Just 13.0% (59 respondents) were aware of the Care2Learn programme, however only 3 of these were in the youngest and relevant age category of 16-24. One person was using Care2Learn although just over a fifth of respondents would welcome more information on it (22.2%).

Children's Centres were known to 77.8% of respondents. As might be expected, those with 0-4 year old children were significantly more likely to be aware of these centres compared to those with 5-16 year olds. Those living in the Coalfields cluster were significantly more likely to be aware of Children's Centres compared to those living in the South East cluster area. In total, 15.0% of those aware of these centres were using them.

Just over a third of respondents were aware of Attendance Allowance (35.0%), with just 3.1% of these parents accessing it.

Figure 6.11.1 Awareness and use of tax credits and CIS



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454 for awareness, bases for 'use' = Child Tax Credit: 437; Working Tax Credit: 421; Nursery Education Grant: 186; CIS: 161; Care2Learn: 59; Children's Centres: 353 and Attendance Allowance: 159.

Further analysis of use of CTC and WFTC cross referenced by household income shows that, overall families with household incomes of less than £30,000 were much more likely to be obtaining Child Tax Credits and Working Families Tax Credits than those on higher incomes as illustrated below.

Figure 6.11.2 Extent to which parents are obtaining CTC and WFTC by income band

Income Band	Obtaining CTC %	Obtaining WFTC %
£0-£14,000	16.5	22.9
£14,001 - £20,000	17.7	21.2
£20,001 – £30,000	24.6	12.4
£30,001 - £40,000	10.3	9.4
£40,000 +	4.8	2.9

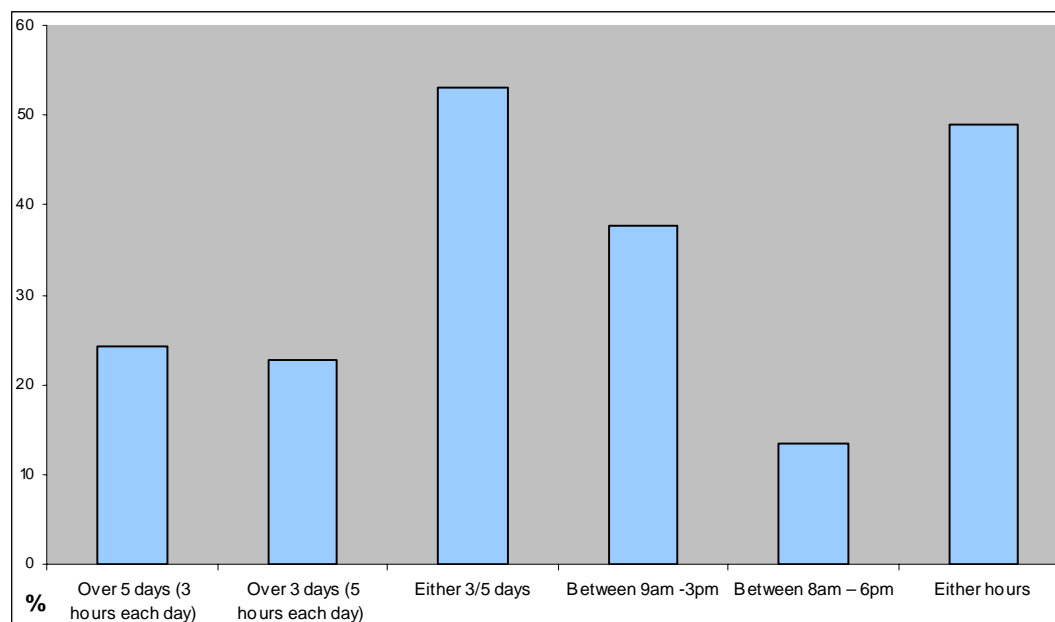
Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007. Bases: for 'use' = Child Tax Credit: 437; Working Tax Credit:

Sunderland is a pilot area for offering increased / flexible Nursery Education Grant. As such parents of 0-4 year olds were informed of the plans to provide 15 hours of Free Entitlement by 2008 and asked how they would most like to use it. As shown in the chart below (fig 6.11.3), in terms of the number of days free entitlement is provided, 24.3% would like to see it available over five days (for three hours a day) whilst 22.8% would prefer it to be spread over three days, for five hours a day. Over half of the parents didn't have a particular preference for three or five days (53.0%).

In terms of the times of day parents would prefer to use their free entitlement, half didn't have a particular preference (49.0%) whilst 37.6% would prefer to use it in what would be school hours

between 9am and 3pm. Fewer people wanted it over a longer period of time, between 8am and 6pm (13.4%).

Figure 6.11.3 How parents would prefer to use Free Entitlement



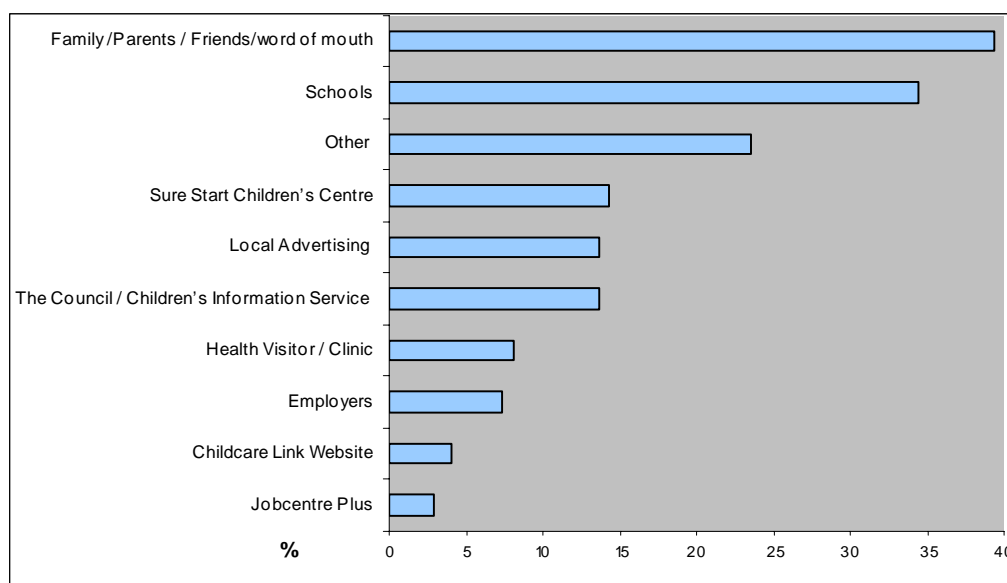
Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 202

Parents were also asked where they get information about childcare and play and youth facilities from. As shown in the chart below (fig 6.11.4), the largest proportion of parents / carers use informal means of finding out about childcare, namely family, parents and friends / word of mouth (39.4%). The data suggests that parents of children with SEN / disabilities are significantly less likely to receive information on childcare and provision through informal means like this compared to other parents (19.1% compared to 40.0%).

A third of parents get their information through schools (34.4%) whilst 14.3% get it through Children's Centres; 13.7% mentioned local advertising. A further 13.7% get their information from the council / Children's Information Service (25.8%) whilst 8.1% get their information through health visitors / clinics.

The options least likely to be mentioned as a means of finding out about childcare and related information were employers (7.3%); the Childcare Link website (4.3%) and Jobcentre Plus (2.9% - with younger parents more likely to find information through JCP than older parents).

Figure 6.11.4 Where parents obtain information about childcare and play / youth facilities



Source: Sunderland Parental Demand Survey 2007, Base = 454

N.B.: Not a mutually exclusive response question therefore figures may not add up to 100%

A further 23.6% of parents stated that they find out childcare and play / youth information through 'other' sources. Other information sources included the internet; social services; other childcare and sessional-care providers; local libraries and the Bunny Hill Centre.

7. Key Findings – Focus Groups

7.1 Parents

Introduction

In total 25 parents were consulted through five focus groups in January and February 2007. These groups were held in schools, children's centres and the premises of organisations offering support to parents.

Some of the parents had completed a telephone survey and had indicated that they would be happy to participate in a focus group, and others were recruited through support groups they already attended.

The parent's children were aged between newborn and 18 years old. The majority of children were 0-5 years old. All but one of the focus group participants was female. Within these groups there was one mother whose child had communication problems.

Additionally, one discussion group was held specifically with parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and one specifically with BME parents. In total, 8 parents contributed to the discussion about SEN and 6 parents about specific issues relating to BME parents.

The following sections comment on findings from the parent groups first then more specific findings from parents of children with SEN are commented upon at the end of each section.

Past and current use of childcare

Parents had used a variety of childcare in the past. These included:

- Private Nursery
- Out of school clubs (before and after school)
- Activity sessions/ play groups with their children

The parents tended to use a combination of the above for the different children they had. In addition they combined this with informal provision from family and friends. Some parents also commented that they had used Sure Start when undertaking training and babysitters should they need childcare on an evening - these babysitters were normally family friends.

The BME parents commented that they would only use close family or friends. This was for a combination of reasons including not knowing where to get information on childcare or not trusting the quality of care provided.

Childcare for some of the parents was more about encouraging their children to take part in extra-curricular activities to develop their personal and social skills.

The parents of children with SEN explained that they were not using childcare at the moment. One parent explained that she received direct payments for childcare support and with this she receives support from a worker eight hours a week and during the holidays. However, this does not mean

that she can leave the child with the support worker because her child needs two people looking after them at any one time.

"I don't get free time... I have to be there all the time"

Other parents of children with SEN have 'Leisure Link', where a support worker can take the children while she has a break. However, the support worker was not wholly reliable and sometimes for example missed or changed appointments. As her child is an emotional child this can have a real impact on her and leaves her upset. Comments on some of the support services for parents of children with SEN included:

"They fit your child in to fit them"

"You can't rely on it not one bit. She will call on a Wednesday and say I can take her on Friday well that's no good to me and it is certainly no good to my daughter... And just taking her to soft play, I can do that myself... it supposed to be to access things that we can't do as a family"

"It wasn't worth it because by the time she gets settled... then she will ring you and say I think he needs a new nappy on and I would have just got somewhere [with the other children] and I would have to turn around and come back... I just had to stop it"

Awareness of Children's Centres

The majority of parents were aware of Sure Start and some parents had volunteered for them. Other parents were aware but explained that their children were too old to access Sure Start services. Some parents of children with SEN commented that they had tried to access Sure Start facilities but had been told that it would not be possible. One parent made the following comment however it must be noted that this parent's child was age seven:

"They won't have anything to do with my little lad... they won't let us go basically"

The main issue for these parents was that these children may be over the age of five but physically or mentally they may have the ability of a younger child so feel they should be able to access Children's Centres even if there are no younger siblings. It is acknowledged that older children won't generally be turned away from Children's Centres if a younger sibling is also attending.

Impressions of Childcare in Sunderland

The groups were asked to comment on childcare provision in Sunderland within six main themes. Generally, the following findings were discussed within the groups. The parents of children with SEN felt that they could not comment on their overall impressions of childcare in Sunderland because they had so little experience of it.

Quality of care

The parents felt that the quality of care received by their children depended on the cost of childcare, for example more expensive nurseries would pay better attention to their children and therefore the quality of care would be better. Additionally the parents felt that the quality of care was also linked

to the experience of staff in the childcare setting and that this normally related back to price. One group in particular commented that the quality of care for younger children, aged below four, was not of a high enough standard in Sunderland. This is the perception of some parents who don't currently use formal childcare, the telephone survey however found that a large majority of those actually using provision are satisfied with the quality of care provided.

Cost

The majority of parents felt that childcare in Sunderland was too expensive. One parent gave an example of the cost she incurs by working:

"I have my two in [private nursery] and it's £30 a day each and if they are in certain time in the morning it's an extra £3 and if you don't pick them up 'til a certain time that's another £3 on top so that's £36 for each child... My friend just lives down the road and she pays £10 a day because they are two years old"

Hours of opening

There were differing needs regarding the opening hours of childcare and supervised provision and therefore different groups had different opinions. Some parents felt that out of school activities, such as Scouts, could run too late meaning that their children could not get into bed early enough.

However, some parents felt that supervised provision for older young people closed too early meaning that young people were sent out onto the streets in the evening when they were more likely to get bored and potentially cause trouble.

Additionally some parents commented that breakfast clubs did not start early enough to give them time to get to work.

Premises and / or environment

Two groups of parents commented on the premises and environment in which their children were taken care of. The women praised Sure Start and the Women's Centre.

Staff

Two groups of parents praised the staff which worked with their children; again these were Sure Start and the Women's Centre. However, comments were made regarding the experience and age of the staff who looked after children. Parents generally felt that younger staff would not have sufficient experience of taking care of children; some felt that this was because they did not have children themselves. Additionally, some groups felt that it was questionable as to how much staff could be trusted with their children in general.

Availability of places

The availability of childcare places was criticised by parents. Some of the parents mentioned they had been on waiting lists for nursery places with Children's Centres but by the time a place had become available they were either no longer seeking childcare or were not able to get a job and therefore did not need the childcare provision. Vacancy data however suggests that such waiting

lists do not exist and Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group have developed a project to identify solutions to issues for particular age groups.

One parent commented that she had needed to return to work after her baby was born for financial reasons however as she had one baby aged 6 months and another under two she had felt that her options were limited as only private nurseries would take children so young. She stated:

"There are very little nurseries that take children under the age of two"

Other parents had been on waiting lists for out of school provision. Additionally, one parent explained that she had been unable to get provision for her six year old child in Sunderland and therefore accessed out of school opportunities for her child in Gateshead, through family which lived there.

Improvements for specific age groups

Parents were asked to comment on improvements which could be made for specific age groups in Sunderland.

0-4 year olds – Nursery and pre-school

It was felt that there were not enough affordable places for 0-4 year olds in Sunderland. Private nurseries were particularly commented upon.

Parents of children with SEN stated that they felt that there was not enough provision and support for them on weekends and during school holidays. Additionally these parents commented that private organisations, such as soft play areas housed within pubs, for example Wacky Warehouses, were able to make a profit out of providing access for children with SEN. They were therefore unhappy that the council could not provide this for them at local swimming pools or activity centres. One parent stated:

"[Chain pubs with soft play areas] have 'special friends' at the weekend. Why can't Sunderland council do the same? On a week day they could have special friends at the pool... that's a business; they make money why can't the council do that?"

5-11 year olds – Out of school provision

The parents commented that they would like cheaper out of school clubs at their schools. One parent commented:

"I mean its £3 an hour, that soon builds up if you have more than one"

Parents also felt that it would be a good idea to have youth clubs for the younger children they had (5-11 years old). It was felt that this age group can miss out on a lot of opportunities for leisure. For example one parent explained that she could not let her children go and play on the park because there was no park close by and any that she could get to she did not trust to be safe for the children to play on because of vandalism and both drug and alcohol paraphernalia.

Parents also felt that out of school clubs should finish later in the day than they already do. One parent however commented that at the school her child goes to the out of school club is cheap but only lasts an hour after school which, although she understood this was better than nothing, it was not enough time for her to get the things done that she needed to before she needed to pick her child up.

"They are only an hour after school. I mean it's only a pound which is good... They give you little time"

11-19 – Supervised youth provision

Interestingly all groups commented that there needed to be more things for young people over the age of 11 to do. They felt that this was particularly important on an evening when young people would normally hang around on the streets or go into town, where the perception was that it was dangerous for them. It was explained that some parents were trying to stop their children from going into town and drinking in pubs and clubs as long as they could, however this was proving difficult because there was nothing for their children to do.

Suggested improvements from parents included having a music venue which was cheap but where young people could hang around with their friends in a safe, warm and alcohol free venue. A youth café where young people could meet was also suggested.

