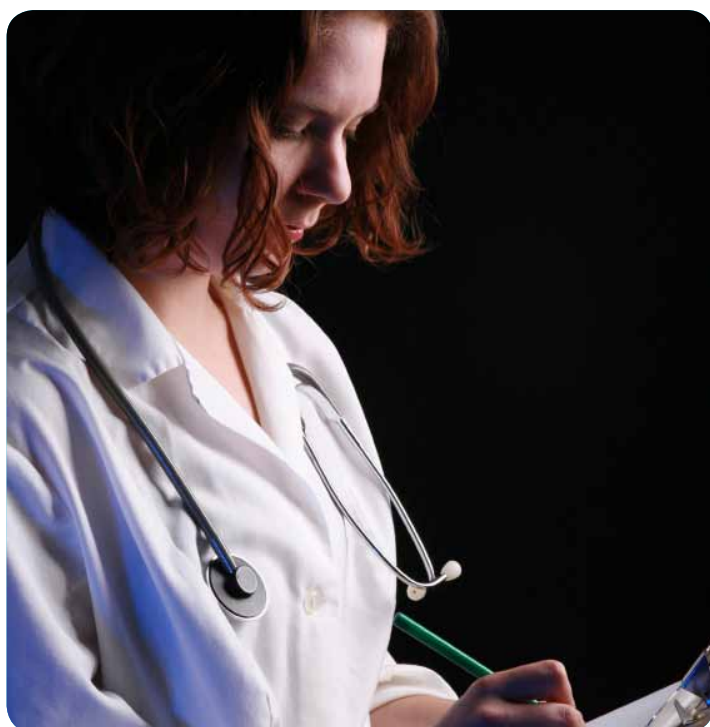


Open all hours?

Flexible childcare in
the 24/7 era

Rosanna Singler





‘ I cannot drop my child off and still get to work on time or get home to collect him on time as journey time is too long. I am often late leaving work and no option is open early enough or late enough.’



‘ There appears to be no commercial childcare available outside Monday to Friday eight to six and this just does not work for us.’



‘ If grandparents cannot look after kids when I’m working and [my] husband [is] away I’ve no other childcare option.’



‘ Childcare at [atypical times] is not available or reliable and emergency childcare which is available is shockingly expensive. I have to cobble together childcare and it is an absolute nightmare.’



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Executive summary

Changes in the economy, most notably the growth of the service sector and the requirement for 24/7 access to services, have led to a culture where employees are increasingly required to work outside of the standard working hours of 8.00am–6.00pm. With only 17 per cent of working families with dependent children working exclusively standard hours, this is a pressing issue for those parents who need to access childcare during atypical hours. There is much evidence to suggest that formal childcare is rarely available to meet this ‘non-standard’ demand. In this study, atypical hours will be defined as any hours worked outside of the standard day (8.00am–6.00pm), including early mornings, late evenings, overnight, weekends and irregular shift work. Very little centre-based care is open beyond 8.00am–6.00pm, from Monday to Friday. Only a small number of individual childminders and groups provide care outside of this and they tend to be more expensive.

Since 1998 the National Childcare Strategy has seen government give greater emphasis to expanding the childcare market to enable employees to remain in the workforce once they

have children. This is based on the recognition that enabling parents, a substantial proportion of the workforce, to remain in and re-enter work is of significant value to the economy and a vital part of government plans to end child poverty. This policy is also integral to the gender equality agenda. However, at both a national and local level, childcare for parents who work atypical hours has largely been ignored. Local authorities have a duty to ensure that sufficient childcare is available for their local parent population, yet they have largely failed to investigate fully or meet the needs of this group. The majority of parents, particularly those from low income groups, fill this gap with informal childcare, that is partners or ex-partners, grandparents, other family members and friends.

However, there are many problems in the reliance on informal care. Those who are reliant on grandparents may not always find this source of care available and/or reliable, because of grandparents’ own employment, health issues or other commitments. Higher income parents who work atypical hours may be able to use nannies and au pairs but high costs make these forms of

care inaccessible to low income families. In other families, parents work at different times in order to manage childcare (so called 'shift-parenting') yet even these parents may sometimes find themselves in a position where their shifts overlap. Lone parents, or couples who need to work at the same time, who have no relatives or social networks to fill in this gap, may not be able to take up employment that involves atypical hours.

This study assesses the demand for atypical hours childcare at different times (that is, early mornings, overnight and so on) and investigates the reasons for the difficulties faced by parents at these times. This was achieved through online surveys and interviews that were conducted with parents. Those providers who had delivered childcare at atypical times and national childcare organisations were interviewed to discover what could be done to improve availability.

Key findings

- A significant number of parents work atypical hours in one form or another – 16 per cent of parents work shifts; 1 in 10 work over 40 hours and a staggering 4 in 10 parents work hours which vary week to week – this may not necessarily be atypical hours but it has an impact on demand for childcare, making it irregular and unpredictable.
- Parents in a weak labour market position are more likely to be concentrated in jobs which demand they work at least some atypical hours. This indicates that low-income groups form a large part of the demand for atypical hours childcare. Affordability is therefore a key consideration for those developing atypical hours childcare services.
- The majority of parents do not have a choice in the hours that they work, as the industry that they work in tends to dictate their hours.
- Lone parents are more likely to be found in jobs that demand they work atypical hours. However, in many cases, informal care provision is difficult to access as they may not be in a position to share childcare duties with their partner, for example. Moreover, those without family (those who have moved away from an extended family or are recent immigrants, for example), are in a similar position.
- Ethnicity is a factor in predicting atypical hours. Further research is needed to understand this pattern more fully but this is significant because, as with lone parents, some black minority and ethnic groups tend to be in a weak labour market position. So, with a view to preventing or reducing unemployment, atypical childcare policies need to focus on this group.
- A significant number of parents experience unmet demand for formal childcare at atypical times (including overnight). This is contrary to the suggestion that parents are happy with informal care at atypical times. Meeting this demand is essential for economic growth, as parents who cannot access childcare are at risk of falling out of employment. It is also essential for the success of the Government's welfare reform proposals, as without appropriate childcare parents who are not currently employed will be unable to move into work.
- Many parents who need childcare at times that vary from week to week (reflecting their varying hours) have trouble accessing childcare, as formal providers are not flexible enough to meet this need.
- Parents report needing childcare on an ad hoc or emergency basis (at very short notice) which causes other challenges for providers.
- Parents express concerns around the suitability of formal care at some non-standard times – late evenings and overnight in particular. However, parents are willing to use formal care on the basis that they trust the provider. In the case of overnight, late night and early morning care, it is preferable that a childminder provides care at the child's home.
- Some parents are not happy with using childminders as they feel they do not have the same 'checks and balances' as care provided in a group setting and are unreliable. There is little awareness that registered childminders have to follow the same Ofsted requirements as group-settings. This demonstrates that

government, at both a national and local level (Family Information Services, for example), and childminding organisations, must do everything they can to communicate this to parents.

- Suitability is less of an issue for parents requiring childcare at weekends – when nurseries and childminders tend to be unavailable. In relation to child welfare, there is no reason why childcare should not be provided at the weekend, as long as parents have sufficient family time together at other times.

Multiple barriers to the provision of childcare at atypical times were uncovered from this research, although the case studies in many cases illustrate solutions to these barriers:

- The difficulty of establishing demand is one of the most significant barriers – as this prevents providers from even attempting to set up services in the first instance. Parents might fail to report unmet demand for formal care as they do not feel it is available and do not request it. For these reasons, and other methodological problems (such as low response rates to surveys, a lack of qualitative data), local authorities find it very difficult to uncover a comprehensive picture of demand. However, both the case studies and this report show that it is possible to establish demand once parents are asked in slightly more detail about their needs for atypical hours childcare.
- Demand for childcare that is irregular, ad hoc or requested at short notice is cited as a problem by providers as it makes it difficult to arrange staff adequately (to meet regulations and give their own staff enough notice) and cost-effectively. Childminder networks are often able to meet these needs, as such networks tend to have a range of availability, which allows the childcare coordinator to find someone who is available at relatively short notice.
- Providing atypical hours care in group-settings can cause difficulties for staffing – that is finding staff willing to work, needing to pay staff more at atypical times and managing staff-to-child ratios to meet varying levels of demand. However, the case studies show that

this can be overcome by using a core group of staff who work more or less set hours, with a smaller number of staff who work hours that change each week, according to parental demand. Some providers find staff who are willing to work atypical hours because of their own personal circumstances.

- Parents are struggling to find a package of care that fulfils their needs. For example, parents need someone to pick their children up from school when they work late evenings. This highlights the need for universal, integrated services that include a mix of home-based and centre-based care, so that parents can mix and match to suit their needs.
- Without support at a local authority level, very few providers decide to set up their own atypical hours services, because they are unable to identify and attract demand and ensure that they are financially viable. When providers attempt to provide this service many fail, as demand takes too long to build and parents do not tend to switch providers as soon as they become available. Both the case studies and existing research show how external support in setting up such services can help to overcome these barriers.
- Registration processes (through Ofsted) are an issue for childcare providers considering providing services at atypical times (particularly overnight care). A lack of perceived demand for care at this time compounds this issue, as providers do not feel that it is worthwhile to go through the process if they are unlikely to find enough demand to warrant the extra time and money necessary. If a local authority can help providers find sufficient demand, providers will be more likely to register.

Recommendations

In view of these findings our recommendations are as follows:

Local government

Local authorities must play a greater role in coordinating childcare for atypical hours:

- Pay closer attention to atypical hours in their Childcare Sufficiency Assessments – probing more deeply, in both surveys and interviews, the needs of parents who work atypical hours, rather than assuming a lack of demand because parents are not actively seeking childcare.
- Assess demand at a local community level by engaging with parents who work atypical hours but do not use formal care. This can easily be achieved through ‘on the ground’ visits to specific locations such as Sure Start Children’s Centres.
- Promote and support childminder networks.
- Offer ‘pump-priming’ grants for an agreed period to provide sufficient time for atypical hours childcare services to find alternative means of funding or become self-sustaining businesses (such as social enterprises).
- Support universal, integrated services that include a mix of home-based and centre-based care, so that parents can mix and match to suit their needs, consisting of centres with home-carers attached, with someone coordinating the partnership to ensure services meet parents’ specific needs.
- Help to set up 24-hour centre-based services that are large enough to support a drop-in crèche and out-of-school provision, if the demand is there. International research illustrates how this can be achieved. For example, in Denmark one or two institutions in four different municipalities have attempted to establish a 24-hour service.
- Provide approved ‘sitter services’ where children are cared for in their own home by a registered carer.