The parents of children with SEN commented that it was difficult to find provision for older young people with SEN. One carer commented that she looked after her 14 year old brother:

"They provide nurseries and things out of school up to age 11 or 12 but then they'll not take them after that... In the end what has happened with me is I'm the main carer for my brother... we can't leave him in the house alone so I can't go out to work... social services can't even help me"

One parent was accessing a Scouts group in Gateshead for their child as she felt that the option available in Sunderland wasn't suitable as it finished too late at night.

Parents also commented that it was as a result of young people hanging around in parks that younger children suffered as they could not play on the equipment provided. They therefore felt that giving the older young people something to do would help the younger children.

Informal Childcare

The majority of parents used some form of informal childcare. This was mostly in the form of friends and family helping them either at short notice, when something came up or when they had an appointment that they needed to make. One parent relied on her son to take care of her other children when she was working on an evening. However her son was starting work and would no longer be able to do this, she did not know what she would do at this time.

The parents of children with SEN used informal childcare the most. They explained that they had to depend on their family and their friends as their children often had complex needs that would not be understood by formal childcare providers. Additionally, they also used each other from the group

to help as they understand the issues they face and have the experience of taking care of children with SEN and therefore they could trust them.

The reasons for using informal childcare included that it was more convenient as they would not have to book sessions well in advance and they could trust their family and friends to take care of their children more than formal childcare providers.

Generally parents were unsure how much they could trust formal childcare providers, for example one parent commented that on the first day in a private nursery one of their children had fallen off the slide and damaged their ear. It was felt that someone should have been watching.

Additionally, it was commented that it was generally younger girls that looked after their children. This made the parents wary as it was felt that they did not have enough experience of looking after children. They felt that they would feel much more confident leaving their child at a venue which was run by older ladies where younger staff just supported and learnt on the job before they had much responsibility for the children.

Parents also explained that they could not afford to pay for formal childcare. It was also noted that family and friends were more flexible and able to meet the needs of their children.

However the majority of parents said that they would seek help from friends and family because they did not know what else was available to them.

Reasons for not wanting to use formal childcare were similar for the parents of children with SEN mainly that they did not trust people to look after their children.

Some parents however commented on the additional strain this could put on the family members they were depending on. One parent stated:

"My daughter looks after her but I don't want it to affect her going to college"

One parent also commented that she felt guilty asking her family to pick her children up at short notice and she would therefore welcome the opportunity to have a flexible childcare service.

When asked if they would prefer informal or formal childcare parents said they would like a combination. This was because they would like to have confidence that their children were being looked after by the family and friends and that this was cheaper however they valued the social skills their children could develop while playing with other children and getting to know other adults.

Interestingly, many parents commented that they would like to be able to pay their family and friends to look after their children. One parent explained that grandparents had offered to take early retirement to look after the children if they could be paid minimum wage for it. It was felt that this would be good for the grandparent as they were getting paid, good for the parent as they trusted the childcare provider and good for the child as they would be happier than being moved between different childcare providers.

Location of Childcare

The distance parents had to travel for their childcare varied greatly. For some there was a Children's Centre close to their home which they could walk to. For others it was a 10/ 15 minute drive to their closest provision, that they were aware of.

Two parents mentioned accessing provision in Gateshead.

Another parent commented:

"It's right out of the way from where I live and work so I have to drag them out of bed take them all the way on the bus, then me go to work and make sure I'm not late... it's the same on the way back. I have to leave early so I don't miss the bus because if I'm late it's an extra £3"

Parents of children with SEN felt that there were disparities between what was available in Sunderland and in Washington. It was noted that there were more special schools in Washington but less childcare and more things to do in Sunderland. One parent of a child with SEN commented:

"Why as parents do we always have to trek so far to do something... it would be nice to have a proper venue"

There were issues highlighted by parents about transportation to and from childcare provision. The BME parents in particular commented that bus drivers were often rude to them and that prices to the same destination could change every time they got on the bus. Additionally, as the buses can only take two buggies or wheel chairs bus drivers would often just drive past them if they were already at capacity. This affects their children as they have to stay out in the cold longer and can get upset. These parents also explained that they don't use a taxi as it is normally too expensive. They commented that their travel experience would be better if they were able to access cheaper taxis or a dependable bus service which would allow more than two pushchairs.

Some parents also explained that their children were affected as they had to be dragged out of bed at unusual times. For example one parent works as a nurse and has to work shift patterns. On these evenings she will leave her child with grandparents but has to collect her late on an evening rather than in the morning so the child has to be taken across town at 11pm half asleep.

Timing of childcare

Regarding the timing of childcare the parents felt that the most pressing issue was provision during school holidays. Parents explained that if they were seeking provision they needed to plan ahead and get in early.

Some parents also found it difficult to get time off work during the school holidays and explained that they had to fight to get time when the holidays first came out; this meant that some parents were not able to take their holidays when they wanted.

Other parents commented that they found finding employment difficult because most jobs would not let them start after 9am (taking the children to school) and finish before 3pm (picking the children up from school). They would therefore like more morning and early afternoon provision to encourage them to seek employment.

Parents of children with SEN made the same comments as above with additional pressures placed on them during the school holidays.

"They need something additional to the school day... like learning life skills"

"The six weeks holidays are a nightmare"

Barriers to accessing childcare

Cost was highlighted as the main barrier to childcare provision in Sunderland. It was felt that it was too expensive and issues such as paying a week in advance, even if you child was ill or would not be attending the following week they still had to pay for it.

Additionally, it was also felt by some parents that being able to trust the staff that worked with their children could be a barrier to them accessing childcare.

Willing to Pay

Parents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for childcare. One parent explained that she would like to pay £5 per half day and would consider this to be a good deal. It was suggested that family be paid minimum wage but generally parents commented that they can pay up to £36 per day per child and that anything would be better than this. A parent of a child with SEN commented that it would have to be cheaper than £15 per day for her to be able to afford it.

"It's £15 a day... I have no skills so I'm not going to earn enough to pay that kind of money"

Employment

The majority of parents were already working or seeking employment. A minority of parents stated that they did not want to work and instead wanted to be full time carers of their children.

Of those that were already working some worked shifts and therefore their partners or family and friends were needed to assist with their childcare needs.

Some parents highlighted that they had understanding employers who were flexible about the core hours they worked and understood if children were ill. A small number of parents were working two different jobs because of their childcare needs. This meant that they had to work in unskilled positions such as cleaners, but they wanted (and needed) to work for the additional money.

The BME parents faced additional pressures relating to gaining employment. All stated they would like to work and a small number faced problems as English was not their first language and they felt that they would need to improve this before they started seeking employment. Some women in this group discussed how their family would not want them to work and would expect them to stay at home and look after the children.

The issue was raised by some that parents are treated as second class citizens by employers. They also noted that there were particular problems when it came to leaving work early because their child was ill and colleagues thinking they just wanted to leave for no reason.

One parent was so in need of returning to work to keep her job and for financial reasons that she had returned when her youngest child was only three months old. This had financial ramifications as the childcare costs for babies aged under six months are far higher than those for children aged over two years old.

Some parents commented that when they did find employment they did not know where the children would be taken care of. The quality of care was again raised and that this had meant they had not put as much effort into seeking employment as they could have done.

One parent of a child with SEN explained that she had been to the job centre several times and felt pressurised into finding work. However, they had stated that they could not help with childcare for disabled children. This had left the parent feeling angry and confused.

These parents also explained that the needs of their children were so great that they would be called away from work on a regular basis and they felt that potential employers would not understand this. Additionally, many of their children needed to spend extended periods of time in hospital and it was felt that employers could not accommodate this.

Training

Within one group all parents were undertaking some kind of training with the aim of gaining employment through this. The parents were about to start training as classroom/ teaching assistants. They felt that they had good skills to do this and that it would easily fit around their childcare needs as they could still take their children to school and pick them up.

One parent of a child with SEN had tried to go on a massage course with Sure Start as her child required intensive physiotherapy and she felt that if she could do massage it would help. However she was told by Sure Start that her child was too old at 7 even though she was the equivalent of a 3 year old. The child had suffered as a result of this and the parent was angry as she did not feel supported. This parent commented:

"I wouldn't mind going to college... and getting my own life but I was told that Sure Start was only 0-5 and we don't take disabled children anyway... they were so close to me, they were on my doorstep"

This highlights the need for Children's Centres to ensure they signpost such families on to other agencies and organisations that they could access.

Communication

The parents were asked where they got information about childcare. The most reoccurring answer was through word of mouth. Some parents also got information from the following sources:

- The Sunderland Echo
- Information children bring home from school
- Sunrise (Sunderland free magazine)
- Library
- Internet
- From support workers at special schools

The Sunrise publication was only cited by one group and within this group not all the parents received it through the post. It was also noted that this gave information about activities which would be taking place during school holidays and did not necessarily give information about regular childcare providers. The Sunderland Echo was cited as good for activities during school holidays but not all people bought the newspaper.

Some parents commented on the out of school information they received through their child from schools.

"They give you little leaflets with all the activities on after school and ask you which activity would your child like to do... she decided she wanted to do them all"

It was generally felt that information to parents from the council was poor, not only about childcare provision but extending to youth provision as well. Discounts and special offers which were available to parents weren't communicated to them. Parents felt that the council would have all their contact details and should tell them what is available.

"Why doesn't the civic centre say... why don't we tell them parents the council gives these cards [Activate Pass for older children] to get discounts... They don't help you. You have to find out about things through word of mouth"

It was also felt that communication through children at school would ensure that parents were able to find out what was available to their children out of school hours and during school holiday times.

The parents of children with SEN explained that they felt isolated and were not given enough information about what was available to them. Some parents suggested that this was because there were never enough places for children with SEN and therefore you had to know other parents to find out about things.

"You are isolated as a parent... you don't get information if you are a parent of a child with special needs, you have to ask for everything"

Another parent explained that she had been looking at provision for children with SEN in other areas of the country and had found that Sunderland did either not have the same opportunities for children with SEN or did not communicate them well enough to parents. She stated:

“If you go on the internet you can see all these discounts for Doncaster, Liverpool and all these other councils and where is Sunderland. What is there in Sunderland?”

Children’s Information Service (CIS)

Parents were asked if they were aware of CIS and if they had ever accessed them for advice or information. Positively the majority of parents had heard of CIS, less positively the majority of these parents were not aware of what they did or how to access them.

Some parents thought that they were based in a library but had never seen them there while others had seen posters and flyers.

Generally, the parents would not approach CIS for advice or information about their childcare needs.

Working Family Tax Credit (WFTC)

The majority of parents had heard about WFTC or accessed them. Generally parents felt that the application process was complicated. Although some parents had received their credits relatively simply others had received over payments and were struggling to pay these back.

During the discussion the parents of children with SEN discovered that different parents were receiving different benefits. One parent commented:

“They shouldn’t have one rule for one and one for another, I think that’s disgusting”

Help from the Government

Overall parents felt that they should receive more assistance from the Government to help them with their childcare needs. They felt that it would be a great support to them if families could be paid for looking after children and that there should be more money made available to parents in the form of childcare so they could not only go to work but also have a break and help them become better, more relaxed parents. The parents of children with SEN particularly felt that they did not get the support they needed from the government. One parent stated:

“Give our children the same opportunities that every other child has”

The Future

In the future parents would like to see more financial support to parents who need childcare as this would encourage them to seek and keep employment.

Parents would also like more information about what is available to them. This was particularly true for the BME parents. They explained that when they had arrived in the city they had only been given a map of Sunderland but no information about what was available to them.

The parents of children with SEN simply stated:

“Just tell us where we can go”

Specific BME questions

The BME parents were asked if they faced any additional pressures because of specific cultural or religious reasons, such as festivals. Positively, the parents felt that currently their needs are taken care of. However, the parents only accessed any childcare when they had specific training needs at Sunderland Women’s centre. They were not sure if any other formal provision would understand their needs. Positively however they did not perceive this to be a barrier to childcare provision.

Although English was a second language the parents either spoke good English or were still learning. Language was not felt to be a barrier for their children.

The parents explained that the main barrier they faced with regards to childcare was that they did not know what was available to them and therefore more information about childcare provision in Sunderland would be helpful.

Generally, BME parents would be more likely to ask family for help with their childcare needs. However some members of the group did not have any family around them, these parents would be more likely to not seek any childcare provision at all and be full time parents. Others would seek help from friends or neighbours while others were left to face the problems of childcare alone.

Specific SEN questions

Parents of children with SEN were asked some additional questions. Initially, information was sought regarding the number of children the parents had and what their additional needs were. The needs the children had included:

- Autism
- ADHD - medicated
- Communication problems
- Williams syndrome
- Child profoundly deaf
- Unstable epilepsy
- Developmental issues with complex needs
- Epilepsy

Only one parent in this group had only one child. The other parents had between two and six children. The parents of larger families depended on siblings to help take care of the child with SEN. This made the parents feel guilty as they felt that they were having an impact on the independence of their other children. Additionally, the parents felt that on occasions their other children suffered because of the lack of relevant and reliable childcare. Parents explained that they wanted to take all their children on outing and trips however this could become more stressful for the whole family and therefore the other children suffered as trips were not normally taken.

However parents did go out as a group with all their children where parents could rely on the support of each other to help with their children.

As stated above parents noted that they did not always want to leave their children with other people but that they wanted to go somewhere with all their family where it was easy to access leisure provision for the whole family.

"I don't want to dump them on someone. I just want to take them somewhere where they are accepted and seen as normal"

"We just want to be able to enjoy things as a family"

"I feel that as she gets older she will miss out because we restrict ourselves as to where we go, I mean we don't go out for meals... she will suffer"

The parents also commented that their needs are not always taken into consideration. It was explained that they had been on a day out and had not been able to find a place to change their children's nappies and clothing as the toilets were too small for a child with SEN, therefore they were forced to change them in the car park at the venue. This was seen as a normal occurrence for these parents.

It was noted that for some of the more popular activities there were waiting lists for children with SEN. For example a centre in Washington runs horse riding sessions which some of the parents felt their children would benefit from in terms of posture and muscle development and confidence, however the waiting lists had been too long.

Positively, parents praised the special schools that their children attended. It was noted that the staff at the schools were understanding and made time to listen to their concerns. Comments about the staff at special schools included:

"They are very supportive there".

"They are very approachable if you need to talk to them"

"They run a nurturing group for parents and the staff take turns... to go through all the things that you need, like coping skills, and they really do understand and if you have a problem they will really try and help"

It was noted that their children enjoyed attending their school. Some parents had tried to have their children in mainstream schools and although the children had been ok for a period of time parents eventually decided to enrol them in special school because they did not receive the support required from the mainstream schools and teachers did not have time to talk to them at the end of each day.

Less positively, the parents commented that special schools tended not to have any out of school clubs or activities and therefore they would struggle to find employment which could work around the working day. Additionally, and most importantly there was no provision at the school during school holidays. Despite this perception all three special schools for primary-aged children have holiday provision available which raises the question of how well services for children and young people with SEN are marketed.

The parents felt that the biggest improvements needed in the future would be to have more help with cost and transport and more information about what was available to them. Regarding transport parents explained that it was a very stressful experience for parents using public transport. Some parents were aware that there was a taxi service (Taxi Link) which was £1 a journey for parents of SEN. However this was not always as available or reliable. It was also noted that priority was given to older members of the community and therefore they may not bother trying the service, also some of the parents had not been aware of this service until the discussion group.

The parents commented that they would not always know where to go for information about what was available to them and therefore they would like to see some kind of directory made available.

Parents also felt that there should be more education about disabled children in schools and for other parents so that they did not feel judged and criticised whenever they went out.