- Help to secure funding for community nanny schemes, whereby parents can share a nanny who provides care in their own home with one or more parents. Local authorities can also support these schemes to become social enterprises that will eventually self-fund.
- Encourage and support primary and secondary schools to provide wraparound care in the form of breakfast and after-school clubs with opening hours that genuinely meet the needs of parents.
- Ensure that childcarers who provide care in a child’s home (for example, nannies or babysitters), register with Ofsted. Although registration is not compulsory, joining the Childcare Register on a voluntary basis means that parents can claim Tax Credits and use employer-supported childcare vouchers. Childminders will already be registered on the Early Years Register to provide care in their own home, but if they provide care in a child’s home they also should join the voluntary part of the Childcare Register.
- Support parents to be able to access local information about providers who would be willing to provide childcare outside of standard hours and/or at short notice.



Central government

Government should offer the following types of support:

- Increase the level of support and guidance for providers developing atypical hours services. This could include help setting up partnerships (particularly with large employers), the funding of childcare coordinators and the provision of best practice information.
- Promote the take up of financial support for childcare – such as Tax Credits and childcare vouchers – making parents aware that these can only be used for registered childcare. Expanding the number of registered childcare providers who provide care in the child's home and/or out-of-hours, such as childminders/sitters, would make childcare more affordable for low income groups.
- Encourage and assist large employers of staff working atypical hours, such as the NHS, to form partnerships with local childcare providers to help build demand, connecting parents to provision.
- Implement a government and employer based campaign to change workplace culture and to increase the acceptability of parents who need to reduce atypical hours, leave on time or require more regular hours.
- Extend the hours over which parents are able to take free early education entitlement for three and four-year-olds in the forthcoming review of the same in the Code of Practice. Currently the entitlement may not be accessed outside of 8.00am–6.00pm, but this should be extended from 7.00am–7.00pm, to enable parents with long working days or long travel to work times, to be able to use their free entitlement to cover this period. Since there are restrictions on the number of hours that may be taken in one day, and the number of days over which the entitlement may be taken, this change would not have an adverse effect on a child's welfare.
- Enable parents to request flexible working from day one of employment, with a stronger emphasis on their right to reject atypical hours and request more regular hours.



Introduction

Changes in the economy, most notably the growth of the service sector and the requirement for 24/7 access to services, have led to a culture where employees are increasingly required to work outside of the standard working hours of 8.00am–6.00pm. As Rutter (2011) points out, the emergency services, transport and manufacturing industries have always employed workers on a shift basis, but there is evidence that demand for atypical workers is on the rise, with, for example, those employed in the retail sector expected to work on Sundays or late into the night. Furthermore, some sectors are employing greater proportions of agency and casual workers and those on 'zero hours' contracts which involve a lot of atypical hours and unplanned working (Rutter, 2011). This is a particular issue for parents working these hours who need to access childcare at atypical hours. For example, Barnes *et al* (2006) found that a mere 17 per cent of working families with dependent children work exclusively standard hours. The same report also found that this was the case for 80 per cent of fathers and 50 per cent of mothers (both single and partnered). Moreover,

as a nation we now work very long hours, with one in four workers clocking up over 40 hours per week and over one-third working for ten hours per day on one or more days per month (Parent-Thirion *et al*, 2010). Long working hours inevitably mean that a significant proportion of parents will end up working well into what is considered atypical hours – early mornings and late evenings in particular.

These are not only times when families traditionally spend time together, but also there is much evidence to suggest that formal childcare is rarely available to meet this 'non-standard' demand. In this study, atypical hours are defined as any hours that are worked outside of the standard working day (8.00am–6.00pm), including early mornings, late evenings, overnight, weekends and irregular shift work. Very little centre-based care is open beyond 8.00am–6.00pm, Monday to Friday, and only a small number of individual childminders and groups provide care outside of this and they tend to be more expensive (Rutter, 2011). Local authorities, with a duty to ensure that sufficient childcare is available for their local population, have largely failed to investigate fully and meet the

needs of this group. The majority of parents fill this gap with partners or ex-partners, grandparents, other family members and friends (Statham and Mooney, 2003; citing DfES, 2001; La Valle *et al*, 2002; Skinner 2003; Woodland *et al*, 2002). Indeed, socio-economic factors are also key – as Rutter (2011) points out, higher income families may be able to use nannies and au pairs, but low income families are more likely to have to rely on free care offered by relatives. Those with no relatives or social networks to fill in this gap may not be able to take up employment that involves atypical hours (Statham and Mooney, 2003). This is especially significant as there is evidence to suggest that the lower socio-economic groups are more likely to work atypical hours, for example, Statham and Mooney (2003) found proportionally more parents worked non-standard hours in more disadvantaged areas.

There is much debate as to the suitability of formal childcare at atypical times – particularly that which is late at night and overnight – based on concerns for children’s welfare. Providers and parents interviewed for this study have called into question whether it is actually the role of providers and government to fill this gap at all. However, there are various problems with relying on informal care. Those who rely on grandparents, for example, may not always find this source of care available and/or reliable, because of grandparents’ own employment, health issues or other commitments. Similarly, there are problems with shift parenting, as parents who usually share the care of their children by working at different times sometimes find themselves in a position where their shifts overlap. Looking at demographic and employment trends, Statham and Mooney (2003) reiterate this point, warning that informal sources of childcare are likely to be in reduced supply in the future as more women nearing retirement age remain in paid employment and/or have other caring responsibilities, such as for elderly parents. Millar and Ridge (2008, cited in Campbell-Barr and Garnham, 2010), also found informal arrangements to be vulnerable and subject to change, highlighting the example of grandparents in need of care themselves. In more extreme cases, a

lack of atypical hours childcare has contributed to parents having to leave their children in foster care. Rutter (2011) cites Olusanya and Hodes (2000), who sent a questionnaire to 600 randomly selected West African families with young children resident in one part of East London. Just over one-third responded and among them 29 had sent at least one of their children to a private foster carer. Almost all of the fostered children were under five and most also had parents who were working atypical hours.

Contrary to the belief that parents are happy with informal care at atypical times, in their extensive review of all available evidence on childcare for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Campbell-Barr and Garnham (2010) found much evidence that there is a growing number of parents reporting unmet demand for formal childcare at atypical times (citing Bell and La Valle, 2005; Dickens *et al*, 2005; Harries *et al*, 2004; La Valle *et al*, 2002; and Statham and Mooney, 2003). The Family Commission (2010) also recently reported parents’ struggles to find appropriate and flexible childcare, particularly those working evenings and weekends. Meeting this demand is essential for economic growth as parents who cannot access childcare are at risk of falling out of employment. This is discussed further in the next section.

Policy context

Since 1998, the National Childcare Strategy has seen government give greater emphasis to expanding the childcare market to allow employees to remain in the workforce once they have children. This is based on the recognition that enabling parents, a significant proportion of the workforce, to remain in and re-enter work is of significant value to the economy and a critical part of government’s plans to end child poverty. This policy is integral to the gender equality agenda. Yet at both a national and local level, childcare for parents who work atypical hours has largely been ignored, when a significant proportion of working parents work such hours.

In the context of the current ambitious plans for welfare reform, it is vital that practical support

for childcare is available if government plans to encourage parents (lone parents, in particular) back into the labour market. It is essential that childcare can meet the needs of a labour market that encompasses a significant amount of jobs which demand that parents work atypical hours. We already know that affordable, local childcare is one of the biggest barriers to employment, particularly for lone parents. This should be a key consideration for local authorities, in their duty to support their local labour market and reduce child poverty.

At the same time, we must remain focused on the welfare of children and their developmental needs and ask whether it is really appropriate for children to be in care in the late evenings or overnight. To this end, a change in the working culture is called for, as it will help to mitigate this question, by ensuring that the labour market is family-friendly. While atypical working hours are a fact of life for many parents (as it is essential in certain sectors such as the NHS), so childcare services must be flexible enough to play a significant role in enabling parents to remain in these roles.

The free early education entitlement for three to four-year-olds is one lever which can be used in a way that meets the needs of working parents and the developmental needs of pre-school children (as it is intended). There is no reason why it cannot be made more flexible, extending outer time limits an hour either way – from 8.00am–6.00pm to 7.00am–7.00pm – would enable parents with long working days or long travel-to-work times to be able to use their free entitlement for at least one of the days they work. Similarly, there is no reason why the free entitlement could not be used on a Saturday, to help parents who work on the weekend.

International atypical childcare

Looking at the international evidence, it is clear that achieving better coverage for parents working atypical hours is possible. The European Commission conducted a comparative review of childcare in 30 European countries, which included some information on the provision of childcare in relation to hours (Plantenga and Remery, 2009). Significantly, the research revealed that most

countries have a few centres that offer care at atypical hours. For example, some of the larger towns in Denmark have a limited number of nurseries and kindergartens that offer care during evening and night hours and one or two institutions in four different municipalities have attempted to establish a 24/7 service. In France there are a few examples of ‘nonstop’ crèches and crèches that offer extended care (for example, ten hours care from 6.00am–9.30pm). In Sweden, more than half of all municipalities offer night-opening childcare arrangements to parents who work nights. In Finland, recent legislation stipulates that municipalities have to provide childcare at times that parents need it, including during the night, the weekend and so on. Consequently, a striking 62 per cent of the municipalities report that the demand for this type of shift care is fully or almost fully met.

Existing research on childcare at atypical times

There have been very few studies which look explicitly at demand for childcare at atypical times and many of them are nearly a decade old. Daycare Trust carried out a study for the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2001, which aimed to identify the demand for and availability of childcare for parents working shifts and atypical hours. It surveyed Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) in England and looked at examples of employers providing flexible work options and help with childcare, how it is met in other countries, and the views of parents working atypical hours with regard to their childcare needs.

Statham and Mooney (2003) examined the factors that prevent or facilitate childcare providers offering a service that covers atypical working hours, largely from a demand-side perspective – surveying now defunct EYDCPs, which were responsible for implementing the National Childcare Strategy in each local authority.

La Valle *et al* (2002) looked at the effect that parental work at atypical times might have on family life, rather than explicitly from a childcare perspective. This informative study examined

whether socio-economic factors affect the likelihood of working atypical hours. It identified low income and low skilled parents as likely to be working atypical hours and explored the relationship between family circumstances and atypical hours. It shed light on those family characteristics (for example, family structure, children's age) that are more closely associated with atypical work, and the type of work (early mornings, late evenings and so on).

The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents (2009), carried out by the National Centre for Social Research for the Department for Education (DfE), provides survey data on atypical working hours by family type, and whether atypical working hours cause problems with childcare by family type (according to different times – early morning, late evenings, weekends and so on).

What is missing from much of this research is a fuller understanding of what parents working atypical hours need in terms of childcare. The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, for example, identifies the times when parents have difficulty accessing childcare but does not state what type of childcare they were trying to access (that is, informal or formal) and the particular reasons for the difficulties. Furthermore, there are holes in the existing research that mean that there is little to no information on the type and time of care that these parents would access if it was available. For example, is informal childcare use a proactive choice or a reactive strategy? As a proactive choice, parents organise their hours so that they are able to share childcare or use grandparents. In so doing, they have made a firm decision to avoid the use of childcare at atypical times. On the other hand, reactive strategy parents might find themselves being forced to rely on informal care because formal childcare is either not available or unaffordable.

Research aims

Policymaking on atypical hours childcare is impeded by a lack of knowledge regarding the exact level of demand and whether, if care was available at atypical times, parents would use it.

This study will attempt to understand the barriers to establishing and supplying demand, and how to overcome them, so that those with responsibility for providing childcare can adequately meet the gaps.

Specifically, our research is concerned with answering the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of parents who work atypical hours? (ethnicity, family type, socio-economic group)?
2. How many parents work in jobs in which they have no choice of hours and does this differ according to socio-economic position and/or family type?
3. At what times do parents face the most difficulty accessing childcare (early mornings, late evenings, overnight, weekends and irregular shift work) and what are the reasons for this difficulty?
4. How many parents do not work because they cannot find childcare which fits around their work patterns?
5. What is the level of childcare being provided at atypical times (before 8.00am, after 6.00pm, regularly/non-regularly, overnight and weekends) and by which providers?
6. What are the barriers to providing childcare at atypical times (before 8.00am, after 6.00pm, regularly/non regularly, overnight and weekends)?
7. How have these barriers been overcome?

This research will be supplemented by a larger study that Daycare Trust is currently conducting research, looking at informal childcare (funded by Big Lottery).



Methodology

The study adopted a multi-method approach consisting of five components:

- An atypical hours survey of 400 parents
- Secondary data analysis of the Labour Force Survey
- Parent interviews
- Provider interviews
- Childcare Sufficiency Assessments analysis

The atypical working hours parents survey

We conducted an online survey using a sample of 400 parents to investigate research questions 2 to 4 (see 'Research aims'). A snowball sampling strategy was used to ensure that the greatest possible number of parents (with children under 16) were made aware of the survey. An email describing the survey and providing a link to its online location was sent to our network of parents. It was also sent to a wide range of contacts such as trade unions, parent and provider organisations, who advertised

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the survey to their members on our behalf. This may mean that the survey was unable to reach parents who are not in contact with any particular networks. The online survey was aimed at parents working atypical hours, but we also encouraged parents who were currently unemployed to answer, to understand if a lack of atypical hours childcare acted as a barrier to securing employment. The survey was conducted from September to November 2010. Details of this survey, including the sample profile and questionnaire, can be found in the appendices.

Due to budgetary and time constraints, data from the survey will not be representative of all parents working atypical hours, primarily because the sample was not selected randomly from this population. As such it is not possible to extrapolate from this data, although it remains useful and indicative in the absence of other information.

Secondary data analysis of the Labour Force Survey

The quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) October to December 2009 dataset was analysed in order

to determine working patterns and provide an indication of the level of demand for childcare during atypical times. The LFS is a quarterly survey of 125,000 households undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), with the primary aim of providing information on the labour market. The survey includes variables on work patterns, including full-time or part-time working, atypical and flexible working patterns. These can be analysed alongside other variables such as industry, sector and occupation class. The up-to-date nature of the LFS makes it a particularly valuable source of information.

Parent interviews

Existing national surveys asking parents about childcare generally fail to explore the reasons for their difficulties in great detail. Therefore, interviews were carried out to provide a more nuanced understanding of the barriers parents face in accessing childcare at atypical times. From those who completed the survey, 15 parents were selected to take part in semi-structured telephone interviews (typically lasting 15–20 minutes). Parents from a broad range of socio-economic groups were selected, to ensure that a wide range of key groups were represented (using their stated profession to classify them according to the Registrar General's classification of social class). Lone parents and partnered parents were interviewed to further understand their specific issues. Those out of work were also interviewed in order to comprehend whether lack of childcare at atypical times acted as an employment barrier. Those parents who took part came from a range of locations across the country – from urban to rural, from north to south.

Provider interviews

In order to assess the issue of atypical hours childcare from the perspective of providers, both membership organisations for providers and a range of individual providers took part in semi-structured interviews over the telephone that lasted from 15–20 minutes. In addition, provider organisations furnished us with case studies to

demonstrate good-practice in the provision of childcare during atypical hours. The aim was to have examples of different types of childcare represented – group-care settings, childminders, private and maintained.

The provider organisations interviewed included: Early Education, National Day Nurseries Association, National Childminding Association and 4Children. They were interviewed from a policy and provider perspective. Particularly, they were asked their views on the general coverage of atypical hours childcare and the barriers and challenges that they faced as users.

Providers interviewed included one private nursery and a nursery which is a social enterprise, two childminders and two NHS childcare coordinators. The coordinator from Southwark's At Home Childcare Service was also interviewed, to provide the perspective of an atypical childcare strategy coordinated at a local government level.

Analysis of Childcare Sufficiency Assessments

In addition to this, the 2008 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) were also analysed, with a wide range of CSAs searched for references to atypical or flexible working hours, to gain a broader perspective on how local authorities have assessed this problem and how, if at all, they have attempted to ensure that childcare is available at atypical times. CSAs are audits of childcare provision and are conducted by local authorities every three years, with a shorter annual update between this three-yearly cycle.

If further resources were available a larger, more rigorous and representative survey is recommended, in order to attain more representative data. Further interviews with parents, particularly lone parents and unemployed parents, would provide further insight into the specific issues of these groups.



What parents need

This section looks at the existing literature on childcare at atypical times, our analysis from the Labour Force Survey (LFS)¹ and the findings from our parent's survey and from direct interviews with parents. This will allow us to obtain a clearer picture of the hours that parents are likely to work and enable us to gain a better understanding of the barriers to childcare that parents working such hours face.

Hours parents work

As the National Childcare Strategy acknowledged, access to childcare is critical if parents, representing a significant proportion of the working population, are able to stay in the workforce. In this section, the quarterly LFS October to December 2009 dataset is analysed in order to determine working patterns and provide an indication of the level of demand for childcare during atypical times.

Shift work

LFS data does not record the number of parents working atypical hours, as defined by this report,

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but it does record the number of people who work shifts. This acts as a good proxy for atypical hours, as shift work implies any work that does not take place from 8.00am–6.00pm, from Monday to Friday. Shift work is defined in the LFS user guide as: three-shift working; continental shifts; two-shift system with 'earlies' and 'lates'/double day shifts; sometimes night and sometimes day shifts; split shifts; morning shifts; evening or twilight shifts; night shifts; weekend shifts; and other type of shift work.

Just under one-fifth of the population (17 per cent) work shifts, this being true of 16 per cent of parents with at least one dependent child living with them. On this basis, a significant minority of parents are working atypical hours.

Working longer than 40 hours per week

Working over 40 hours is also a good proxy for atypical hours, as by definition people would have to work outside of what is traditionally thought of as full-time hours (that is from 9.00am–5.00pm,

Monday to Friday), to clock up this number of hours. Existing research reporting that one in four Britons work over 40 hours a week is backed up by these LFS figures – with almost one-third of the population (27 per cent) working over 40 hours a week. Just over one in ten parents with a dependent child (under 16-years-old) work over 40 hours.

Working overtime

A significant proportion of the workforce works overtime (almost four in ten (36 per cent)), with slightly more men than women working overtime (39 per cent compared to 34 per cent of women).

Whether weekly hours vary

It is significant to look at the amount of parents whose hours varied weekly, as this will have an effect on how regular their demand for childcare would be (many nurseries require regular demand), even though this may not necessarily be work during atypical hours. This is true of four in ten parents.

Analysis from our parent survey provides an indication of the times parents are likely to work, according to our definition of atypical hours. As discussed in the methodology section, these findings cannot be extrapolated to the rest of the population, as in the case of Labour Force Survey (LFS), as it has been aimed at people working atypical hours and this is likely to inflate the results.

The survey findings confirm the LFS findings (that weekly hours vary for a significant proportion of parents), and outline the fact that irregular work is more prevalent among respondents than the different atypical hours themselves (although it is highly likely that they overlap).

The highest proportion of respondents report working evenings 'sometimes' during the working week (65 per cent), closely followed by Saturdays and Sundays. However, those who report working before 8.00am 'sometimes' is similarly high, at almost six in ten parents. Interestingly, figures for those who report working overnight 'sometimes'

are also quite high (although a lot smaller for those who work it 'always') (see Table 1). Again, while these figures cannot be extrapolated, they suggest that Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs) need to pay much more attention to overnight work than they have done in the past.

Table 1: Hours parents work September–November 2010

	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work before 8.00am (Monday–Friday)	25%	58%	18%
I work evenings (Monday–Friday, after 6.00pm)	16%	65%	19%
I work at times that vary from week to week	17%	40%	43%
I work at times that vary from month to month	21%	39%	41%
I work overnight	48%	47%	6%
I work Saturdays	26%	61%	13%
I work Sundays	29%	60%	11%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Socio-economic profile of parents who work atypical hours

It is important to look at atypical hours from a socio-economic perspective because it helps providers understand better their potential market. For example, although working atypical hours is fairly common across the labour market, there is evidence to suggest that control over hours worked and the likelihood of working at certain atypical times is strongly related to having a weak position in the labour market (Barnes *et al*, 2006; Family Commission, 2009). Based on an existing survey of 5,000 parents conducted for the Department for Education and Employment (now DfE), La Valle *et al* (2002) found that the majority of parents (almost three-quarters) said they worked atypical hours because it was a requirement of the job (that is, they did not have any control over the hours they worked), regardless of their position in the labour

market. However, this was particularly likely to be true for those working in professional and manual professions. Only a minority of parents reported choosing their hours in order to minimise their use of formal childcare (allowing for a shift-parenting arrangement), working against the assumption that parents choose to work atypical hours so that they can share parenting and avoid formal care.

The same study found that factors associated with lack of limited job choice and working arrangements (including low skill levels, skills relevant only to declining sectors, health problems and disability) were likely to have an impact on a parent's level of choice of hours. This was due to the fact that their bargaining positions were much weaker and that they might be more likely to work non-standard hours out of necessity rather than choice, as staying in work was a higher priority. Furthermore, anecdotally, national childcare organisations reported to Statham and Mooney (2003) that demand for atypical childcare tended to come from more deprived areas.

There is a lot of evidence in Barnes *et al* (2003) that substantiates the link between low-skilled workers and the increased likelihood of working non-standard hours (citing Barnes and Bryson, 2004; Venn, 2003). Their research also found that managers, professionals or those who work in personal services, are also likely to work atypical hours (citing Harkness, 1999), although research also suggests that professional, managerial and technical workers tend to undertake their atypical work for a short time in the evenings (as they have more freedom as to when they can work their overtime) (Natti *et al*, 2004 cited in Barnes *et al*, 2006). In other occupation groups, such as in the manual professions however, people are more likely to work non-standard hours and are less likely to take this work home (Callister, 2003). Low skilled workers and those in manual occupations and industries are more likely to undertake morning and night work, while evening work affects a broader range of people, including those who work part-time, very long hours or students (Barnes *et al*, 2006, citing Venn, 2003).