7.2 Young People Focus Groups

Introduction

In total 19 young people were consulted through two focus groups in January and February 2007. Eight of these were male respondents and eleven were female. The young people were all aged between 13 and 16 years old. The young people were all part of forums or youth councils and therefore were asked to comment on behalf of all the young people they represented. They were asked about supervised provision for young people in Sunderland.

Currently

The young people currently accessed a variety of organised activities. These included:

- Youth clubs
- Sports groups
- Youth forum
- NERD SYP
- NEOP
- National Youth parliament
- Swimming
- Groups after school including
 - Sports
 - Music
 - Councils

The majority of services accessed were either council or youth service led. Additionally, schools tended to provide more sporting activities for young people which were supervised by PE teachers or members of staff from the school. There was however some independent sports groups such as martial arts; however these were not specifically run for young people.

Young people were most likely to have found out about activities for young people from their friends. They also felt that youth workers were a key source of information about what was going on.

As stated above the young people attended youth forums. One young person stated:

"We represent young people in Washington"

There were a range of activities that the young people undertook when they did access supervised provision. These included:

- Organising residentials
- Arts projects such as graffiti workshops
- *"We talk about our problems"*

The young people liked attending sessions that although had a focus, such as art based projects, were not formal in nature and let them spend time with their friends in an informal setting.

The young people were asked what would stop them from attending a session. Projects which did involve school were praised by some young people. For example one specific example was given of an arts project which was organised by a teacher but they did not feel that it was directly related to school. This project had resulted in an exhibition and some of the young people had been in the local newspaper. This had helped increase their confidence and made them proud of their achievements.

Some young people liked working towards goals and feeling a sense of achievement once they had completed it, whereas others simply wanted a venue to spend time with their friends at.

Reasons for not attending

Reasons for not attending groups were mainly focused on the type of young people that attended those sessions. For example one young person stated:

“If you're not a chav they don't make you welcome”

It was also noted that large groups of young people hanging around outside venues where activities were happening might stop them from going.

“Like when you go to [the centre] there are loads hanging around there and they cause bother”

They felt that these young people also had the right to do what they wanted and that if this was simply hanging around with their friends they should be able to do that. They did however feel that they could go somewhere where they would not be intimidating:

“When there are large groups of them they could move them somewhere where they are not intimidating”

Some young people did not like to attend activities organised by the school one commented:

“I just want to get out of there as soon as possible”

It was also noted that they had attended different supervised provision and that if it was the same thing every week it could get boring.

“I think that it is the same thing just in different places and it can get a bit boring”

Other things that would stop young people going to provision included:

- Travel
- Expensive clubs
- Not knowing when or where it was on
- Too busy doing other things
- Too repetitive
- Too controlled like school
- Aimed at a much younger age group than them

H-Diagram

The young people were asked to complete an H-Diagram. This involved each young person having sticky notes and writing each idea down and placing them under the categories; 'what are the best things about supervised provision', 'what are the worst things' and 'what would make it better' for you. The following table demonstrates all the responses given by young people. They have been arranged by popularity of comment.

Best things about supervised provision	Worst things about supervised provision	Things that would make supervised provision better
Safe warm place to go and socialise and spend time out	I wouldn't go to certain places where certain people go	More things to do at youth clubs
Meeting new people of a similar age	Charvers	More resources
New friends	Gangs	More things to do
Meet new people	Out of comfort zone – so less confident and less likely to fit in at first	More things to do
Good way to socialise	Doesn't interest everyone	More things to do so it doesn't get boring
Meeting new people and having fun	Charvers	Things that actually interest young people
The people there	Not being kind to people	Try and have something for everyone
Chance to meet new people	Groupism	Combine youth club stuff with advice stuff
Meet new people	Bullying	Have more free things
Meet new people	Sometimes there is bullying	Get more young people in and have more involvement
Hanging with friends	Youth culture	More social interaction
Meet new people	Sometimes the same things get boring	Other activities
socialise with friends	Can be repetitive – doing the same thing every session	Different things to do each session
Get young people off the streets	Can get boring	More youth workers per person
A place for young people to go	Exclusion	More attention for vulnerable people
Safe	No participation	Be accessible to all (people with disabilities etc)
Warm	Bad youth workers	Young people enjoying it – a good buzz
Safety	Controlled environment	Having more of a say in what happens
Gives people something to do	Can be a lot of rules	Things that people need to know e.g. sexual health, mortgages

Stops people hanging around streets and shop corners	Not open long enough	Longer hours open
Keep people off streets	Set times	Flexible set times erg later on nights
Kelly (youth worker)	Time/ place/ day	More advertising
Kelly (YW)	Not always open	Advertisement
Michelle (YW)	More money to do things	Better transport
Youth workers		More funding
Michelle (YW)		
Michelle (YW)		
Get to talk about issues that you might not talk about normally		
Issue based work		
More adult conversations		
Chance to improve		
Respected environment		
Organised		
Ground rules		
Usually cheap		
Free		
Normally cheap		
Internet access		
Pringles		

As can be seen in the table above many young people felt that the best thing about supervised provision was having a warm safe place to meet new people. They also felt that it was a good way to get young people off the streets. The youth workers at provision were all praised as being one of the best things. Being able to talk about the issues they were facing was commented on by some young people as was access to a cheap or free venue for young people to go to.

Less positively young people felt that the worst things were the types of young people that accessed provision. With this comments were made regarding bullying and people not feeling welcomed in certain youth clubs. It was also noted that clubs can get boring and repetitive. Young people also wanted to be able to control what happened in the club and participate in the decisions make about them. Having a controlled environment and bad youth workers was also noted as one of the worst things about supervised provision. Young people also commented that provision was not open enough but that when it was, it closed too early, meaning that young people were left to walk the streets after 9pm.

The young people also commented on what would make supervised provision better. The most common response was having interesting and different things to do each week. It was also felt that there should be more sessions which gave advice about the issues that young people face and with this there should be more youth workers, especially to help more vulnerable young people. It was also noted that provision could be more accessible and empower young people to have a say in what happened. It was felt by some young people that having longer hours of opening would open

up access to more young people and increasing the advertising of provision again would increase take-up and help get young people off the streets. For some young people there was also the issue of transport, this is discussed in more depth later.

Logistics

The young people felt that the clubs they went to did not open long enough. Commenting specifically about closing too early and sending the young people out onto the street, as noted above in the H-Diagram.

Additionally some young people commented that the clubs were not open on enough days. For example one club opened only two nights a week and not on a weekend. They felt that opening more during the weekend would give them more opportunities to get involved.

Young people either got lifts, walked or took public transport to get to the supervised provision. The maximum time it would take young people to get to provision would be between 30 and 40 minutes. Some young people commented that if it was dark they can get worried about walking through the dark park but that this was not something that would stop them from going to the club.

"[I can't come on a Tuesday] I'm not going to walk down by myself"

Some young people explained that the distance they had to travel to get to a club would stop them from going, especially if they could not get a lift or had to walk a long distance alone.

The young people who had to access public transport to get to their provision were generally not positive about their experiences. The cost of travel was felt to be too expensive. Some young people also commented that prices could change dramatically and that there was no guarantee that they would be able to pay reduced fares for being young people. It was noted that some bus drivers would not allow this.

They felt that there were different rules for different people. Some young people paid for bus passes/ cards while others didn't, some could pay cheaper fares while others had to pay full fare. These young people would like clearer information about bus fares, routes and the rights of young people accessing public transport; they felt that they were discriminated against on public transport.

One young person had argued with a bus driver over the fares they had to pay:

"I asked for my bus pass back and he said no... I said well can I have your driver number then and he said no... I said I know that if I ask you have to give me it... then he gave me it but I know that if I had been with an adult it would have been totally different"

The bus routes were also commented upon:

"The buses are awful... I think they have forgotten that Washington is on the map"

Improvements

In addition to the H-Diagram young people were asked what specific improvements they would like to see regarding supervised provision for young people in Sunderland. Some young people would like to have access to cheaper gym facilities. They commented that being healthy was important and that going to the gym was regarded as a positive activity that young people wanted to do. However private gym facilities were too expensive and gyms at school were either too busy or not well equipped.

The young people also commented that they would enjoy accessing youth cafés. Some young people explained that they were looking forward to a Starbucks opening in Sunderland so that they could go there and relax with their friends. It was noted that if there was somewhere for them to go and buy tea/coffee and drinks and sit in a safe warm environment they would use it.

The young people also noted that at school there was:

“There is a club on every night but its all sports”

Some did not like going to a club when it was run by a teacher in school because they see them all day and needed to feel more relaxed and see new faces. However, others felt that by having clubs with teachers after school young people who don't normally interact with certain people would be able to talk to new friends and make new friends and this would make their school life better. Some young people also highlighted the need for self defence classes.

Communication

The young people were asked where they would go to get information about what was available to them in terms of supervised provision. Word of mouth, as stated above, was primarily where young people got their information.

Generally it was felt that there was not enough information made available to young people about what was going on in the area for them. When asked what would be a better way to communicate to young people about what was happening in Sunderland for them they felt that youth workers, mainly detached workers, could provide information not only to young people who already accessed provision but also to those young people who would tend to hang around outside.

They commented that providing information through schools would not always work. One young person stated:

“If a teacher tells you about the club no one will go as it is a teacher who has told you”

It was felt however that if a youth worker was to give a presentation in assembly at school that might encourage young people who would not normally attend events to seek additional information about them.

Some young people commented that they had been to Connexions however that this was normally for advice about their career and future. They would not typically ask Connexions about what was available for them to do socially.

Some young people were representatives at community committee meetings. The police representatives had highlighted that young people hanging around on the street was causing problems for some residents. This had prompted the young people to make Contact Cards which the police distributed to young people they spoke to on the street. The card entitled the young people two free sessions (although it only costs 50p per session).

Young people also explained other ways they felt would be useful in getting touch with young people to tell them what was going on. These included:

- In local newspapers
- Flyers printed and put in the local newspaper
- Youth Workers speaking in school
- Flyers through the door
- The radio – Most young people listened to Galaxy FM and it was explained that this radio station had commercial breaks
- The internet, however the young people noted that they would not go to the council website and did not look at it to see what was going on for young people and therefore suggested a Sunderland young person's website with information on about what was available to them. However they felt that this would then have to be advertised effectively
- Posters in schools

With regards to youth workers coming to schools one young person stated:

"They could tell them in assembly... I think if she [youth worker] came in and talked I think they would listen"

8. Key Findings – Stakeholders

Introduction

Thirty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted via the telephone. Contact details were supplied by Sunderland City Council. The majority of interviews were audio recorded with the respondent's permission. The 33 Stakeholders included representatives from Day nurseries (DN); Local Education Authority Nurseries (LA) Neighbourhood Nurseries (NN); Childminders (CM); Local Employers (E); Job Centre Plus (JCP); Out of School Clubs (OSC); Head teachers (H) and Social Services (SS).

General Provision

It was apparent that the majority of childcare was available between 7:30 am and 6 pm although more flexible hours were offered by some of the Childminders and Nurseries. The majority of provision focused on three to eleven year olds, with waiting lists for infants (0-2) places and relatively little provision for 11+. Some providers were struggling to fill their capacity and although a number of providers ran Holiday Playschemes the uptake of these appeared to be erratic and many were not operating at capacity.

None of the employers provided on-site crèche facilities although one had explored this option, but decided it was not viable. All of the employers offered statutory flexible working arrangements.

There was a consensus amongst the Stakeholders that general provision of childcare in the Sunderland area was good. Some Stakeholders believed that supply now far outstrips demand.

At the moment there is saturation of the market and it's difficult to get even 75% occupancy. (DN)

There is plenty of choice of childcare here – we are in the outskirts of Sunderland. There is even more choice of places to attend in the Centre. (H)

I think there's enough nursery places and at the moment - they've reached a peak with the childminding places because it's getting harder to get work there's so many childcare places available. (CM)

A few of the Stakeholders felt that although provision was good it was not evenly distributed across the clusters i.e. there was good provision if parents were prepared or able to travel. The Doxford Business Park was noted as an area lacking in childcare provision.

There's a shortage of childminders in this area now. (OSC)

I think there is enough childcare provision for younger children but it is hard for older children. There are not enough Childminders in the North of the City. (OSC)

Competition

Some Stakeholders felt that the advent of Extended Services is having an adverse effect on day nurseries in particular. Some felt that there could be much more partnership working between the private and public sector.

“Extended Schools and Children’s Centres are where the Government and Local Authority want to go, but we have been overlooked. Partnerships have not been developed with private providers.” (DN)

The Manager of an Extended Service in the North of the district felt that there was further competition between the community and statutory sector in this area.

“There are lots of community groups here and on the North side of the river which work against us in a way because they can get different funding than a school. We’re refused a lot of funding because it’s seen as ‘double-funding’ and that the LEA should be funding them [activities], so we have to charge a nominal fee.” (OSC)

Another provider in the same area had similar concerns regarding sustainability.

“When you start to look at the sustainability of projects like this it just doesn’t add up. We’re not allowed to prejudice the main school budget to support childcare – It’s supposed to be self-sustainable. At the moment we have the North Grant, but when that ends we have to be self-sustainable.” (OSC)

Accessing funds to enhance their service was also an issue for Childminders.

“We don’t get the recognition or the money. Our childminding group is trying to get grants to take the children out in the school holidays, but we come up against a lot of barriers. We can’t get grant money – we’re self-employed.” (CM)

Provision for Special Needs

Most of the providers felt able to cope with special dietary or cultural needs. One childminder was provided with food by the parent.

Although a few of the Stakeholders felt there was a lack of provision for children with SEN there was evidence to suggest that Special Educational Needs and disability can be catered for by a range of provider types, although those attached to school settings (Extended Service or LA Nursery) appeared most prolific.

"In the main school we identify early any SENs. We also have children with complex behavioural needs; we go to the 'nth' degree and work with a lot of agencies." (OSC)

"I do think that settings nowadays are genuinely more inclusive and are not just paying lip-service to inclusivity." (OSC)

"We have 'commissioned' childcare places...they are vulnerable places for children in families with difficulties, or children with Special Educational Needs." (LA)

There was also evidence that further specialist provision was available to Travelling Families; Families suffering domestic abuse and children whose first language was not English.

However, one provider of out of school care felt that they were not well equipped to cope with children with special needs.

"We don't feel that we get the help and support we need to look after the children with special needs. We have children at the moment with an educational statement who need one-to-one supervision in an after school club and although we get extra funding from Social Services to put a named person in it would be better for us if we had a separate member of staff to look after that child... I would rather they just gave us a worker. We also need funds for specials resources; a multi sensory room is needed." (OSC)

The views on respite care were mixed. A few stakeholders felt that there was a lack of respite care for families whose children had special needs or disabilities whilst others felt that families were well catered for, but the evidence was mostly anecdotal:

"I don't think there's enough respite care for children with special needs – the mother of the little girl I look after struggles to get respite care for her little girl although she gets four hours a week at a special needs nursery." (CM)

"Respite care is available for parents of children with disabilities and there's a good support network but I haven't experienced it at first hand." (xx)

Support for Providers

Many of the providers praised the training available through Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group and acknowledged the support available through the 'Transformation Fund':

"The Local Authority puts on a really good variation of training package that all staff can access." (DN)

"I have done lots of training. I'm doing NVO Level III at the moment and I haven't had to pay for any of it – I'm really thrilled about that, it would have been very expensive. I have to study in my own time." (CM)

"There is no problem with funding for training and there is plenty of information from the Local Authority and Children's Information Service." (OSC)

"The development officer who works with the Children's Information Service comes out every three months and emails us about changes in legislation and useful training." (OSC)

One provider noted that although the cost of 'backfilling' staff was covered by the Local Authority, supply staff were difficult to access.