Our analysis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data found that atypical hours were largely spread across different socio-economic groups. For example, it was found that managers and senior officials were the group most likely to work over 40 hours a week, followed by those working in process, plant and machine occupations and those in the professional occupations. Those working in the skilled trade occupations were also likely to work these hours.

Our parents survey, although not representative, found that a large proportion of parents (almost eight in ten) say that their hours are a requirement of their job. This indicates that very few parents choose atypical hours to enable them to share childcare with their partner, in a shift-parenting style arrangement. A much smaller proportion reported it being because their job was the only one available to them locally. It would therefore appear that most parents in the survey worked atypical hours because that was what their chosen career demanded, as opposed to being forced to work such hours because there was no other work or that they were constrained to atypical working hours because of their position in the labour market, as suggested in the research. Either way, it is not simple to change careers just because you have had children, so effectively these parents have little choice.

Furthermore, in the survey, slightly fewer lone parents say that their hours are a requirement of their job (71 per cent compared to 80 per cent of couples). Slightly more say they chose their hours to fit in with their childcare arrangements (16 per cent as compared to 11 per cent of couple parents). As these figures are so small they are only indicative, but this is an interesting finding. It suggests that lone parents are perhaps more likely to consider hours when choosing jobs that may have atypical hours. This may be because, as found earlier, they are less likely to be able to access both informal and formal care. Additional research is needed to explore this issue further.

Almost all of the parents interviewed stated that the hours that they were working did not match up to their ideal childcare arrangements. This was

mostly because of the circumstances of their chosen profession – for example, those working in television production accepted that they had to work early or late shifts or both, because of the industry that they worked in. Some of the parents interviewed who were unemployed, or who had recently been made unemployed, implied that they had little choice in the hours of their profession and also had had difficulty finding work in other roles. These parents, supporting existing research, tended to be employed in lower paid positions. For example, one parent who was a beauty consultant, which included shifts working early mornings revealed:

'I have asked my boss if I can change my hours to 9.00am–5.00pm but this does not look likely. I have looked around for other jobs with better hours but have not found much.'

Family type and link to atypical hours

Similarly, according to research, whether a parent is single or partnered (married or co-habiting) has an effect on the reason they work the hours they do. For example, La Valle *et al* (2002), found that lone parents were even more likely to report that their hours were a requirement of the job (as opposed to a choice), to fit in with preferable childcare arrangements. Moreover, research conducted by Barnes *et al* (2006) found that, due to their skills profile, lone parents tend to be more likely to work in labour markets where atypical hours are more likely to be required.

Analysis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data finds that lone parents are almost as likely, or slightly more likely, to work shifts as coupled parents. Lone parents tend to be slightly less likely to work shifts if all their children are under 16 but slightly more likely if they have a mix of dependent and non-dependent children (18 per cent). This could possibly be because some parents ask their older children to take care of younger siblings and so can find childcare which covers atypical work. Conversely, the survey finds that lone parents are slightly less likely to work hours which vary on a weekly basis, which can also cause issues for

meeting childcare needs (even if the actual hours worked are not at atypical times).

In addition, the age of the child affects parental decisions around working and appears to be particularly significant when looking at the working patterns of lone parents who, out of those parents working atypical hours, are more likely to have an older child. In this way, 36 per cent of lone mothers frequently working at atypical times had a child over the age of 11, compared with 29 per cent of other employed lone parents (La Valle *et al*, 2002). Given what is known about the issues that lone parents have finding affordable childcare, as discussed above, and their ability to find family friendly employment, it is possible that having a child that is old enough to look after him- or herself at certain times, is a significant factor in allowing lone parents to move into work. Also, lone parents are required by the welfare system to look for work when their child reaches seven and this age will be reduced to five in October 2011. In general, all parents felt that the older the child, the less concerned they were with finding cover at certain atypical times (La Valle *et al*, 2002). Further research is needed with lone parents, to explore their reasons for working atypical hours.



Ethnicity and its link to atypical hours working

Looking at the likelihood of working shifts 'most of the time', according to ethnicity in our LFS analysis, certain groups are much more likely to work shifts than others – Black African (23 per cent), Other Black (21 per cent), Indian (20 per cent), Chinese (19 per cent), Other White (18 per cent), Other Asian (18 per cent). This is in contrast to the lower likelihood of those who report being British White working shifts at 13 per cent. Bangladeshi and Black Caribbeans are also less likely to report working shifts.

The difficulties parents face accessing atypical hours childcare

Existing research looking at parents who work atypical hours finds a strong reliance on informal care. This is true of over one-half of partnered families, where only the mother frequently worked atypical hours and just under one-half where both parents worked these hours (La Valle *et al*, 2002). Similarly, more recent research, conducted for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (now the Department for Education) finds that when parents were working atypical hours, this tended to increase the likelihood of the use of informal care, reflecting what it found to be a lack of formal care at these hours (Kazimirski *et al*, 2007). Where at least one of the parents worked atypical hours, a shift-parenting operation was used – whereby one parent works while the other takes care of the children and vice versa.

However, it is unclear from the research as to whether parents were happy with using informal care and would try to avoid formal care, even if it was available. It is also difficult to ascertain whether informal childcare use is a proactive choice or a reactive strategy. That is, do parents try to organise their hours so that they are able to share childcare or use grandparents and avoid the use of formal care because they do not think it is suitable at atypical times? Or is it a reactive strategy, in the sense that they are effectively forced to rely on informal care because formal care

is not available (or is unaffordable if it is)? Daycare Trust is currently conducting research on informal childcare which is closely linked to the findings of this report.

There are various reasons as to why it has been so difficult to predict demand for childcare at atypical times, and understand what childcare parents working such hours need and would consider using if available. For one, as La Valle *et al* (2002) point out, parents make decisions around childcare in the context of what they believe to be available, so while they may report a preference for using informal care, this may be because they do not think that formal childcare is available and therefore do not treat it as a serious consideration.

Moreover, looking at the issue from a demand-side perspective, Statham and Mooney (2003) carried out a survey of providers, provider organisations and the now defunct Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs). They found that accurate and reliable information on demand was not easy to gather. The authors of the study discovered that parents were unlikely to request childcare that they did not think would be available. Indeed, even though EYDCPs undertook surveys of local parents as part of their childcare audits, response rates to such questionnaires were usually extremely low. In addition, Children's Information Services (CISs), now Family Information Services, in some authorities followed up all enquiries about childcare and collected information on whether parents found a provider. However, even this did not provide a comprehensive picture of demand and unmet demand as not every parent contacts a CIS, and of those who do, only a minority will return monitoring forms. As the authors conclude, it is likely that for these reasons, reported demand for atypical hours childcare from providers, EYDCPs and CISs, was low.

Times parents are most likely to have difficulty accessing childcare

Existing evidence shows that parents do have difficulty accessing childcare at atypical times, although it is not clear which type of care they are trying to access and what exactly causes the

difficulty. In a survey of parents for DfE (Smith *et al*, 2009), it was found that mothers working atypical hours were more likely to report difficulty accessing childcare before 8.00am and after 6.00pm (representing one-quarter of partnered mothers), and much less at the weekends. Despite this, parents were almost as likely to work on Saturdays as they were to work past 6.00pm. Perhaps this was because they were able to rely on partners on these days. The study did not report any difficulties in finding childcare overnight, for both lone and partnered parents. Although a similar study conducted for DCFS in 2007 (Kazimirski *et al*, 2007), did find that parents used childcare overnight, it was at this time that they were least likely to use it. This possibly reflects a preference for informal care at these times, or a lack of availability of formal care.

In our survey of parents, their difficulties accessing childcare tended to mirror the DfE research noted above. However, our survey found that overnight care was a significant issue for parents, suggesting that this is a bigger problem than is currently acknowledged (although, as the survey cannot be extrapolated to the general population, these results are only indicative). A few quotes from the survey reveal the issue from the parental perspective:

'I'm a single mum and don't know anyone that could look after my kids overnight!'

'If I am working on [a] night shift and my wife who is a student nurse is on [a] placement, there will be the problem of who to look after them at night.'

'They are antisocial hours and therefore I would need someone to sleep in my house.'

'I could not afford overnight childcare or indeed find anyone to do so.'

'Trying to find one childminder to take both my children overnight is so difficult, because each week/month is different. With childminders sometimes it's first come first served, then it's all their paper work.'

Comparing these results in the parents survey to the times that parents say that they work highlights

a significant difference between those saying they work Saturdays and Sunday 'sometimes' (61 per cent and 60 per cent respectively) and those who report difficulty at this time (42 per cent and 38 per cent respectively). This perhaps reflects the fact that informal care is much easier to access at these times. There is also a difference between those parents who report working overnight (47 per cent) compared with 32 per cent who report difficulty at this time. This could reflect a preference for informal care or an ability to rely on partners. Moreover, it would appear that overnight care is difficult for parents only relatively rarely, which could make it more challenging for providers to meet, as this demand is less likely to be steady.

Difficulty accessing formal childcare

Significantly, our survey looked more closely at the reasons why parents face difficulty accessing childcare – what type of childcare they were trying to access and why they were having so much trouble doing so? It found that there was an appetite for formal care for all types of atypical working (although sometimes, such as overnight, this was not without concerns, as discussed later). This was generally because informal care was not available for some or all of the times that parents worked atypical hours. Overall, the majority of parents preferred a formal type of childcare², with the most popular form being a day nursery (at almost one-third of parents), followed by a childminder (one in ten) and breakfast and after-school clubs (almost one in ten) (see Table 2). Nursery schools and playgroups were less popular. Informal care was also popular, although less so than formal care, with around a quarter of parents preferring this. The child's grandparent or other family members were particularly popular within informal care options (18 per cent).

Table 2: Comparing preferred childcare to main form of childcare September–November 2010

	Childcare type	Preferred childcare	Main form of childcare
Formal childcare	Day nursery	30%	31%
	Nursery school	4%	4%
	Nursery class in a primary school	4%	2%
	Childminder	12%	14%
	Playgroup or pre-school	3%	3%
	Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs	1%	0%
	Breakfast club/after-school club	9%	11%
	Holiday scheme/club	4%	2%
	Nanny	6%	4%
	Au pair	1%	1%
Informal childcare	Child's grandparents or other family member	18%	16%
	Friend or neighbour	3%	3%
	No childcare	3%	5%
	Other	2%	3%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

When asking parents which other forms of childcare they used, the figures are almost reversed in terms of popularity of formal and informal care. Far more parents use informal care – nearly one-half (46 per cent) use grandparents or other family member and one-quarter (24 per cent) use a friend or neighbour, compared with only 8 per cent using a day nursery and 13 per cent using a childminder. It is possible therefore that parents are supplementing their main form of childcare with informal childcare at the times that they are working atypical hours (when they cannot access formal childcare).

Table 3: Other forms of childcare used September–November 2010

What other forms of childcare do you use? (you can tick more than one option)		
Formal childcare	Day nursery	8%
	Nursery school	4%
	Nursery class in a primary school	3%
	Childminder	13%
	Playgroup or pre-school	9%
	Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs	0%
	Breakfast club/after-school club	24%
	Holiday scheme/club	23%
	Nanny	3%
	Au pair	0%
Informal childcare	Child's grandparents or other family member	46%
	Friend or neighbour	24%
	No childcare	11%
	Other	3%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

This is supported by the fact that an overwhelming majority of parents report that their preferred access to childcare would be that which is open at times that they need it to be (over six in ten). Therefore, when parents report being able to access their preferred childcare, it is because they can access it at standard times and as part of their childcare package.

Moreover, responses to an open-ended question in the survey, which asked parents why they had trouble accessing childcare at atypical times, reveal further support for this interpretation. Answers were re-coded into categories of similar responses and out of the parents who provided a response, a large majority mentioned that formal care was simply not available when it was needed (just over one-half). Some examples include:

'Other than my family I have never seen childcare that is outside 8.00am–6.00pm time bracket, or offered at weekends.'

'The childcare facility is not open before 8.00am and shuts at 6.00pm – nothing [is] available before or after these hours. I start a shift at 8.00am and finish shifts at 8.00pm.'

'Childcare is only available Monday to Friday, 7.30am–6.00pm. I work weekends which can cause an issue.'

'Most nurseries/crèches only open at about 7.30 or 8.00am and close at 6.00pm. I have had to alter my working day to allow me to pick up my son from the nursery.'

One-quarter mentioned that the ad hoc or irregular nature of demand made it difficult to access formal care. For example:

'The before and after-school club has school holidays. An option is a childminder but invariably they do not take ad hoc children.'

'My experience is that childcare providers have little ability to respond to changes in schedule or extra days needed. Bookings need to be made far in advance and they need to be the same each week.'

'Mainly, short notice and changing work patterns are a problem because the day nursery only has limited "extra day" availability and generally you have to have a specific day(s) booked in.'

One in ten also mentioned cost as another barrier that prevented them from finding formal care at these times. For example:

'It costs more to put my child in nursery before 8.00am.'

'Most day care settings do not provide affordable childcare beyond sociable hours.'

'Childcare at the times I need it is not offered – unless by [a] nanny at [a] hideous, unaffordable (sic) price.'

If the categories which parents reported trying to access formal care (either solely or together with informal care) are combined, an overwhelming majority seem to be trying to access formal care for at least some of the atypical hours that they work. This contradicts existing studies which suggest that parents prefer to rely on informal

care at atypical times and implies that closer attention needs to be paid to parents who work atypical times while meeting their needs for formal childcare at these times.

Challenges in the reliance on informal care

Existing research finds that there are numerous problems with relying on informal childcare to meet the shortfall in formal childcare available at atypical times. For example, research focusing on lone parents working atypical hours, found that lone parents tended to rely heavily on informal care because they did not feel that formal care would cater for any short-time, or ad hoc need (Bell *et al*, 2005). These parents reported a desire for flexible childcare which did not require a regular or up-front commitment – for example, a 'drop in' out-of-school club or a childminder who could provide care at relatively short notice. Furthermore, Mooney and Statham (2003) warn that it is likely that informal sources of childcare are likely to be in reduced supply in the future, as more women nearing retirement age remain in paid employment and/or have other caring responsibilities (such as for elderly parents). Millar and Ridge (2008, cited in Campbell-Barr and Garnham, 2010) also report that there is evidence to suggest that informal arrangements can sometimes be vulnerable and subject to change, highlighting the example of grandparents becoming in need of care themselves. In addition, some parents report negative feelings in having to rely on informal carers (particularly grandmothers), more than they would wish to (La Valle *et al*, 2002). Forthcoming research from Daycare Trust looks at these issues around informal care in more detail.

Furthermore, interviews revealed that for some parents, although informal care was preferable, it was not available and so they were seeking formal care. One parent, for example, was due to return from maternity leave to her evenings-only teaching job. Although she would have preferred her mother-in-law to take care of her child, she was not available and her husband was studying away from home. She was trying to access affordable

childcare but without success. Quotes from the survey further illuminate this issue:

'I am a widow with no local family support and the nanny has her own family to care for in the evenings.'

'Our families are 250 and 400 miles away from us and we don't want to pay for a nanny as well as the day care. So I end up having to take leave to cover the times my wife has to go away on business, or sometimes even if she has a late meeting.'

The parent interviews also revealed that even though some parents managed to coordinate their shifts to enable them to share the care of their children and reduce their reliance on childcare, there were still times when this was not possible. For example, one set of parents worked virtually opposing shifts and could have almost made it work if the nursery they used was open a little later into the evening (up to 7.00pm). As it was, one parent was forced to drive the children one hour from his home, at dinner time, to drop them off at his wife's work, so that she could then drive them home which was incredibly disruptive to their children. Some parents could not rely on their partners at all as they either worked very long hours or were working away from home. For a lot of parents, ad hoc childcare available at short notice would have been helpful as it would have enabled them to meet this shortfall. Comments from the survey also illustrate this point:

'The only person who will look after my children before 4.00am is their father, and sometimes we're down to work at the same times.'

'My partner works away so I am in effect a single parent during the week. Any weekend working that I do needs to be planned in advance, I cannot react to last minute requests.'

Existing research supports these findings, which show that informal care is not always reliable or available. La Valle *et al* (2002) found that parents who generally relied on a method of shift-parenting (or family and friends to cover late evenings, nights and weekends), were most likely to report demand for atypical hours childcare – where plans

had fallen through, or where parents' shifts did not coordinate. Parents in this situation reported experiencing a lot of stress, as they struggled to coordinate childcare and work.

Furthermore, as Rutter (2011) points out, there are significant regional differences in informal childcare usage across the UK, with families in Greater London being less likely to use informal care such as grandparents and other relatives. The high proportion of internal and international migrants in London, both groups who may not live near to relatives, potentially accounts for this difference. This raises an important issue in terms of employment, as there may be a larger unmet demand for care at non-standard hours from this group who cannot rely on family or on formal care, but may be unable to avoid working atypical hours. For these families, either unemployment or a lack of supervision can be the consequence of this unmet childcare need.

Parental views on the suitability of childcare at atypical times

As well as exploring their working patterns, it remains important to consider parents' feelings around the use of formal care at atypical times. This is because childcare must be available that meets the welfare and developmental needs of the children and covers parents' working hours. Focusing on parents who work atypical hours and exploring their reasons for avoidance of formal care, La Valle *et al* (2002) found several themes emerging. Some parents did not feel comfortable using childminders in general, as they had concerns about the quality of care they provided, and the safety of their children with just one carer who may have a different value system or approach. For this reason childminders cannot be relied upon as the only type of childcare providing services at atypical times, so parents who are not comfortable using them can have another option. Other concerns were related to there being too many carers involved in looking after children – particularly pertinent to parents who work both atypical and typical hours and who may need to switch from nursery care to a childminder for

the evenings. Rutter (2011) finds that, in general, parents often use informal childcare as part of a package that combines formal and informal childcare. For example, using a nursery for daytime care but an informal carer to pick up the child in the early evening. This supports the premise that parents want a package of care to avoid over-use of care in a group setting. The concerns expressed were particularly relevant for parents with pre-school children, because pre-school children were less likely to be able to inform parents if they were unhappy with their care.

The study also looked into parents' feelings about what was considered to be family times – evenings and weekends, to which they attached a lot of importance. This may help to explain a particular preference for shift-parenting arrangements at these times, or at least another member of the family taking care of their children. Research conducted for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on lone parents and childcare adds to this view, finding that some parents were reluctant to consider using formal childcare late in the evening or at night (Bell *et al*, 2005). On the other hand, parents who were happy with formal care in general and not at atypical times specifically, reported that they knew the carers well and felt that they could trust them. These parents also mentioned the importance of formal group care to enable their children to develop social skills or a routine.

The interviews with parents also found concerns about childcare at atypical times, but found that if informal care was not available, parents were willing to consider formal care under certain conditions. For example, parents who worked early mornings tended to want carers who could come to their home at these times, to reduce disruption to their children. To illustrate, one couple both worked early mornings and were forced to drop their children off at their parents, getting them up and leaving the home by 6.45am. As the parent explains:

'I have to get the children out of bed so early and take them over to their grandparents. It's not a situation I am really happy with. It would be great if

a childminder could come to my home to look after my children and take them to school.'

Similarly, although none of the parents interviewed reported using formal care overnight, they would consider it if it met with certain conditions. These conditions were based upon whether they trusted their childminder and whether or not the arrangements meant that the child could stay in his or her own home. Parents who needed cover overnight found it very stressful. One parent, whose husband was employed abroad, worked as a nurse on occasional night shifts and had to rely on her friend, as it was the only form of care available. She found this incredibly difficult to manage, as she explains:

'My children have to go to my friend's house to sleep and she will have to drive them to school which is not the same one as her own children attend. Then they will need to be taken to an after-school club, so I am able to catch up on sleep from working the previous night.'

Some parents, on the other hand, were uneasy using childminders, feeling they could trust group settings as it had checks and balances and was more reliable (as nannies and childminders could call in sick and leave parents without care at the last minute). For example, one parent said:

'If there is only one person providing care, it is difficult to know they are giving the right care, resulting in a situation where it would be the word of the carer's against the children's.'

Demand for care at weekends

There were other times when unmet demand for formal care was reported and suitability was far less of an issue. For example, although care at weekends is barely mentioned in existing research as a time at which parents report childcare difficulties, in our parent's survey, four in ten parents cited this as a time that had caused them difficulty. The interviews revealed that parents did want to access formal care at these times. One lone parent interviewed worked one Saturday per month on an irregular basis, and had tried to find a childminder for Saturday cover. She said:

'The nursery I use is not open at the weekend so I tried to book a childminder but they were always booked up in advance, and many did not work Saturdays. I am forced to use friends when my mother is not available and I really hate doing this. I feel uncomfortable relying on my friends for such a big inconvenience.'

An aversion to relying on friends came up numerous times during interviews, as parents tended to feel it was too much of an imposition.

Need for flexibility

A theme that came through strongly in the interviews and survey was the demand for flexible care that could be provided at short notice. This tended to be an issue for either: those parents who would usually share care, but whose hours did not match up; or on a more irregular basis, those parents who worked hours that varied from week to week. The survey of parents found that being able to give notice acted as a significant barrier to accessing formal childcare, with almost one-third citing this as an issue. The interviews revealed that parents requiring nursery provision were usually the ones facing these problems, although parents also reported being able to use nannies and childminders. Nurseries tended to demand that parents pay for a regular place or provide a notice period for when they would be requiring a place. However, some parents worked a lot of hours one week and barely any the next, or they worked on contracts where they would be full-time for a few weeks and unemployed for another few weeks. One parent ended up giving up his work for this very reason:

'I wanted my youngest [aged two] to attend nursery but [I] could not justify paying for a place during the weeks I do not work. It seemed more cost-effective to give up work until all my children are in school.'