A couple of specific examples of specialist support were mentioned, by a childminder and an out of school manager:

"I have Portage workers coming in from Sunningdale School who help me with that [special needs provision]. I get help with Makaton Sign Language and I get support and ideas on what to do." (CM)

"We have a 13 year old with Special Needs and quite a few children with Autism. We have had training to Level II to look after these children, and we speak to the parents a lot to find out what they like etc." (OSC)

Out of School Provision

There was general agreement amongst the Stakeholders that term-time out of school provision was increasing, but that holiday provision was still lacking in some areas:

"Breakfast and after school provision is being addressed by the Extended Schools Programme. I think it's fantastic. I always used to think what a crime it was to have a school empty for six weeks when it could be used as a facility for the community." (LA)

"I think there are very few schools in the Washington area that don't have after school and breakfast clubs now. I think we could do with a few more holiday clubs." (OSC)

"Holiday provision can be difficult for older children, we are only registered until the child turns five and if any of them have older brothers and sister – getting them cared for is a massive problem and the parent has to take time off work for holidays and things like that." (DN)

"I don't think there's a lot of school holiday provision." (OSC)

"The issue is for parents whose children are in school and don't have holiday provision – that is the area where there might be a lack." (H grant maintained nursery)

In some cases there were reports that the extra provision before and after school had not been successfully taken up:

"Our Breakfast Club hasn't taken off – we've only got two children." (OSC)

"I have 143 on the books but I have on average 10-24 actually attend after school and at breakfast we have 6-12." (OSC)

Despite many Stakeholders believing that there is insufficient childcare during school holidays one Extended Service Administrator felt that there was not demand for this type of provision in their area, based on a local survey:

"We did a survey asking if they [parents] wanted any provision for half-term and the demand was practically non-existent (3 out of 400 children)." (OSC)

The most successful providers of out-of-school provision appeared to be those with a wider community catchments:

"We had to get together as a cluster of schools, because there were another two people offering out of school care as well. One afternoon last Easter we only had two children, but we had to have two members of staff on as well." (OSC)

"We have been working with other local schools in a cluster to signpost that children can come here in the holidays, but we've had very little take-up. We're planning with the Extended Schools Co-ordinator a marketing approach for Easter and Summer to improve that situation. It isn't viable for individual schools to run their own holiday club." (H extended school)

There were also suggestions that the extended school agenda still needed to be promoted in schools:

"There's still a lot of work to be done with the local authority about how childcare sits with schools." (H extended school)

"I went to a conference where they were all head teachers and not one of them was happy about the extended schools agenda. (DN)"

Provision for Older Children

All Stakeholders agreed that there was a lack of provision beyond eight years of age and in particular for teenagers:

"There are not many places for ten years and upwards." (OSC)

"We can't take children over eight...staff who have always worked with 3-4 year olds now need to go on training to work with older children." (LA)

"There is a massive gap in the provision for teenagers 11+ onwards, especially in the school holidays." (CS)

"What's missing is [provision for] the 11-14 year olds. A lot of parents ask if the children can still come to the After School Club during their first year at the Comprehensive School." (OSC)

Affordability

The cost of childcare was still seen as an issue for some by most of the stakeholders, particularly in relation to day nurseries. It was noted that cost became more of an issue with a second child:

"Regarding the cost of childcare, I think it's better over the last few years because not only have you got the Grant [Nursery Education], but Working Family Tax Credits. It could still be an issue for non-workers and single parents." (DN)

"Cost is definitely a barrier to parents here. We try to keep our costs as low as we can and we offer certain discounts but when a parent takes a child away it is invariably because of cost." (DN)

"Our fees are paid in advance, so cost can be a barrier, but there are plenty of places available." (DN)

One employer noted that several childminders had, in the past, investigated the potential for setting up at Doxford International but the fees were deemed prohibitive for staff below senior management level. Others felt that formal nursery places were only affordable to those in *"better paid management roles"*.

Cost as an issue specifically in relation to the low incomes of lone parents was mentioned by a number of the Stakeholders. Difficulties in accessing childcare funds were reported by a few respondents:

"My parents all work, quite a few are lone parents. They have a lot of problems getting their child-care benefit through; they are not always able to pay as promptly as they might." (OSC)

"Lone parents may have issues around balancing their finances to have their child in a provision." (OSC)

The late payment of fees was highlighted by a few providers who were prepared to be flexible to a point:

“Of those parents who do struggle, we help the out, they pay their bills maybe slightly late – we have to allow some flexibility. If a parent owed two month's fees we would have to review the case.” (DN)

In addition, it was noted by a few stakeholders that parents in receipt of benefits are only eligible to work up to 16 hours before the benefit is affected – this then impacts on their ability to pay for childcare.

Many of the providers mentioned the financial support they had received which enabled them to keep their costs affordable, however, the need for sustainability in the future may lead to increased costs:

“Our costs seem to be an issue for parents, but they're not excessive, and we couldn't reduce them any more... We had three years start-up money, which heads bid for, and we've also had additional Children's Centre Start-up Money.” (LA - consortium)

Some providers felt that the provision of free nursery places needed to expand.

“With the Agenda being around Every Child Matters and around economic wellbeing of families, I think there needs to be help around helping to subsidise part of Nursery Placements in order for those parents to access courses to be able to enter employment – we have funded places through Sure Start but I don't think it's adequate for demand in our area.” (LA consortium)

“I'd like to see Government Funding run a different way so that you can offer childcare provision at a very low cost or free.” (OSC)

Working Family Tax Credit

It was felt that Working Family Tax Credit is a good scheme – easy to administer with high uptake.

Most stakeholders assumed that since it was available, families would be accessing it. One provider mentioned supporting families in applying for this credit:

“The Working Family Tax Credit is available for them, some people find that quite daunting – filling forms in, we will help with that.” (OSC)

Another provider specifically promoted this tax credit to parents:

“We try to highlight that there is Working Tax Credit available.”

Nursery Education Grant

One Employer felt that the Nursery Education Grant fell short of supporting working parents as it only provides 12.5 hours over five days:

“Childcare is all very expensive and what the government does is give a provision for over three year olds to attend a nursery – it really doesn’t classify as childcare because if a parent’s working they have to top it up and if the child is under three they have to pay for it anyway, the full amount. The government provision doesn’t help mothers who are returning to work, it only helps those who have children over three.” (E)

A number of providers noted that Sunderland was to be a pathfinder in providing 15 hours of free childcare over three days for children aged 3 and 4.

In addition providers recognised that parents access the NEG so their child could socialise, not so they could return to the workforce:

“We are based in a disadvantage area so a good percentage of our children come here for the Nursery Education places or they use us privately, but it’s not to enable them to work, but so their child can socialise.” (DN)

Childcare Vouchers

Two out of three of the employers offered their employees childcare vouchers. However, one employer felt that this discriminated against employees without children.

“Parents who work for us have to fund their own childcare provision. No childcare vouchers. I don’t see it as the employer’s liability to provide childcare vouchers or provision for their staff who have children – what would they do for all their other staff who don’t have children?” (E)

Flexibility (Weekends and Shifts)

Whilst Nurseries, Childminders and the advent of Extended Schools afforded some flexibility to parents it was apparent that the needs of shift workers were still not being addressed by the majority of childcare providers. It was felt that this affected lone parents in particular:

“A lot of single parents work shifts which start after the childcare places have finished at 6pm... that causes a lot of problems for single parents.” (OSC)

“There’s a gap in the market for anyone who wants to offer overnight care.” (CM)

“I can imagine it’s a nightmare if you work an evening shift.” (OSC)

Quality

The majority of Stakeholders felt that the quality of childcare provision in Sunderland was good. The training provided by the Sunderland team and regular Ofsted inspections were seen as the main drivers of this quality:

“Because Sunderland have worked so carefully to build up quality in childcare it’s been there all along in the planning that I would trust all childcare in Sunderland. We’ve worked hard in bringing in private childcare as well alongside the maintained childcare and the childminders. Everyone’s been brought in to the same quality assurance.” (H)

“I think the quality of the childcare in Sunderland is very good, especially in the Private and Voluntary Sector the standard has increased dramatically in the last few years because of the availability of training.” (DN)

“Sunderland have brought out DVDs and information packs with every policy and procedure in place that you can think of. You can adjust them to suit your own facility – invaluable!” (OSC)

“The new Neighbourhood Nurseries and Children’s Centres are very good and of a very high standard. Early Years are raising the standard.” (Neighbourhood Nursery)

There were no concerns raised regarding staff recruitment, however some providers in the private sector mentioned difficulties retaining staff when faced with competitive salaries being offered by Children Centres.

Demand

Some Stakeholders believed that traditionally families in the Sunderland area rely on extended family networks to provide childcare and that they would not wish to pay for an alternative. The Job Centre Plus representative reported the use of Family Tax Credits to pay friends and family.

The interviews revealed that ‘trust’ can be an important factor in the uptake of childcare:

“All of my parents have said that ‘we cannot leave our children with someone that we cannot trust” (CM)

One respondent felt that school settings could hold negative connotations for some parents:

“It can be difficult to build up trust and confidence in some parents and get them to come in. They’ve usually had a lot of bad experiences in schools themselves... their feelings towards schools are still quite raw.” (H)

Conversely, another of the Stakeholders felt school settings are best placed to encourage those individuals not in education, employment or training to access childcare:

“My parents see the benefits of everything being on one site attached to school. Parents get to know staff and they get to know them.” (H)

In areas of deprivation relatively low uptake was seen as a threat to sustainability, particularly to those providers who had received “pump priming” and were now attempting to “break even”:

“Originally our provision was designed to give local parents an opportunity to train and get back into employment, be because of lack of up-take we are now having to market outside

of the local community in order to be sustainable with a view to upping our numbers... Sustainability is an issue for absolutely everybody.” (DN)

‘Taster-sessions’ were mentioned by a couple of the stakeholders. It was felt that this type of inducement would be successful in encouraging the uptake of childcare services:

“We give ‘taster sessions’ at a reduced price to see if it’s something that would help them in the future.” (H)

One DN stakeholder mentioned having heard of the idea of running taster sessions but weren’t aware that anything came of this. Information was sent out to providers.

Information Needs

Although the Children’s Information Service was praised for keeping providers up-to-date with relevant information, most of the stakeholders felt that there were still information gaps amongst the parents:

“A bit more press publicity, but they’re good as they are.” (OSC)

“The new Children’s Centres as they come on board should be getting in their own marketing. Sunderland are doing everything they can to raise awareness, it’s still early days and there’s a need to keep educating parents about the services available.” (H extended school)

“There needs to be more information shared with parents on how to access all this provision. There’s a lot for them to think about and I think in communities like mine there is a weakness in getting to the parents who are illiterate, who don’t have the ability or confidence to ask the right questions and get that information.” (H)

“Parents need to be made aware of what entitlement is due to them and how to access it.” (LA)

The private sector providers particularly felt that their services were undervalued and could be promoted more:

“A lot of people think that that Private Sector is just for fee paying parents – we need to be promoted for providing free places as well.” (DN)

“Not enough information in local newspapers. Parents should be encouraged to use properly registered childminders with proper training.” (CM)

“Childcare needs publicity; a lot of parents tend not to plan into the future for childcare. Now it’s the trend to leave it to the last minute. Publicity would be beneficial to the Nurseries; we can’t afford to spend a lot on publicity.” (DN)

9. Mapping Supply to Demand

This next section of the report shows a series of maps and commentary.

The first two maps represent Sunderland overall with ward boundaries. The first one highlights the distribution of childcare providers in Sunderland and the second, the distribution of the respondents from the telephone survey.

The subsequent five maps show the individual cluster areas and these each show the distribution of the providers in these locations and mapped against this is the provision respondents have expressed demand for in the next 12 months (by the respondents' residential postcode). In most cases it appears that there is a range of childcare in close proximity to where the respondents live. Nonetheless, this doesn't mean that the provision has vacancies or is suitable for child's needs.

In addition, travel to work issues also need to be taken into account.

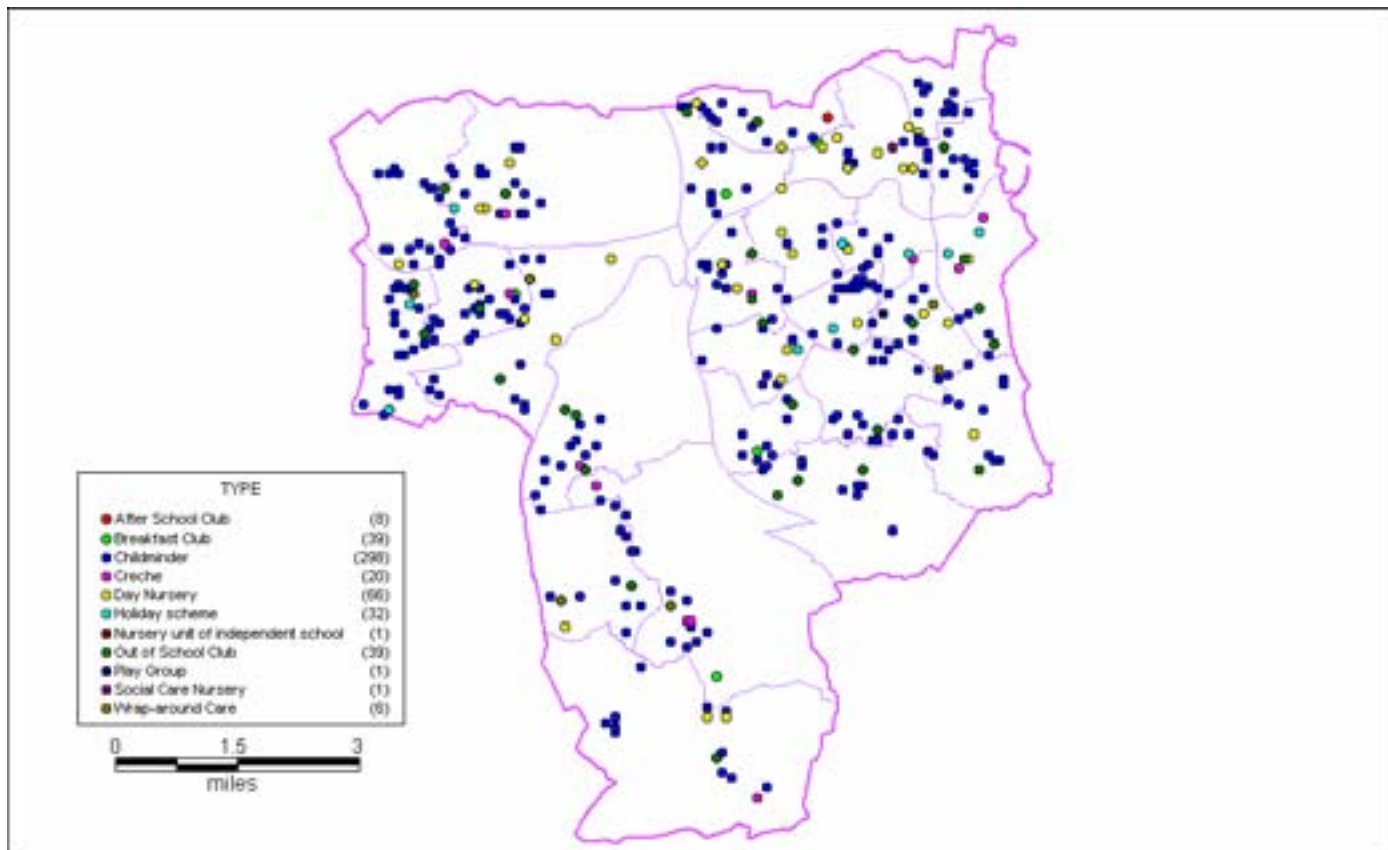
N.B. Due to small base figures in some instances, these figures should only be seen as indicative rather than conclusive.

It would be useful for the Extended Services and Attendance Group to do some further analysis of the maps against vacancy data as well as the average attendance to be able to analyse against these maps more accurately. The following table shows the number of places per provider type in each cluster. It is acknowledged that this is just information just represents a snapshot in time however and only concerns places for 0-8 year olds:

CLUSTER	Total no. of settings	Total no. of places	After School Club	Breakfast Club	Child-minders	Creche	Day Care	Day Nursery	Wrap around	Holiday Scheme	OSH	Out of School Care / club	Play Group	Social Care Nursery
Central Sunderland	73	1283	24	120	210	12	326	267	0	160	92	72	0	0
Coalfields	85	1229	24	194	219	74	283	31	64	170	0	170	0	0
Sunderland North	91	1495	156	262	258	35	400	36	0	164	0	130	0	30
Sunderland South and East	116	2183	0	197	288	92	352	319	92	377	172	268	26	0
Washington	139	1847	0	285	477	53	0	440	40	252	179	121	0	0
Sunderland Total	504	8037	204	1058	1452	266	1361	1093	196	1123	443	761	26	30

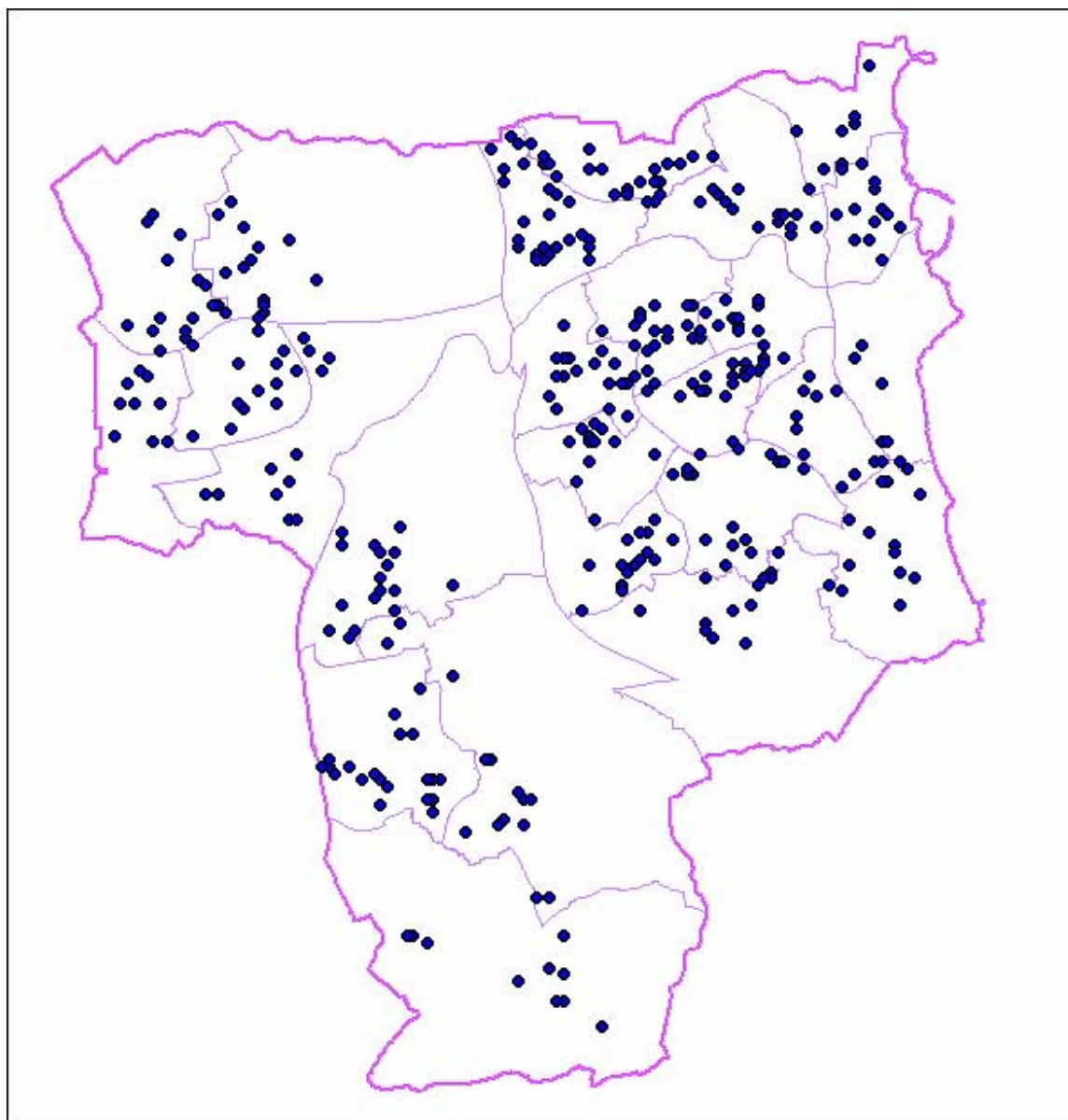
9.1 Where Providers Are Situated

The map below shows where all the providers are located across Sunderland from which it is evident that provision is fairly evenly distributed. The apparent gap in the centre of the map is due to open space and industrial areas.



9.2 Where Survey Respondents Live

The map below highlights where the respondents from the survey are resident. This shows that interviews were conducted with parents / carers across the whole of Sunderland.



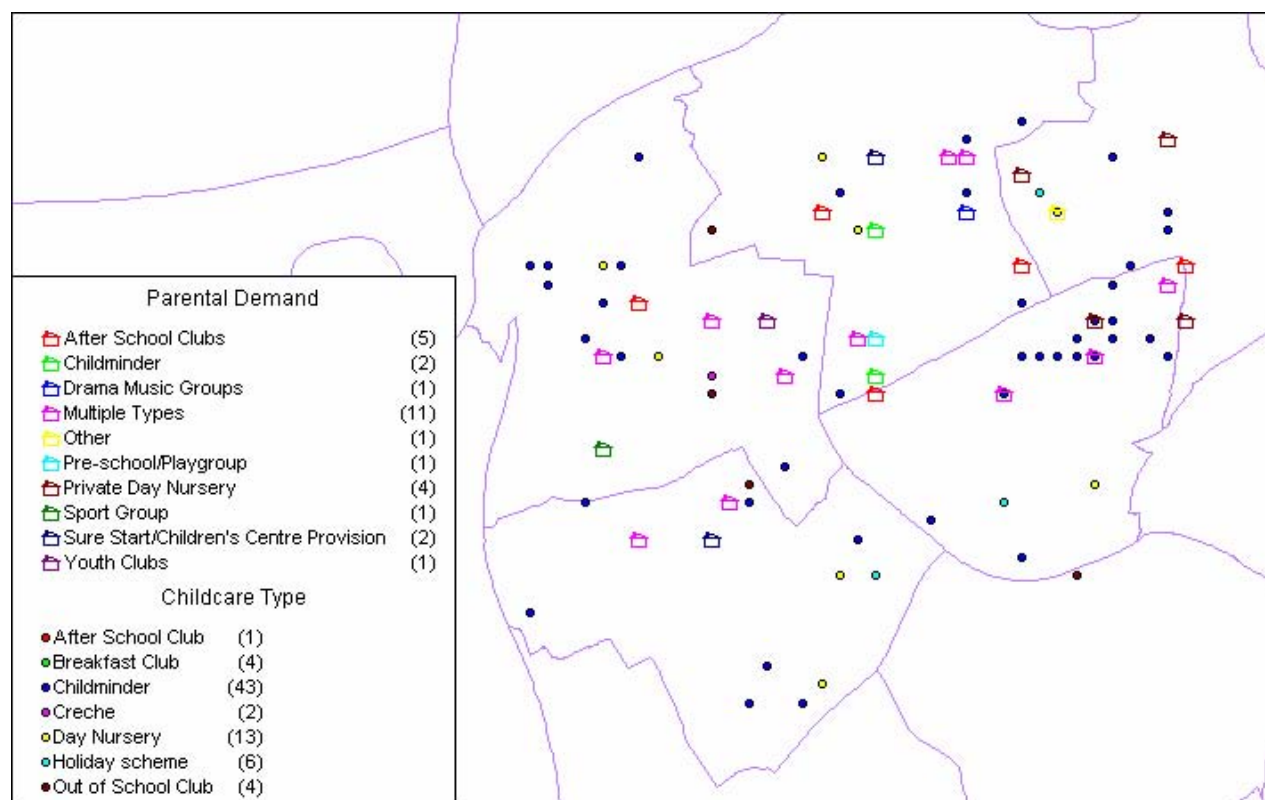
9.3 Central Cluster (Providers and future demand from parents)

Despite this cluster area having a lower than average childcare penetration ratio, this cluster area appears to be well served by providers. This observation has been made through looking at the level of demand from families living in this area and in the context of this cluster area having the second lowest number of children aged 0-11 (7302).

The map indicates a range of providers operating in the Central cluster area. It does suggest however that whilst many childminders are based in this area, few parents who live in the area said they plan to use childminders in the next 12 months. This observation doesn't take into account whether childminders have any vacancies / wish to fill all their vacancies however and doesn't take into account parents who use childcare outside of their cluster area (for example using provision near work instead of home).

This cluster area has the highest proportion of children with Special Educational Needs (from all children living in the cluster area) therefore the Extended Services and Attendance Group team could examine the level of adequate places for these children and the ability of the local childcare workforce to care for these children.

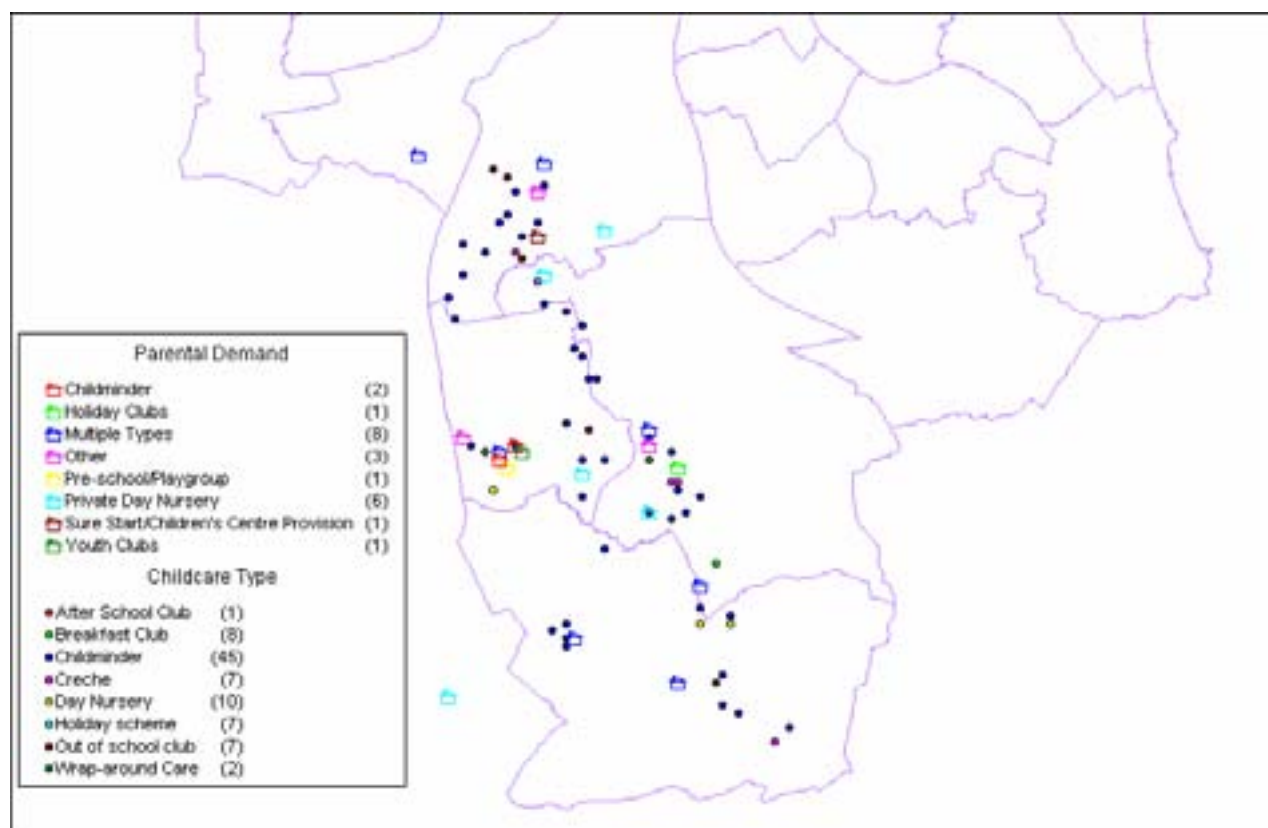
Out of the five cluster areas, Central has the second highest number of dwellings planned over the coming years therefore this needs to be taken into account when assessing sufficiency in this area and will need to be monitored.



9.4 Coalfields Cluster (Providers and future demand from parents)

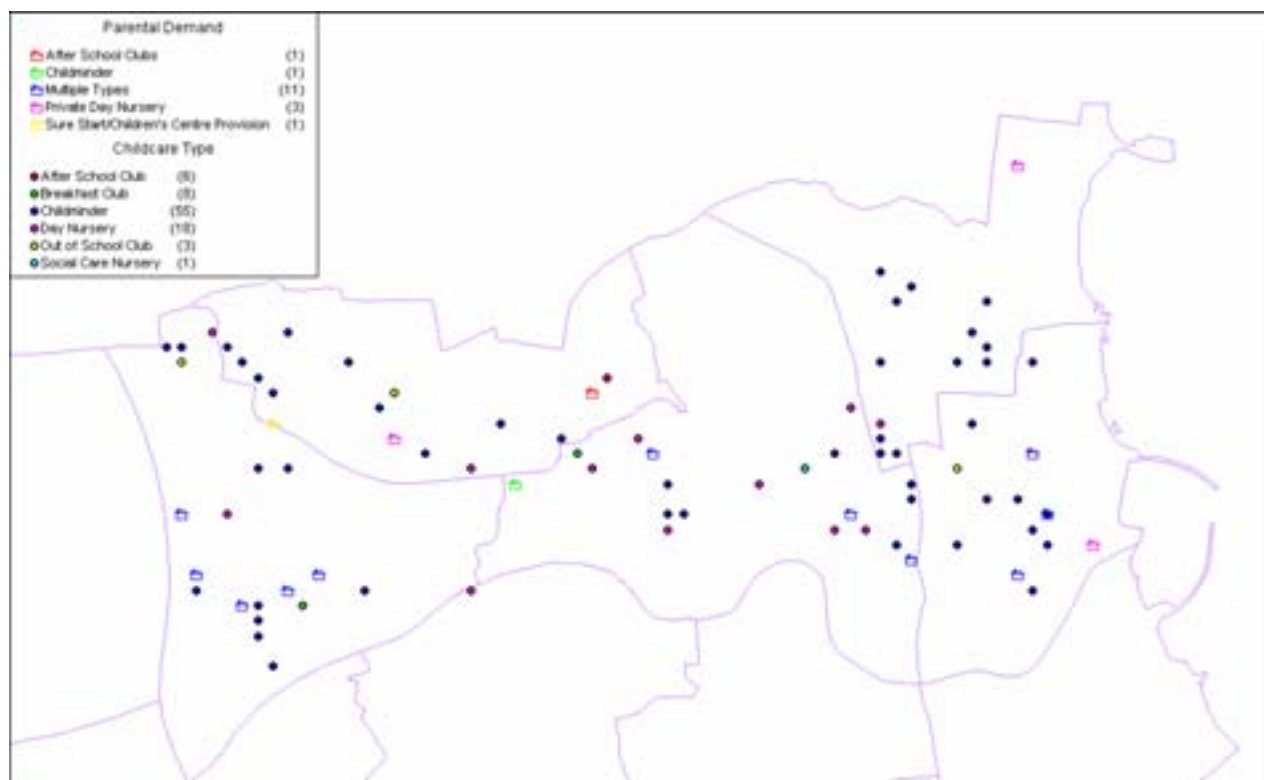
In total 28.8% of survey respondents living in the Coalfields cluster area intend to use provision for their children in the next 12 months, this includes formal provision as well as drama / music groups and so on. Whilst this is the second highest proportion out of all five cluster areas, interestingly this cluster area has the lowest actual number of children (6758 0-11 year olds).