Parents' responses in the survey also provided vital insights into this problem:

'The shifts I work are not regular but childminders need regular income and charge for cancellations and retainers for unused times.'

'I have to use a nanny as I work freelance and only want childcare when I'm working – nothing else is this flexible.'

As mentioned above, parents also found that childminders were not available at short notice. For those who wanted to use nannies, they had a similar problem to those using nurseries. It was not cost-effective to have a nanny on the days or weeks that they were not working as nannies required regular uninterrupted work.

Demand for joined-up care

For those parents who had school-age children in particular, there was a strong demand for affordable breakfast and after-school clubs which were able to cover their working hours (that is, opening slightly later than 6.00pm). In some cases after-school clubs were not available at all for children who attended school. One parent explains in an interview:

'I would much prefer it if my daughter's school provided wraparound care through breakfast and after-school clubs, so I know she is safe and being cared for whilst I am at work. As it is, I have to pay a premium for the nursery to pick her up in a taxi from school and take her to the nursery.'

On the other hand, parents who could access these clubs relied on them to enable them to work long days without having to worry about their children, as one parent said:

'After-school clubs are reliable, structured and provide good activities for my children. It is great to know that whilst I am working my children are safe and I do not have to worry about them having dinner, as this is provided for.'

For others, after-school clubs were not always desirable as they were concerned that their children were in school for too long. However, this meant relying on family or friends which was also not desirable. For example, one lone parent had to rely on her mother who was in her eighties to take an hour long bus to pick up her children from school, and get another hour long bus back:

'It is a lot to ask of my mum, who is elderly. I do not know how long I can keep going on asking her to do this, but my children are already attending the breakfast club daily and I want to avoid them having to be in school for too long.'

It would appear that there is the demand for a flexible package of provision that gives parents a choice in care which covers their long working days. Instead of offering only after-school clubs, which may not suit parents who wish to avoid their children being in school for too long, parents may benefit from a choice of childminders, perhaps attached to the school or a formal childcare provider, who could pick their children up from school and take them to their home.

Workplace culture

Although this study is not explicitly looking at workplace culture, a few of the parents in the interviews mentioned the inability of their jobs to accommodate their needs for family-friendly hours as a major issue. In a couple of instances this problem had prevented them from working, as they could not and did not want to find childcare to cover these hours. In an interview, one parent had felt forced to give up his job because he found that the industry that he was working in – television production – left him unable to assert any control over his hours. The parent in question had tried to stipulate to his employer that on two days a week he would only work until 5.30pm, so that he could pick up his children from nursery when his wife worked late:

'As I would leave earlier than others, I would hear comments like, "there goes the part-timer". Also it became clear that I would not be asked to work with the same team again. I began to realise that making these requests hampered my chances of getting further work. When I asked my agent if I could not be put forward for projects which need me to work late on these two days I was told that I would miss out on a lot of projects. I am frustrated at how inflexible the industry I work in is for working parents.'

The parent could not find and would not be willing to find childcare late into the evening as he did not feel this was suitable with a young child (aged three years old). This situation highlights the difficulty in securing flexible, family-friendly, working hours – particularly for those who are working on a freelance basis. Other case studies show that some parents are allowed to request to drop what is known as their unpredictability allowance – giving them some control over their hours (although they still worked atypical hours), but losing them around ten per cent of their pay. This at least allows them the ability to negotiate with their employer. The right to request flexible working, introduced for those with parental responsibility of a child aged under 17 (from April 2011 a child aged under 18), encompasses the right to request not to work atypical hours:

*'Flexitime allows you to choose, within agreed limits, when to start and end your working day. You work a standard core time, but you can vary your start, finish and break times each day. For example, within limits, you may also be able to carry over any excess or shortfall in the number of hours you are required to work. This could be something like one or two days a month.'*³ (Directgov).



The inclusion of the phrase 'within agreed limits' suggests that it is down to the employer to decide. The legislation was designed to facilitate negotiation on hours which suits both the employer and employee. There is evidence to suggest that in many cases requests are accepted but there is more evidence needed to understand whether parents working atypical hours in particular get their requests accepted.

Lone parents

According to existing research, lone parents are more likely to rely on informal care (Speight *et al*, 2009) and are also more likely to have difficulties with accessing childcare, as they are less likely to be able to rely on their child's other parent as a source of childcare (than their partnered counterparts). This can impact on their employment decisions and experiences. This problem is compounded by the difficulties, most significantly affordability, which lone parents have in accessing childcare services (Bell *et al*, 2005).

Our survey tends to support these findings, although it only represents a small number of lone parents (eight) and so is at best, indicative, as it found that one parent households were less likely to use a day nursery (33 per cent against 18 per cent) as their main form of care. Interestingly, lone parents are also more likely to rely on breakfast clubs and after-school clubs (27 per cent against 8 per cent of couple parents) – which may reflect the fact that lone parents are more likely to work when their children are in school and cannot share wraparound care with the other parent. Further research is necessary to explore these issues in more depth.

Looking at the specific times which cause lone parents the most difficulty, existing research found that although the levels of reported difficulty were similar for lone parents before 8.00am and after 6.00pm, it was higher for those who worked at weekends. This was true of nearly one-third of lone parents, which was twice that of single-earner couple families where a parent worked on Saturdays, and more than double for Sunday workers (Kazimirski *et al*, 2007). One lone parent

interview allowed for further exploration of this issue. Having to work one Saturday a month, on an irregular basis, she could not rely on family members and the nursery she used in the week was not open on weekends. Childminders were always booked up in advance, and many did not work Saturdays. She was forced to call on friends to provide care but she felt very uncomfortable doing this and it caused her a lot of stress.

Our survey, although not representative, suggests that lone parents were significantly more likely to report having trouble accessing childcare before 8.00am (68 per cent compared to 51 per cent of couple parents), despite being just as likely as couple parents to report working at these times ('sometimes'). This perhaps reflects a lack of ability to rely on a partner at this time. Similarly, lone parents were slightly more likely to report difficulties overnight (38 per cent compared to 31 per cent of couple parents), even though they were less likely to work at these times.

In relation to preference for informal or formal care, lone parents appeared to have no less of a preference for formal care at atypical times in our survey. As mentioned previously, in an open ended question where parents were asked about the reasons they had difficulty accessing childcare at atypical times, the majority had said that it was because they had had trouble accessing either formal care on its own or a combination of formal and informal. There was no difference when this was analysed according to family type. Although, once again, this cannot be extrapolated to the rest of the population.

How many parents do not work because they cannot find childcare that fits around their work patterns?

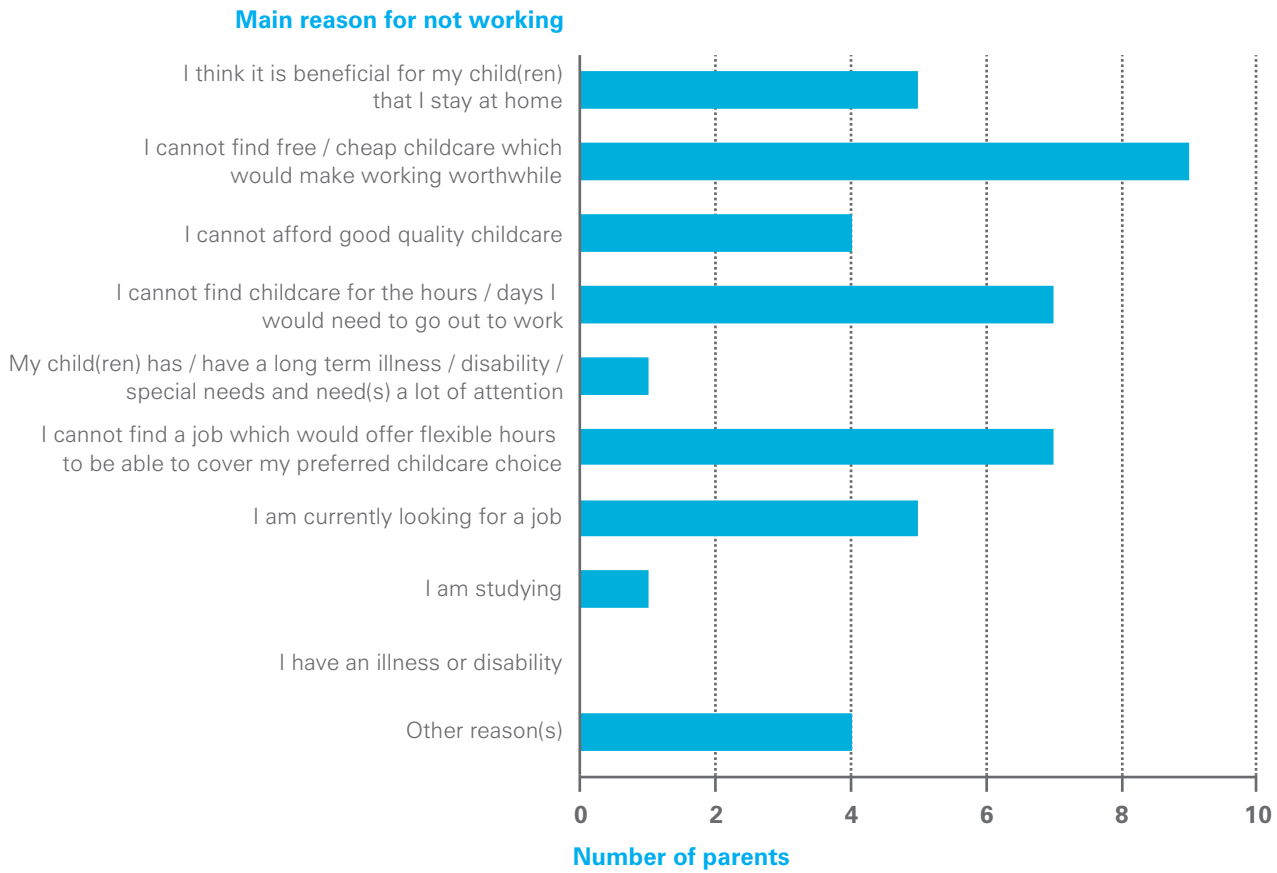
Considering the increased likelihood of working atypical hours and the lack of access to both formal and informal childcare (for reasons of cost and availability), it is unsurprising that lone parents, particularly those from low income groups, face more barriers to entering employment. As Waldfogel and Garnham, 2008 cited by Campbell-

Barr and Garnham, 2010) point out, the lack of suitable childcare remains a barrier to work for over half of parents – particularly among low income groups and lone mothers (who currently have the lowest employment rates). Moreover, almost one-third of non-working parents in England said that their reason for not working was due to inadequate childcare provision and just over one-half said that they would work if they could find good quality, affordable and reliable childcare (Speight *et al*, 2009). These figures do not show whether a possible reason for this is that the work that is available is at atypical times that childcare would not be able to cover. However, in a report conducted for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), lone parents suggested that improving on the inflexibility of all types of formal provision (for example, having to book or pay for a place a long time in advance), and provision at atypical times (Bell *et al*, 2005), would make a real difference from their perspective. The research also found that the availability of informal care was 'crucial' to parents' decisions to take up work, because there was the perception that other forms of care would not be flexible. That is, not available at atypical times (which was raised by shift workers and night workers in particular); or on an ad hoc or irregular basis.