The map below shows that there are a considerable number of childminders in this cluster area, the area is also well served in terms of other facilities. The level of vacancies available within providers in this cluster area is not known therefore it is difficult to judge whether there is a surplus of particular type of provision in this area. What is clear however is that in theory, if vacancies are available, all those living in the Coalfields cluster area that intends to use formal provision in the next 12 months should be able to source their desired provision in their own cluster area.



9.5 North Cluster (Providers and future demand from parents)

A fifth of survey respondents living in the North cluster intend to use provision for their children in the next 12 months (20.0%). The map below shows that these parents plan to use a variety of provision all of which are well catered for in this cluster area should vacancies exist. In particular there are a large number of childminders registered in this area as well as several out of school clubs.

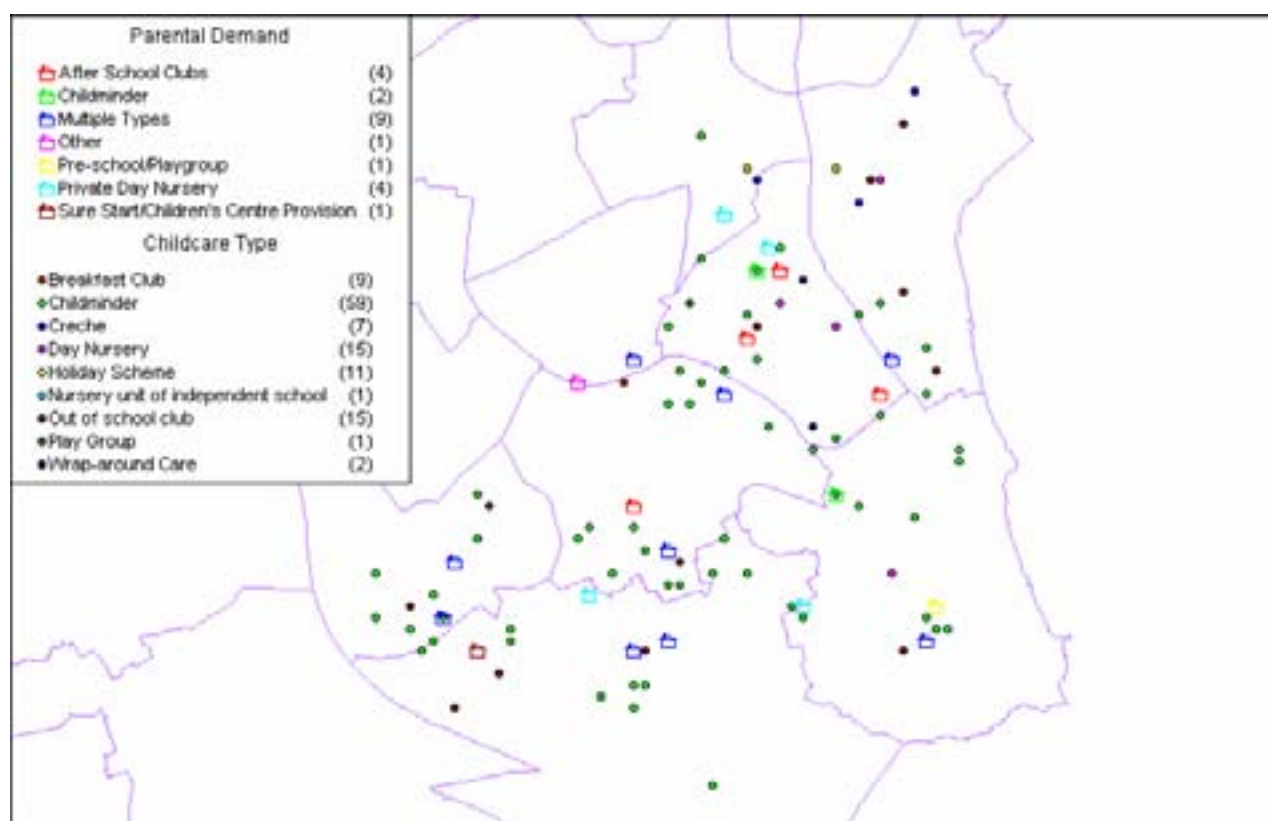


9.6 South and East Cluster (Providers and future demand from parents)

This cluster area has the largest number of children aged 0-11 living in it (9829) and also has the second largest number of individual childcare providers out of all cluster areas. The area has a higher childcare penetration ratio compared to Sunderland overall.

The provision available in this cluster does appear quite evenly spread across the area. All those parents living in this area who require formal childcare in the next 12 months should be well served locally if vacancies exist. In particular there are a large number of childminders and out of school and holiday clubs in this area.

It is acknowledged that this cluster area has the highest number of dwellings planned for the next few years out of all cluster areas (2940 by 2021) which may affect the demand for provision in this area.

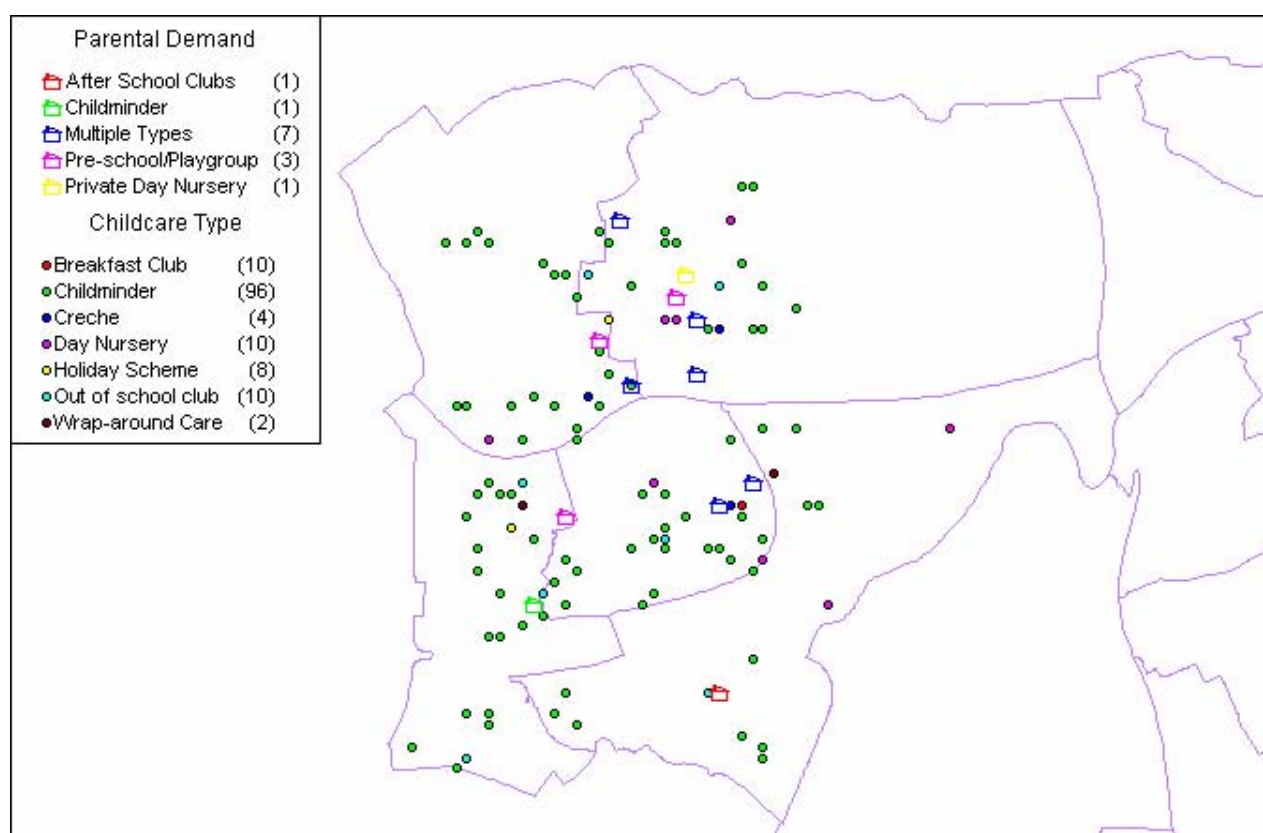


9.7 Washington (Providers and future demand from parents)

Just 20% of the parents surveyed who live in the Washington cluster plan to use provision for their children in the next 12 months despite this area having the second highest number of 0-11 year olds residing in it (8546). The area has a slightly higher than average childcare penetration ratio of 30 places per 100 children aged 0-8.

This area seems to be well served with a range of provision that should in theory cater to the needs of those who live in the area and intend to use childcare in the next 12 months.

This cluster area has the least amount of proposed dwellings in the next few years, therefore it would be anticipated that demand for provision is less likely to change in this area compared to others.



10. Conclusions

Current use of provision

In total, 57.5% of survey respondents were using some kind of provision for their children. Just over a third were using formal childcare (35.5% - equivalent to 161 parents) whilst 28.4% were using informal care; a further 15.6% use other provision for their children.

The most widely used registered provision was after-school clubs (24.5%) followed by day nurseries (16.1%); sports groups (14.9%) and breakfast clubs (11.9%).

The survey revealed that parents of children with disabilities or SEN were very unlikely to be using formal childcare provision. The focus group findings show that there is reliance upon informal care with family or friends who understand the individual needs of the child.

The survey findings show that the least used provision includes youth clubs and holiday clubs. The focus group findings show that there is reliance upon informal care with family or friends who understand the individual needs of the child.

Satisfaction

The survey data shows overall high levels of satisfaction with childcare provision, particularly with the quality and reliability of provision. Areas for improvement are mainly in relation to cost, location, premises and opening hours / times.

The findings from the focus groups support this in that although parents felt that provision was costly, they felt that the standard of care was high. Parents in the focus groups also expressed a preference for leaving their children with 'older' childcare workers.

It is evident from the survey and focus groups shows that parents of disabled / SEN children are less satisfied with the provision available. In particular, some parents were dissatisfied with the support workers provided and others had experienced problems accessing Sure Start provision.

The focus group discussions also highlighted some issues concerning waiting lists for Sure Start nursery provision and out of school care.

Although the survey data shows that demand is low for holiday and weekend provision, a lack of this type of provision seemed to be an issue for parents in the focus groups, especially parents with disabled / SEN children. The findings from the interviews with stakeholders also suggest that the uptake of holiday provision is erratic. This contradiction could suggest that there is some issue with the appropriateness of the provision or a lack of publicity.

Parents in the focus groups also referred to a lack of supervised play/leisure opportunities for children aged 5-11; this was also acknowledged by stakeholders.

The focus groups and stakeholder interviews also point towards some issues in relation to transport and pockets of sparse provision. Young people participating in the focus groups also experienced transport problems in relation to accessing clubs and activities. Some stakeholders were also conscious of a disparity of provision in certain areas, e.g. North Sunderland and Doxford Business

Park (it is acknowledged that there is a 100 place nursery at Doxford Business Park). On the other hand, there was also some concern about 'saturation' in some areas, arising in part from a lack of partnership working between the public and private sectors and the prohibitive conditions of some funding streams.

Reasons for not using childcare

It is evident from the survey that the main reason for non-use of childcare was parents' preference for looking after their children themselves, especially those aged 0-4.

High cost was also a barrier to accessing provision (particularly for children aged 0-4). The high cost of private day nursery care was also acknowledged by stakeholders. The specific difficulties faced by lone parents and working parents of under 3's were highlighted. An expansion of free nursery provision was seen as the solution to the latter issue.

Data suggests that in some cases parental perceptions of childcare, rather than the reality of what's on offer could act as a barrier to using childcare. As such there is a need for Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group to consider how these perceptions, for example regarding poor quality of care, could be changed.

Black and minority ethnic parents that participated in the focus groups were satisfied with the way in which their cultural needs were taken into account by the providers that they had used and did not perceive unmet cultural needs to be a barrier to accessing childcare. They felt that lack of information was a more pressing need although it was clear that there was a general tendency for BME parents to prefer not to use any formal childcare provision.

Future use of provision

In total 116 people (25.6%) of survey respondents intended to use provision for their children in the next 12 months. Interestingly, further analysis shows that a significantly higher proportion of BME respondents plan to use provision than White British respondents (50.0% compared to 24.2%). However, focus group findings suggest that BME parents would be unlikely to want to use provision.

Parents in the South East of Sunderland were most likely to use provision in the next twelve months (33.0%) followed by Coalfields (28.8%); Central (27.3%); Sunderland North (20.0%) and Washington (20.0%). In total 69 out of the 202 parents with 0-4 year olds planned to use provision for these children in the next 12 months (34.1%). This equates to 75 of the 0-4 year olds covered by the research.

Although, generally, the data indicates that the demand for most types of childcare and related provision will fall within the next 12 months. After school clubs and day nurseries appear to be the type of provision most likely to continue being used. Again, reasons for future non-usage relate to parents' preference to care for their children themselves.

Employment

In total, 69% of survey respondents were working either full or part time. The majority of these had not been affected by childcare issues in relation to employment.

However, parents of disabled / SEN children were less likely to be working. The focus group findings highlight issues for parents of disabled children who wish to work; these include a perceived lack of support from the Jobcentre and concerns about lack of understanding from employers.

The survey data shows that just over half of those not working said that they intended to enter employment in the next three yrs (68 people in total); however responses were evenly split between those requiring and not requiring childcare. Generally, it was more likely for single parents to state that they intended to enter employment.

Several of the parents in the focus groups expressed concern around combining childcare and work, particularly in terms of finding employment with flexible working hours. It is evident that some parents may not be aware of the right to request flexible working hours. Furthermore, some stakeholders interviewed felt that there was a lack of provision for shift workers.

Tax credits and childcare information

The survey findings showed high levels of awareness of Tax Credits; however awareness was lower for the Nursery Education Grant. Just over a third of respondents were aware of the CIS, however only 7% had used it. The focus group findings suggest that there may be a lack of understanding of the exact nature of the information / help available via the CIS. It was clear from the survey and focus groups that word of mouth and schools were the most popular information sources on childcare.

Over 70% of survey respondents were aware of children's centres; although awareness tended to be higher in the coalfields cluster than in the south east. No clear pattern emerged in terms of parental preference for use of the NEG, although a number of stakeholders noted the insufficiency of this as a tool for supporting working parents as only children 3 and over are eligible, so it seemed that most parents tended to use the NEG as an opportunity for their child's social development and respite rather than a support mechanism for returning to work.

The findings from the stakeholder interviews suggest that there may be a lack of understanding about childcare vouchers amongst employers, particularly in relation to the benefits to the employer.

Further Recommendations

As set out in the initial invitation to tender the Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group requested that QA recommends processes by which the audit could be undertaken annually in-house. The separate audit report makes clear recommendations for how data can be gathered and presented in a user-friendly format which is easily updatable whilst the points below refer to the parental demand element of the work.

The Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group could:

- Involve those parents and carers that requested further information as a result of the survey in future work. For example these people could be sent a short self-completion survey with key questions taken from this year's survey on an annual basis. This will enable key questions to be compared over time.

- Consider undertaking an annual telephone survey on a smaller scale than for this research, whilst not being as statistically robust it would enable key comparisons of data to be made to assess trends over time.
- An alternative or addition to this could be liaising with Children's Centre Co-ordinators to distribute a self-completion survey to families which would ask about current use and demand for childcare again on an annual basis.
- Consider offering staff training on how to run focus group discussions (QA could provide training) similar to what Cumbria Children's Services have recently undertaken. This would enable staff to gather information themselves.

11. Appendix

A - Verbatim Survey Responses

Q7 – Could any of the following changes be made to childcare / youth and special needs provision in your area to help you / enhance your lifestyle / working patterns? – Comments

- Free care would help me get a job.
- Every thing is fine.
- For what we want, it every thing is fine.
- I am happy with my childcare as they are.
- I don't work so as I can look after my children.
- I have never thought about it.
- I prefer to leave my child with the childminder we have always used.
- Most childminders finish at 5
- Child care should be more affordable.
- I am very careful who I let look after my children.
- There is no after school activities in the area.
- Washington (where I live) is a big place and there are only two holiday clubs available. There is high demand for these places. It is very hard to ensure your child gets a place.
- After school clubs.
- after school facilities and options for the children. Need a wide range of activities.
- After school provision would be useful.
- All I have to say is that they go to schools far too often for far too long.
- All of it would be good. You never know when you might have an emergency.
- At the moment we are fine as we have both of are parents who are wiling to help but if anything were to happen to them or we were to have another baby then school facilities could be improved in the area.
- Au Pairs from back home that could speak our language and understand are culture.
- Breakfast club could start earlier.
- Can't really speak for myself but I think for others the evening childcare would be handy.
- Cheaper cost.
- Childminders are few and far between, nursery's are there but some people want one on one care.
- Childminders do not work on the weekend, so it's hard and sometimes I can not do what I have planned because there is no one to look after the children. Therefore weekend childcare would be a bonus.
- doesn't apply, I don't need any of these services.
- Don't need anything at the moment but maybe in the future when the youngest gets older we will use breakfast clubs and things. At the moment my wife it happy just spending as much time as possible with him.
- earlier opening hours would be nice.
- Emergency childcare would be good if something came up.
- Emergency childcare Would be helpful.
- emergency plan when problems in school occur. People have to work but have nowhere for their children to go when the schools get closed.
- Everything is brilliant in this area.
- Everything is fine for us, just attends after school clubs then is looked after by grandma.
- Everything is fine how it is.
- everything's in place
- Flexible times, earlier and later opening would be good otherwise I have to drag me oldest one home to look after him.
- For special needs there is actually quite a lot in Sunderland during the day (tea mornings etc..) but nothing out of school time and as I work full time this is no good.
- Found good childminder, very happy there, good environment.
- Grandparents are the only form of care we need
- happy with everything.
- Happy with the way things are.
- Haven't really looked into it because never needed it.
- Having not used it I do not know really, I could see that there maybe the need for weekend care for mothers who work in the week and need a rest but for me there is nothing.
- Holiday clubs would be good
- Holidays are the main thing.

- I actually used to be a childminder but I don't do that anymore, so I now have the time to look after my children myself.
- I am a carer for my husband, changes in childcare would not make any difference to whether I worked or not.
- I am a childminder myself so I don't need to use any.
- I am a childminder myself, so it doesn't really matter much.
- I am a full time mum and I have the time to look after all my children. I like to keep in touch with what is happening though; I will always try and get as much information on childcare as I can. That's why I go to coffee mornings at the school and things like that.
- I am just recovering from a brain haemorrhage so he has to look after my child at the moment, I can't even walk so he has to help more. I wouldn't even trust anybody else with my child anyway.
- I am looking to go back to work and cannot because cannot find childminder so need more facilities.
- I am wary of leaving my child with people I do not know.
- I don't need any personally but anything for the kids to do after school would be good.
- I don't really know, you want to ask the wife.
- I don't really use Childcare so I wouldn't know. When they were younger it could be difficult as there wasn't any nursery facilities close by, but that's improved now.
- I don't think that there are many nurseries around, I remember when I tried to get my children into a nursery years ago and I couldn't, and I have heard that it's still the same for many people today.
- I don't use any so I wouldn't be able to comment.
- I find the nursery systems run well in our area
- I have a good support network with my family. The children get on so well with them there is no need for outside help; everything fits so well I'm really lucky. You wouldn't pay for child care if you get better care for free.
- I have just had to turn down a course as there is no childcare available from 6-9 on a weeknight.
- I have to drop the kids off early at school, so something to occupy the children in the morning, or a teacher starting early would help a lot.
- I have to work around the children, so more available free youth provisions would be good.
- I have to work Saturday mornings but there is no childcare facilities I can use. And I don't understand why I have to pay extra for childcare during school holidays; I don't get paid extra for holidays.
- I haven't looked into it, so I don't really know what I'd be looking for.
- I know for a lot of people the inability to find weekend care has caused a lot of problems regarding taking up and been in employment.
- I know there are a number of youth workers in the area but not enough supervised youth provision. I am a church minister and we tried to provide some ourselves but because of the ageing congregation it was difficult. We did do a one off provision and a few youth workers came in but it was just a one off. I think something needs to be done about it as it is a large area.
- I only work part time, the youngest goes to breakfast club and that's all I need.
- I share child care with my husband and son.
- I think earlier opening hours would be helpful.
- I think for the older youth there should be more on offer.
- I think grandparents should get an allowance if they take care of children because at the moment my parents spend a lot of time looking after mine but they don't receive anything for their work.
- I think that if you have children you should stay at home and look after them, if you don't want to then you shouldn't have had them.
- I think that there is enough childcare in the area if your looking for it.
- I think the youth provision is important because the youth centres rely a lot on volunteers. We have been talking about raising money off our own backs to hire a youth worker to work with the kids. There is a lot of good will out there that could be harnessed by local communities, just a little extra support in getting youth provision sorted out. We run two youth clubs one for St. Joseph's and one for the older children. We are aware of the problems teenagers can face. There seems to be a lot of provision in the early years, but not enough for the older ones. We try to run activities that they'll want to do and we get them to organise activities, but we could use council help or even just some advice. There are parents who are teachers and they help out and the schools are very active, but we could do with some external support.
- I think there is enough for the young people as it is.
- I think there's a lot in this area, it's going forward really.
- I think we need more activities near to hand at reasonable prices. Anything that comes into the local area is too expensive with three children. I think if they brought in more family prices rather than individual prices that would be better.
- I think we're well covered here because we have sure start as well.
- I want to look after him myself; I don't need any childcare as I am always around.
- I work at the school so it all works really well.

- I work at the school so the hours are really flexible so we don't have any problems.
- I work from 11-3 within school hours, so I don't really need any extra childcare.
- I would prefer that the school would have more facilities e.g. childcare.
- I would rather send the children someone I know, rather than someone I don't know.
- I wouldn't consider sport groups, youth clubs, drama/music groups as childcare.
- I wouldn't use any anyway as I prefer to leave them with family.
- If childcare were to be cheaper then I would use it more, its not that I don't want to use it it just seems pointless to earn money if are then going to spend it on childcare.
- If the childcare was cheaper then we could afford to use it maybe.
- I'm classified disabled and don't work so I'm able to care for my children personally.
- I'm fine with childcare, I like doing it myself.
- It doesn't really affect me so I wouldn't know.
- It isn't the case so much now, but, I know that when I use to work part-time I worked on a Tuesday and a Wednesday. Although the school did provide cover it didn't do so for every day of the week. In my case the school only provided cover on Tuesday's and Thursday but I worked on Tuesdays and Wednesdays so then I did have problems. If there had been more care it would have been easier for me. In addition this there isn't much for older children to do when they get above the age of 8 in schools.
- It was pretty poor a few years ago. Now our jobs are ok to work around when he needs to be at school.
- It would be better if there were more childminders about the fact is that there isn't many at all, and if it wasn't for my friends and family being there I would have real problems.
- It would be good to have holiday clubs for the children.
- It would be good to have more activities offered for the 6 week holiday so that my children would not get stuck without much to do.
- It would be good to have more day nurseries nearer for toddlers before starting school.
- It would be nice to have the option of emergency childcare if something came up, even if it was just for half an hour.
- It would help if there were more facilities around the area.
- It would of been nice for a breakfast club at the school the children go to, or a homework club.
- It would perhaps be good for the child.
- It would probably be the cost.
- It's always the school that provides everything, there isn't anything else around.
- I've used the day nursery for the eldest and the childminder for your youngest child and the childminder is better as they are in home environment and they have one to one. Again, if you're 100% happy with your childminder
- Just rely on family.
- Knowing exactly what you should be paying and when, just more general knowledge really.
- later opening hours will be helpful for those parents with work. There should be more weekend activities for children or they just sit in front of the computer. I think there should be more facilities for the disabled. And it would be beneficial if there is support for the cost of equipments.
- lower cost would be better.
- Making childcare more affordable. I think they are starting more care in all schools but it needs to be more affordable. If they get more numbers in they can reduce the cost.
- Maybe if it was cheaper I would look into it, it's just the cost that is a killer.
- Me and my husband both work full time but if we had had to pay for childcare, it would not be worth going to work as it is so expensive. The government want you to go to work but childcare is too expensive for most. If my mother in law wasn't so brilliant with looking after her, I would have no cash left at the end of the month. I know plenty of people in the same situation.
- More affordable holiday provision. It would be good to have a lot more activities on offer for holidays. Better marketing of available future activities in time for holidays.
- More after school activities and more holiday activities would be good as that can give the children more things to do during afternoons or holidays. This would therefore give my mother more time to herself as the children would have more activates to do.
- More childcare in the workplace, be more aware of working parents and the limitations to the jobs they can do. Employers should be more flexible and aware, hours to fit around school time.
- More facilities for playing during holidays would be good.
- More holiday activities, especially for summer when they have a long holiday. Please forward any details of any activities happening in the summer vacation.
- More holiday care might be useful.
- More local facilities for children, not a child friendly zone here, there's Washington Baths but not many others.
- More special needs services, more information
- more support for special needs would be needed in the area.

- More youth provision would be good for the older kids. There a lot of kids hanging around the streets who would be better off in a club of some kind. Also, it can be difficult picking him (the child) up during Summer
- My child was in a sure-start nursery last year and they were really good, brilliant in fact. I think the service they offer is great. the only thing I think that would be nice would be for more money to be put into childcare, so the children can be taken to farms, swimming and days out. However we would all like more money and that is all I can think of.
- My husband does the working and I look after the child
- My husband works shifts and something happened to one of the kids and I had to go to the hospital for example, it would be nice to have somewhere to take the other kids.
- My nursery that I did use was quite reasonable but a lot are very expensive.
- My wife looks after the child.
- My wife wouldn't use anybody other than family.
- Never really needed to use anything else other than the childcare organised through my work.
- No again we are fine as I have our parents.
- No changes really, I don't use it because I am not in employment so I have time to look after my children myself. However I do think that in the area where I live there should be more things for children to do. It is quite limited round here.
- No everything is fine; my wife looks after the children.
- No we are fine at the moment; she will be going to school soon so we will see then.
- No, everything fits in at the moment as I'm studying so I am around at the right time.
- No, just prefer to look after him myself.
- No. No need to use childcare at all.
- No. Quite happy with the services provided.
- None for me really, I just think that for people who use it it would be getting the hours in and around to fit the children.
- none- The children have a lot of activities to do, so I don't really know.
- Not at the moment, when the youngest starts school then we may look but at the moment we are fine.
- Not enough play schemes for children available during the holiday periods.
- Not really relevant at the moment.
- Not really, but I have heard people complain about the prices of childcare, for example childminders.
- Not really, my friends and I help each other out and it works really well.
- Not relevant for me as my child is too young.
- Not something that would affect me, I want to look after my children.
- Not that I know of.
- One would be Martial Arts. there is nothing in the school environment I feel that caters for Martial Arts.
- Our area is really good for childcare and extra- curricular activities.
- Places are very limited for holiday clubs, and very expensive so more places or making them cheaper would help me.
- Price of childcare is just too much, it is beyond a joke. My wife can not go back to work because we cannot afford the price of childcare.
- Prices of holiday clubs available at the local school are too expensive.
- Quite happy with it
- School holidays should be shorter.
- She is only 19 months so not really relevant.
- Should be more youth clubs for young children in Hetton because there are a lot of children hanging around on the streets. I have put my daughter in classes to keep her off the streets. There isn't much to do round here. There is nothing for the kids and it is frightening. They are drinking on the streets.
- Sometimes we are stuck and there is nothing available. Emergency childcare will be helpful.
- Sports teams, e.g. football clubs would help to bring the local children together and keep them occupied.
- sure start cannot be used because they are all above the age of 8
- Taking a five year career break then going back to work so will need more facilities for my youngest.
- The age for the holiday club only goes up to 11yrs because of insurance issues this means that my 12yr old cannot go anymore. It would be good if they increased the age so my 12yr old could go with the youngest.
- The area I live in is absolutely run down; there is not enough opportunities for young children available.
- The childminder has her own children, so on holidays I'm stuck.
- The cost of childcare is very expensive. There isn't much choice during the school holidays.
- The evening and weekend care would really help, because I work shifts.
- The School (St Joseph's in Millfield) doesn't have a breakfast club or an after school club. It would be a great benefit for most parents if they had breakfast club or after school club. No information for her special needs

- child, information on help with the speech problem (phonological) would really help. Need specific one to one training but it isn't available.
- The school could have more after school clubs and so on. I know some do, but I don't really need them.
 - The school does provide a sure start crèche although places are limited but it doesn't really apply to me as my partner can look after the children if I want to go out or anything.
 - the services have been good
 - The wife deals with it.
 - There are absolutely no facilities in this area for young children. They have a park to play football and that's it.
 - There are not many places available in the area.
 - There aren't many people who will look after children with special needs and it is very expensive.
 - There is a childcare facility in the morning but I don't use it so everything is fine.
 - There is always room for improvement.
 - There is no need for it.
 - There is not a great deal for the children to do on a night. There are clubs and so on but you have to take them and fetch them back which is inconvenient. It would be good if more was provided to stop the kids graffitiing and breaking windows. you see gangs in the street because there is nothing for them to do.
 - There is nothing missing.
 - These would all help the situation really.
 - They are too old now and my job is flexible but when they were younger if the care had been cheaper and more flexible then I may have used it.
 - They are too old now.
 - They need more holiday activities for children with special needs.
 - They wouldn't go.
 - Used to work for social services doing shifts and there was nothing to accommodate for people working shift patterns.
 - Usually first come first served so more spaces would be good.
 - Very happy with the childcare.
 - wanted a childcare next to the school. the council owns the land. permission to build a nursery denied by the council. local parents willing to have a nursery on consultation.
 - We are fine as we are.
 - We are pretty much covered for childcare.
 - We don't have any family in the area so child minding is difficult and I've never really considered hiring a childminder. The after school club in the local school is good but it's ridiculously expensive. It was set up with good intentions but now it seems like it's just there to make money.
 - We don't really need to use any childcare.
 - We have got it pretty much covered at the moment so no.
 - We have never looked into it because my wife works at the school and we work flexible hours so I cannot comment, I wouldn't know where to start.
 - Weekend childcare would be nice but I think it is asking the impossible
 - Well, I'm a Scout leader so I like to think that there is something. Although I feel that unless a child makes the special effort to join a group like the Scouts, there is little else available.
 - When our children were born, my wife cut down on her work. We think it's more important for her to look after the children.
 - With 4 children it becomes very expensive.
 - Would be nice if I could leave her at school for an extra hour on a night time.
 - You have to book in a couple of weeks in advance and you can't change, then you still have to pay regardless of whether the kids go or not.

Q10 – You said you don't expect to use formal childcare /youth provision or respite care in the next 12 months, why is that? FURTHER COMMENTS

- All our friends and family work.
- I only trust my family with my children.
- I only let my family look after my children
- Prefer to look after children myself.
- Also the kiddy starts school in a few months so we won't have the problems of childcare when we are working.
- At home always, not working currently. No need for childcare currently.
- Child is at nursery when I'm at work; look after when she is at home.

- Childcare is too expensive, I can not afford it.
- Childcare is too expensive, my parents help me with looking after my child when I am at work.
- Dad does not work so he looks after him when I cannot.
- Do not work so I do not need any childcare as I am always at home to look after the children.
- Do not work, so in do not need any childcare.
- Don't believe in charges the cost is high. Nurseries charging high so not affordable. would like to acquire land which was denied by the council to build a nursery. local parents are willing to support.
- Don't trust anybody
- don't trust them rather take care myself.
- Grandparents look after child when we are at work.
- Grandparents look after children when no one is at home to look after them.
- I am very wary of whom I leave my children with.
- I am a carer for my husband, changes in childcare would not make any difference to whether I worked or not.
- I am a childminder myself
- I am actually pregnant at the moment, not sure but I doubt it.
- I am disabled so I do not go to work therefore my children do not need any childcare.
- I am not currently working so I look after my child, after school hours.
- I am not working currently, so I do not need any form of childcare.
- I am the carer of the child, so we don't need any more childcare.
- I do not work currently so I can look after the children.
- I do not work currently so I do not need any childcare as I look after the children myself.
- I do not work so I can look after the children myself whenever they are home.
- I do not work so I do not need any childcare.
- I do not work, I look after my children.
- I do not work, so I do not need any childcare.
- I don't particularly like the idea of leaving my children with a childminder, so I prefer to look after them myself. I also have family living close by so they occasionally help look after them.
- I don't use childcare because my child is too old and even when my child was younger I didn't work and could look after them myself.
- I don't work.
- I have been off sick long-term so there has been no need for it; I did use a childminder when I use to work.
- I have flexible hours at work so whenever the children are at home I am there to look after them.
- I only work a few hours so it doesn't really affect me.
- I only work part time and she will be at school soon so I don't think that I will need any.
- I only work part time, and my parents look after them when I'm not available.
- I study and look after the children whilst my husband works so I don't need childcare.
- I think that it is a major problem that if you want to get into childminding you have to fork out all the money yourself, I am a married woman with a husband who supports me so I am ok, he helped support me to do childminding. however I think that the government should help in some way because I know for a fact that a lot of mums would be very good at childminding, a lot of people would love to do it, and would be very good at it, but because you have to pay the ofstead, medical and first aid courses yourself many can't afford to, it would get people off the dole and lots of single mums would be good at it. If there was any way that the government could help out, by paying upfront or in any way I think this would be a massive help. There isn't many childminders around and that is a problem.
- I think the nurseries should all have longer hours that would be more helpful.
- I work as a childminder and when I'm childminding my children are with me, so I do not need any childcare.
- I work evenings so my husband takes over (i.e. to look after the children) when I am at work.
- I work flexible hours round my children's school programmes so I can to look after them when they are at home.
- I work flexibly but when I am at work my parents look after my child.

- I work flexibly so I'm always at home when the children are at home.
- I work flexibly so whenever the children are at home I'm there to look after them.
- I work flexibly which helps me to look after the children when they are at home.
- I work from home so I don't have a need for it.
- I work part time and within school hours, when I cannot look after the children my mum helps out. Childcare is too expensive and my mum is happy to look after them so it works out best.
- I work part time of which I can look after the children when they are at home.
- I work part- time, so it is not necessary to have any childcare as I am at home when the child is back from nursery.
- I work part-time, so my parents and I alternate to look after my youngest child when I'm at work. When it is school holidays I am off too as I work at a school.
- I work part-time. My family helps to look after the children when my partner and I are at work.
- I work shifts so I am home in the day, and I go to work when my wife is home looking after the children. So the way it pans out there is no need for childcare.
- I work when children are not at home, which allows me to be at home when they are back from school.
- If we decide to have another baby, then I will be looking into using childcare, but right now my child is at school so I don't need to use it.
- I'm a childminder so there is no need for our family to use other means of childcare.
- I'm not working at the moment as I prefer to look after children myself.
- always at grandparents when
- Me and my wife work shifts, so that way we can look after the children ourselves.
- More help should be offered to those who cannot afford childcare.
- My family look after my children when I'm at work.
- My job is very flexible so I work suitable hours to care for my children when they are back from school.
- My mother helps to look after the child when my partner and I are at work.
- My mother in law will help out if I'm desperate.
- My mother looks after my child when I'm at work.
- My mum, husband and myself alternate in looking after the children.
- My parents are retired so I don't need any formal childcare.
- My parents look after my child when I'm at work, and she is out of school.
- My parents look after my child when not at home.
- My partner and I are always at home so we do not need any childcare as we can look after our children.
- My partner and I work flexibly so that we look after the child whenever she is at home; therefore there is no need for childcare.
- My wife and I work flexibly therefore there is always someone at home to look after the child.
- My wife does not work; therefore there is always someone to look after the children when they are at home.
- My wife doesn't work.
- My wife looks after the children.
- My wife only works part time so is around to pick the kids up from school after work so there isn't really any need for formal care. I have nothing against formal care just don't think that it is right for us.
- My wife works part-time so there is always someone to look after the child when she is at home. Therefore there is no need for childcare.
- My work allows me to look after them.
- My work is quite flexible, so if we do need any additional childcare I can take time off. We normally don't need it anyway.
- No need as there is always one parent at home to look after our child.
- No, hopefully not changing my job or anything.

- Normally, either me or my husband are at home when either of the kids finish school, and if not then we have family who can watch them. My youngest only has to go to her grandparents once a week anyway.
- Not working currently looks after children herself.
- parents and grand parents do the trick
- Prefer to look after them ourselves; do not want strangers looking after them.
- She used to go to ballet but we haven't enough time now to pick her up and so on.
- She's old enough now and I've managed to juggle my hours.
- The children are happy in their routines and clubs currently; there is no need for any other forms of childcare.
- The children are practically at school all day; such that when they are home we are there to look after them.
- The main problem is the cost of childcare.
- There is always someone at home to look after the children.
- There is always someone at home to look after the youngest child, so there is no need for childcare.
- There is always someone here to look after the children when they are at home.
- There is no need for me to use childcare as I am always here when my daughter is.
- There's nothing around here, the government fund nothing here.
- They are both at school and don't need it.
- They don't have formal childcare as they don't need it due to the activities (e.g. dance groups) so they'll probably just do more of them.
- They fight over looking after her.
- Too expensive, can not afford formal childcare.
- We are in our own routine now so there is no need to change it. Why change something that works? We are lucky with employment because we can work shifts.
- What they will perhaps attend are activity based things and holiday schemes, doing things at the library, and going on organised outings. These kind of things will tend to be at the local leisure facilities.
- Whenever children are at home I'm around to look after them.
- With circumstances as they are at the moment, I don't foresee any need for any extra childcare.
- Work during the night so does not need childcare
- You don't know who you're employing to look after your children, better to know someone you trust instead.

Q12 – In the last year have issues surrounding childcare / youth provision or respite care caused problems for either you or your partner, if applicable – COMMENTS

- would enable them to get further trained and get back to work.
- Wife looks after the children, so it's not a problem.
- When there's a sudden problem, like when the heating goes at school, then I've got a problem, I think there should be more emergency childcare, a nursery that's Ofsted approved that you can take your child to at short notice.
- We make sure that one of us is at home at any one point to look after the children.
- We have to be careful in the holidays when we are looking at the hours we are going to work, we have to make sure the wife and mine's shifts don't overlap.
- We can work flexible hours so we don't need it.
- We both have flexible employers and we are lucky that we can work at different times of the day, both evenings and mornings.
- Too much money to work and put child in childcare so not worth it.
- There is nowhere to take my daughter on a night if I wanted to go to college. Nowhere to take her where I'd feel she was safe. The after school clubs shut at 5.45 which is too early for me to do an

- evening class and it is not guaranteed my husband will be there on an evening as he works all over the country.
- There has been an odd occasion where my wife and I would have liked to go on holiday and we have found it difficult in the past to get supervision for the kids.
 - The only thing that has cropped up is term time illness. This cannot be avoided though it doesn't normally happen until you are about to walk out the door, then its just all hands to the deck and you do the best that you can do. The main problems are when they're on school holidays
 - The family is very good and helps a lot.
 - The cost of childcare is quite high.
 - The children are both at school, so it doesn't really affect us as I only work part time.
 - Some schools could have more breakfast clubs, that way I can go to work earlier.
 - Some people aren't fortunate enough to have one parent that doesn't work so it is ok for us because if I'm at work then my wife can look after the kids and vice versa if my wife wants to go out or something.
 - School where youngest child who is looked after by childminder, has limited number of places therefore, can be difficult to be able to obtain a place for that child
 - Registered disabled so don't work.
 - Not really used any childcare because the oldest is at school full time now.
 - Not affected the situation as I don't work.
 - No. I had to change jobs to accommodate the childcare; there were no jobs to accommodate the childcare I needed.
 - No we have are mams so we haven't had any problems.
 - no problem at all. We can rely on my mother as well. The children stay with her on the Friday night. My father died last year and she can feel a bit lonely at times.
 - No because I work in the school so I am up when they are up.
 - My wife works flexi time so she can get away with it but it still does cause a few problems.
 - My wife's and my parents are both retired so they look after her when we need them to.
 - My wife doesn't work.
 - My wife cannot go to work because the cost of childcare is too much, which is a shame as she would really like to go back to work. More free childcare is needed in the Sunderland area as it is a shame for those who cannot afford the costs.
 - My partner and I share child-care.
 - My part time work suits me better anyway. It means I can take care of the home as well as the child
 - My job has very flexible hours so it's not a problem.
 - My job finishes at 7 pm, but I need to pick my child up at 4:30, so if there's childcare after school hours, it will be great.
 - My family are very supportive and helpful so there haven't been any problems.
 - Most places of work are not very flexible. If school is closed then it is very difficult.
 - Lucky I have my parents to help me out. I do not need any other form of childcare.
 - Luckily my child's grandparents will cover any emergencies so it has not really affected work.
 - Just the arrangement with the holiday times
 - Just had to take days off in the past.
 - Just because I work unsociable hours, you don't want to have to rely on family all the time, so if there was some later provision in the area that might work out better.
 - I've taken time off work to look after my child if he's poorly although I wouldn't want him/her to be anywhere apart from home in these circumstances
 - I've been suffering depression, and have no desire to start working again for a long time. My children come first now.
 - Its not so much that childcare isn't there, although I don't think that the school they attend has breakfast and after school clubs, it's that they just won't go!
 - It's not for me at this present time, since my son was born, before he was diagnosed
 - It's caused a problem for her shift work, because she does early and late shifts.
 - It's a major pain in the backside for alternative childcare at short notice
 - It stopped me from getting a job, as I couldn't find a carer who started earlier enough.

- It has, but we have always managed to find a way round it.
- It has meant that I have had to reduce my hours. I now work in shifts.
- It has caused a problem with my wife wanting to train to be a teaching assistant, we've had to re-think it a bit, but now they're at an age where we can think about it a bit more.
- It costs so much that there wouldn't be any point in me working and having to pay for someone to look after two of my children, especially as I just found out I am expecting.
- I'm retired, and care for my grandchild every day, so no problems are caused.
- I'm a housewife so, obviously not
- If we had wanted to do anything, me or my wife would have been able to
- If I need anyone, my mum helps.
- I work part time so my family work around my hours.
- I work days and my wife works shifts so we are lucky, but if we had to use childcare we would pay the full amount as
- you need the proper care although it is very expensive.
- I wanted to do a foundation degree but I'm not able to because I can't get anyone to look after my daughter. I don't think any of the colleges offer any evening childcare at all.
- I think that now I would think twice before moving away again to work.
- I rely on my mother so she will come here if I do need it.
- I have to work around the children as I have no-one to look after them in the holidays.
- I have to do night shifts because I could not find any suitable day jobs.
- I have had to reduce my hours for the little, again it seems pointless and silly to earn money if it has to be spent on childcare when I am working.
- I have 3 children, am divorced, and don't have time to work. I also have a broken arm.
- I feel that the children are too young for formal childcare. And I'm not ready to go back to work.
- I do not work so no problems.
- I chose to work part time to be able to spend more time with my son.
- I am very lucky with my work; if my child is sick I can call in and take the day off.
- I am self employed and work the hours I want so do not need childcare.
- I am a carer for my husband; I cannot go to work so childcare has not affected this.
- Had to leave work on occasions.
- Had to fit work around the children.
- Even though I don't use childcare, I do think that in the area where I live there is a good amount of childcare, you have got all the afterschool clubs, as well as Surestart centres. So overall I would be happy with the range of care offered if I was using it.
- Currently partner is full-time mum at home
- Because he is autistic if he kicks off then either my wife or myself have to leave where ever we are to tend to him. In the past this has caused problems as work because sometimes we do have to just leave and be with him till it is all sorted out.
- As I said I work from home so there isn't any problems.
- As I said I look after children myself so I don't need to use anyone or thing else.
- Although my hours are fairly flexible, it has been difficult juggling childcare with working the number of hours I'd like to do.
- All revolves around school, if I was working, all my money would go on childcare. Not sure if it is worth going back to work because all money would go on that.
- Again, we are lucky as both my partner and I can work shifts.
- Again it all fits in well.
- Affected your working hours had to decrease your hours of work.
- My sister is a child minder
- The nursery will not take children if they are poorly.
- My employer is very understanding about child- care.
- I don't want to leave my children with people I don't know. You can't trust people.

B - Glossary of terms

- **Private Day Nursery** – includes all daycare providers maintained , private and voluntary
- **Out of School Clubs (OOSC)** - defines a setting which delivers care for 4-11 year olds all year round i.e. term time before and after school and holidays.
- **Breakfast clubs** – typically deliver care for children aged 5 to 11 years between the hours 8a.m and 9a.m. term time
- **After school care** – typically deliver care for children aged 5 to 11 years between the hours of 3.30 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. term time
- **Holiday care** – typically deliver care for children aged 5 to 11 years during the hours 8a.m. to 6 p.m. during the school holidays
- **Childminders** – typically deliver care for children aged birth to 8 years or older all year round. They can wrap the care offer around the school day.
- **Crèche** – typically will offer short term care to support parents accessing training.
- **Playgroup** – typically offer sessions of care for children aged 2 to 5 years either mornings or afternoons
- **Wraparound care** – typically operate as before and after school care for older children, but wrap the care offer around the early education provision for children aged 3 to 4 years.
- **Social service day nurseries** – provide care for children in need aged birth to 5 years.
- **Free entitlement** – parents entitlement to 15 hours of free education and care per week, term time only. This can be delivered in maintained and registered non-maintained settings for children aged 3 and 4 years.
- **Cluster** – an administrative area for the development and delivery of services
- **Respite care** – defined as care for children with special or additional needs or disability.
- **Formal care** – is care that is registered or approved by Ofsted
- **Informal care** – is care arranged by parents with relatives or friends.
- **Children's Centres** – deliver integrated services for children and their families aged birth to 5 years