Our survey focused on parents working atypical hours and so very few parents who took part were unemployed. Consequently, the data collected on the particular reasons for unemployment is based on a particularly small group of parents who answered our parent's survey and is therefore by no means representative – although the data is indicative and tends to support existing research. The results indicate that, as with much of the literature, childcare was cited as the biggest barrier to employment. The majority said they could not find affordable childcare that would make working worthwhile (60 per cent, representing just nine parents). The next biggest reasons cited were the difficulties in locating childcare for the hours or days that they worked (47 per cent) and the difficulty in finding flexible hours to cover their preferred childcare choice (also at 47 per cent and representing just seven parents – see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Reasons for not working, September–November, 2010



Source: Daycare Trust

The interviews with parents who were unemployed, or had recently been unemployed, provide further illumination in answer to this question. These parents had either worked atypical hours and given up due to childcare issues, or were on maternity leave for the first time and were finding it difficult to find suitable childcare in order to return to work. For example, one parent had been unemployed for some time until recently. She was looking for part-time work in television production but could only find positions where the days varied from week to week. She found that she was not able to secure a place at a nursery that would accept this:

'I could not find a nursery or a nanny, which would allow me to leave my baby with them on an irregular basis, which would cover my irregular hours, which also change at short notice.'

Furthermore, when she was looking for work she was unable to give the nursery a date from when she would need the place far enough in advance, and so when she did eventually find a full-time position the place was gone. Even though she managed to find a job that synchronised with childcare – a nanny-share – she was still concerned that sometimes she would have to work longer days which the nanny would not cover. She was hopeful that her employer would allow her to work flexible overtime hours if necessary.



Case studies – parents

This section provides case studies based on parents who were selected to take part in semi-structured telephone interviews. All parents in the case studies have been given pseudonyms in order to ensure their anonymity.

Unpredictable overtime leads mother to quit her job in the absence of adequate, flexible and affordable childcare 30

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Mother on maternity leave considers setting up a parent network to make up for a local shortfall in inexpensive after-hours childcare 37

Working mother takes career break and works part-time from home to provide childcare 38

Unpredictable overtime leads mother to quit her job in the absence of adequate, flexible and affordable childcare

Jan was previously working as an assistant warden in sheltered housing, but it became untenable as she was working every other weekend and could not find childcare to cover that period. Jan is unable to rely on her husband for childcare, as he is self-employed and works long, unpredictable hours, beginning at 5.30am and usually finishing at around 5.00pm (although his hours can change at very short notice and he can also finish quite late). She has two school age children, aged 12 and 16-years-old.

While employed as an assistant warden, Jan was responsible for covering the warden when he was off work, working from 9.00am–1.00pm on alternate weekends and from 9.00am–3.00pm on Wednesdays. However, due to the nature of the role, she sometimes had to work past her arranged hours at extremely short notice. This factor made it very difficult for her to arrange childcare.

To add to this, when the warden took his holidays, Jan had to work increased hours. This usually fell during the summer holidays when her children were off from school. The knock-on effect of this was that Jan could not find adequate childcare during these times. As a result of this, Jan felt that she would need to leave her job.

The after-school club that Jan's sons attended had been integral to allowing Jan to work, as she was happy with this care and it was affordable. Furthermore, she received financial assistance for childcare.⁴ However, when her son began secondary school there was no after-school club:


'This made things very difficult for me. When I discovered there was no after-school club, I did not make any further enquiries as I assumed there was no point. Finding childcare is more difficult when your children are older in my view. I had to leave my son on his own sometimes, and I was really unhappy about this.'

Finding a job with suitable hours has not been easy for Jan. She did not feel she could ask for different hours in her last role, as the point of it was to cover the warden when he was off. Jan had tried to find another job with more suitable hours since becoming unemployed but has been unable to find one.

'Out of all the jobs I have seen, I found just two to apply for that fit around my son's school hours.'

Childminders are not a suitable option for older children in Jan's view, and she also feels they would not be affordable.





Freelance irregular hours and inflexible work environment lead to father giving up work to supplement childcare

Adrian is married with two children aged three and seven. He is currently unemployed as his previous job as a freelance video editor involved working irregular hours. His unpredictable working hours meant that his family had great difficulty with planning or arranging childcare on certain days, due to work overlap between Adrian and his wife.

His wife, Sandra, works relatively long days, sometimes as late as 10.00pm, at least once a week. When Adrian was working, he worked freelance on contracts which could last several weeks at a time, clocking up 45–50 hours per week and frequently working as late as 7.00am–8.00pm at night. Furthermore, he would have to work these hours at short notice – depending on the particular needs of the project and the hours that his colleagues were working (as his work was collaborative in nature). Consequently, due to working time overlap and unpredictable freelance hours, Sandra and Adrian had real difficulty with childcare at least two days per week.

Adrian had attempted to assert some control over his hours, trying to stipulate to his employer that on two days a week he would only work until 5.30pm. This was so that he was able to finish work on time to pick up his children from nursery (which closed at 6.00pm). However, Adrian's new arrangements were met with 'snide' comments from his colleagues:

'As I would leave earlier than others, I would hear comments like, "there goes the part-timer". Also it became clear that I would not be asked to work with the same team again. I began to realise that making these requests hampered my chances of getting further work. When I asked my agent if I could not be put forward for projects which need me to work late on these two days I was told that I would miss out on a lot of projects. I am frustrated

at how inflexible the industry I work in is for working parents.'

This situation highlights the difficulty of securing flexible, family-friendly, working hours – particularly for those who are working on a freelance basis.

Adrian and his wife are wary of childcare that is available late into the evening as they do not think this is in the best interests of their children. They are also cautious about using childminders as they do not feel that they have the same 'checks and balances' as group-settings, which they prefer:

'If there is only one person providing care, it is difficult to know they are giving the right care, resulting in a situation where it would be the word of the carer's against the children's.'

Furthermore, because Adrian works on contracts, there can be weeks when he does need childcare but then weeks when he has no work and so he is in a conundrum over whether to take the child out of care and lose the place. After-school clubs are a much better option, he feels, as they are far more affordable and so it remains cost-effective to keep them in the clubs, even when he is not working.

When his daughter was three-years-old, Adrian took her out of the community run nursery to attend a nursery attached to the school, as she was then eligible for her 15 hours free nursery education. However, this was only three hours a day, five days a week and so not suitable for covering his working hours. He has now given up on work until his daughter starts school. At this stage both children will attend after-school clubs on the days on which his wife works – which he feels will be just about manageable.

Flexible employer enables couple to utilise shift-parenting until their youngest child is old enough to attend a school with wraparound care

Terence is married with 4 children (aged 9-months, 2, 13 and 15-years-old) and decided to change his hours as a cameraman in the past year, because their unpredictability meant that he and his wife could not coordinate childcare adequately:

'I was working very unpredictable hours which could be anything from early mornings, late at night to weekends. Sometimes I work away from home for a week and this can coincide with my children's school holidays, creating a lot of problems with childcare.'

Terence requested his employer change his hours. At his work they have an unpredictability allowance – in which they get paid extra for the fact that their hours are unpredictable. He asked to drop this which means he loses 10 per cent of his pay, but can now work relatively regular, although still atypical, hours (usually from 5.00pm–12.30am, Monday to Friday).

These hours are the only ones that fit in with his wife's job. Sally works standard hours for three days a week as a hairdresser. However, her hours often conflict with Terence's – for example, she will finish at 5.00pm and he will start at 5.00pm. This crossover is exacerbated by the distance that both parents live from their job. This means that when their schedules clash, Terence drives for one hour to Sally's workplace, so that Sally can drive their children back home. The negative consequences of this are that it is disruptive for the children as they are travelling during their mealtime and they become restless as a result. They have also tended to rely on Sally's mother for help with childcare in the past, but she has just undergone heart surgery and is no longer in a position to help out.

Terence and Sally would prefer their younger children to go to a nursery so that they are able to socialise with other children, but they neither feel

that it would be affordable, nor cover the hours that they need it (that is, early evenings). They do not feel happy using a childminder, as they believe that this would deprive their children of the social aspect.

Terence feels that his childcare situation has had an impact on his career:

'Working these relatively set hours means that I can only work on certain shows and I cannot meet other producers. However, my boss has been relatively understanding and he realises this is only for a certain period of time, whilst my children are young. Once all the children are at school I will be able to go back to unpredictable hours.'

However, his school-age children are not currently at a school that provides breakfast or after-school clubs. When choosing a school for his two youngest children, wraparound care will be a key consideration.



Mother on maternity leave refused childcare friendly working hours considers quitting work

Anita is married with an 11-month-old baby and is due to return to work from maternity leave as a beautician working varied hours. Her shifts include weekends, late evenings and early mornings at an airport. Although Anita is married she is unable to rely on her partner for help with childcare as he also works early in the morning as a teacher, with quite a long distance to travel from where they live. In addition, she cannot rely on friends or family because she sometimes works morning shifts that require childcare from as early as 4.30am. Anita would not be comfortable asking for help at such an hour:

'Such early hours means I would need family or friends to come to my home from as early as 4.30am and I feel this is too much to ask.'

Anita is supposed to return from maternity leave very soon but she feels that it is highly likely she will have to quit her job because she will not be able to find childcare to cover these hours and she does not feel that she can change her hours:

'I have asked my boss if I can change my hours [from] 9.00am–5.00pm but this does not look likely. I have looked around for other jobs with better hours but have not found much.'

Her ideal childcare would be a nursery, but as far as she is aware they only provide care at standard hours and they are not close enough to where she works. Moreover, this would also not be an affordable option, as she does not think she would be able to get any financial help with the cost of childcare. She has tried to work out how much help she could get through the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. She is not certain that her calculations are right but she gets the impression she is better off not working, when childcare costs are taken into account.

Unpredictable hours and lack of alternative childcare affects mother's career progression and forces couple to rely on grandparents

Helen and James both work as technical operators in the television industry and have four children – triplets aged seven and a ten-year-old. Both work unpredictable hours, for which they get an unpredictability allowance (20 per cent extra on top of their salary).

After struggling to coordinate childcare, Helen has requested slightly more control over her hours so she does not work weekends (except for rare occasions) and mostly works late morning until late evening (7.00pm).

The only formal childcare that Helen and James use on a regular basis is an after-school club once a month. For the majority of the time, they share the care of their children (one parent working while the other one cares for the children). Mostly they can rely on the fact that they will not be working the same shift but when they are, finding alternative childcare can be a struggle, particularly as they can be asked to work shifts at short notice:

'If our parents are away we have to rely on friends which can be problematic with four children. Most of our friends have children of their own and so they will not be able to fit them all in their car. We have to find two friends willing to help, with two children in each car. This is a "nightmare" to coordinate.'

Helen's preference is for formal care – for its social activities and its structure and reliability (as she knows her children are taken care of and have an evening meal). She likes her family to look after the children as well but has concerns regarding the pressure that looking after four lively children puts on her parents. She also does not like having to rely on friends when her parents are unavailable. She would like her children to be able to attend after-school clubs more often (at least once a week) but they finish too early (6.00pm) to be able to cover a

late shift and so she has to rely on her parents to pick them up. As a result of these concerns and more specifically when her parents are away, she has considered asking someone who works at the after-school clubs to take care of her children until she arrives home. However, as yet, she has not found anything suitable.

In terms of having an impact on her job, Helen feels that it has stalled her career. As she has asked for some control over her shifts, she is prevented from progressing. There was one incident where the school was closed and she either had to cancel a shift or bring the children in. Her boss said to bring the children in, but someone higher up issued a complaint about this which made her feel very uncomfortable and prevented her from doing this ever again.



Married couple with two young children make good use of typical childcare services in their area

Becky and Dave have two young children and live in mid-Devon, both begin work at 7.30am. Becky works as a nursery nurse (with set shifts from 7.30am–2.30pm and 1.30pm–6.00pm). Dave is an HGV driver and works five days a week – from 7.30am–5.30pm (including every other Sunday).

Their eldest daughter is at school and attends breakfast and after-school clubs. The opening times suit both parents well, especially as the school is situated very near to Becky's work. The only issue is cost, with the after-school club being the more expensive of the two. Fortunately Becky's youngest child is not yet in school, so she is able to bring him into work at the nursery, which helps a lot:

'If this was not possible, or I had to get another job with similar hours, I don't think I would find childcare which covered my early morning shifts.'

Despite being an employee, Becky still has to pay for her son's nursery place. The costs are just about affordable, although it does make her working only marginally worthwhile financially.

Working mother relies on friends as she struggles to find appropriate childcare at the week and weekends in her local area

Beverly is a lone parent working in a managerial position in the NHS (with a clinical caseload). She works mostly regular hours, although she also works one Sunday a month. Her main issue is finding appropriate wraparound childcare for her five-year-old girl, before and after-school, as Beverly starts work early and finishes late.

Beverly sends her child to a nursery which provides this wraparound care, but this is far from ideal in her view:

'I would much prefer it if my daughter's school provided wraparound care through breakfast and after-school clubs so I know she is safe and being cared for whilst I am at work. As it is I have to pay a premium for the nursery to pick her up in a taxi from school and take her to the nursery.'

Moreover, although her daughter has been in nursery care since she was small and she has been happy with the care that they provide, she is concerned that now that her child is older, it is no longer suitable as the majority of the children there are younger than her daughter. In light of this, she wants her child to interact with children of her own age.

Beverly has made repeated requests to her daughter's school to provide wraparound care and has managed, after a struggle, to get them to consider setting it up:


'When we went to the school to ask for breakfast and after-school clubs, the headmistress was not keen to set up breakfast and after-school clubs, as she did not believe the demand was there. They have allowed us to conduct a survey in order to see if there is the demand there.'

Beverly has also found securing childcare on the Saturdays that she works particularly problematic. In the past, she has relied on au pairs and childminders, with mixed results:

'Au pairs are good because they come to your home, are affordable and flexible. I have [had] one good experience with an au pair but I found I could not rely on her replacement...I have also tried childminders but having to take my daughter [to] them was not ideal.'

Currently, Beverly is trying to access childminders, but has struggled for two reasons. First, her work commitments mean that she cannot provide the necessary notice. Second, they are often booked up in advance. Finally, many childminders do not work on Saturdays. In light of this lack of available formal care and the absence of family support, Beverly has had to rely on friends to babysit, which she is not happy about.





Working mother seeks to work from home to supplement nanny-share scheme on days where overtime is required

Rachel has just managed to find employment that fits with her childcare but had been unemployed for a period after taking a year out to have her first child. Working freelance as a script editor, she was not in a position to take paid maternity leave. However, it was her intention to return to working freelance within a year of her baby's birth.

It has taken Rachel six months to secure some work – a full-time, contract position. Prior to this she was only finding part-time contracts where hours varied drastically from week to week. This made securing affordable childcare impossible:


'I could not find a nursery or a nanny, who would allow me to leave my baby with them on an irregular basis, which would cover my irregular hours, which also change at short notice.'

Since she has found work on a contract with full-time hours (which do not vary), she has been able to place her baby on a nanny-share scheme with another family.

Rachel is concerned that the new contract will involve working long days, as she is aware that this is common practice in her industry. She is hopeful that if this happens, then she will at least be able to work from home at times where her nanny cannot provide cover. She is unsure, however, whether her employer will allow this.

Securing a place at a nursery was also particularly difficult as, being freelance, she did not know the exact date that she would be returning to work. This meant that she could neither give the nursery an exact date for the nursery place, nor the particular notice that they required. When she did get her new job, a place was not available.

However, the fact that she is working full-time, means that her existing nanny-share arrangement is ideal. If she was working part-time however, she would have been happier to use a nursery.



Part-time mother has difficulty finding flexible out-of-hours care that does not involve her extended family

Lucy and Ben have two children, aged five and eight and have particular issues finding childcare to cover their early morning shifts. Lucy works as a sound mixer from 5.30am–1.30pm, for three days a week. She cannot rely on her husband to take care of the children as he also has to leave early because his work is 50 miles away.

On the days that Lucy works, Ben has to drop their children off at Lucy's parents' house at 6.45am. This is far from ideal and, as she describes, is particularly disruptive to the children:

'I have to get the children out of bed so early and take them over to their grandparents – it's not a situation I am really happy with.'

Moreover, Lucy's mother is 80 and will soon be too old to take care of the children. Ideally, Lucy would like a qualified childminder to be able to come to her home for when her partner leaves for work. This is so that the children can stay in their own home.

Lucy does have some control over the hours that she works, choosing the early shift to avoid working shifts that end after 6.00pm. As she explains:

'I don't want to work late afternoons because I want to be there when the kids come home from school and I can help with their homework and taking them to after-school activities.'

Ben works late evenings and so she cannot rely on him for childcare at these times. When they do need cover, on the odd occasion she works evening shifts, they have trouble finding care as no nurseries are open past 6.00pm. Lucy has no qualms about leaving her children in formal care during the evening or even overnight if her job requires it, so long as it is with someone that she can trust. She also knows of a nursery nearby that is run by a mother and daughter and she trusts

them very much. However, thoughts of nursery care for her two children are counterbalanced by her desire to be with her children as much as she possibly can.

Lucy has contacted her local Family Information Service (FIS) in the past to find suitable childcare, but they could not help her to find a childminder who would be able to work the early shifts or the flexible hours that she needs at short notice. Indeed, even if she could find one, she thinks that she would not be able to afford to pay for it, as it is likely that childminders working atypical hours will charge more.

Lucy is aware that in choosing to constrict the hours she works to three days a week, she has affected her career progression in her chosen industry. However, as far as she is concerned, her children come first:

'Because I can only work morning shifts I can only work on news and I feel "pigeon-holed" in this category as a result. There are other pieces of work I would like to do, but my chosen hours prevent it.'


If a nursery was open a bit later into the evening Lucy says she would consider working these hours on occasion, so long as she could be with her children in the evenings for the majority of the time.

Mother on maternity leave considers setting up a parent network to make up for a local shortfall in inexpensive after-hours childcare

Isabelle is currently on maternity leave from a teaching position in an English language school and works evening shifts only (up until 8.30pm). She has a six-month-old baby and a four-year-old child. Although married, her husband is currently studying in Scotland (Isabelle lives in London) and so she cannot rely on him for childcare at all. Planning to return to work imminently, she is concerned she will not be able to find suitable childcare. Previously, she had relied on her mother-in-law, but she is no longer available.

Isabelle would prefer a childminder while her children are so young, as they come into the home, but upon contacting her local FIS she has only been able to find childminders who provide evening care at a cost that she finds too expensive. As a potential solution, Isabelle is currently investigating the possibility of setting up a parent network, which would enable parents to provide each other's childcare, minimising any costs. She is unsure as to whether this would be legal and is seeking advice.





Working mother takes career break and works part-time from home to provide childcare

Until recently Deborah was employed as an immigration officer, working various atypical shifts that changed from week to week (including weekends, nights, early mornings and late evenings). Her husband, John, also worked similar hours as an immigration officer with the same employer. This enabled them to coordinate their shifts so that while one was working, the other was able to be at home with their children.

When she had her first child, Deborah dropped one of her days, but their shift-parenting arrangement was very stressful and exhausting. They found that this arrangement meant that they often only had a few hours crossover time when both of them were at home before the other parent had to leave for work. As a result of this, they began to spend very little time with each other as a family.

Deborah says:

'Sometimes I would get in at 1.00am and John would need to go out to work at 5.00am, giving me only a few hours to sleep before I had to be up early to take care of the children.'

Their second child was born with severe autism and global development delay, meaning that he had a lot of additional needs for extra care and attention and Deborah was forced to reduce her hours to three days per week (still atypical shift work). They continued to bear with the arrangements after Deborah had their third child, but found it increasingly difficult to maintain.

In light of these difficult circumstances Deborah and John moved to Norfolk. They moved 95 miles away from their place of employment so that they could be near their extended family for additional support. They applied for transfers in order to work nearer to their new home but their requests were not fulfilled and they were forced to commute. This added to their childcare problems.

During this time Deborah and John tried to find childcare for their disabled son but they found no private nurseries that were able to adequately meet his extra needs. Eventually they found a pre-school place, for which they received funding which they are quite happy with (although Deborah has concerns that, despite their best efforts, they are not really set up to deal with her son's additional needs). They also received some respite care, but this was only on an ad hoc/emergency basis. At first, the parents tried to carry on shift-parenting with this extra help, but this proved almost impossible, so Deborah reduced her hours to one shift per week (receiving Carers Allowance for looking after her son for the rest of the time).

Their childcare situation for the other children was also complicated, as all of their three children were in three different locations. As Deborah explains:

'On the days we were both working, we had to rely on my mum to get the children to three different places [nursery, pre-school and primary school]. This was difficult as although the pre-school was nearby to the school, the daycare setting was five miles away. What's more, my mother also works shifts and so on the days when she was working I had to take emergency leave.'

Deborah has recently decided that the situation is too complicated and exhausting to coordinate and so is now on a career break for up to five years. Instead, she works from home ten hours a week, working the hours at any time that she likes. She usually works during the night when her children are asleep or when her husband is at home.

Ideally, she would love to return to her old job for three days a week and employ a trusted childminder to look after the children during that time:

'I would have no problem leaving my children in care, even at night, as long as I can trust the childminder. It would take a few months to get [my son] used to the new location and so it would take a lot of preparation – such as going to the childminder's home with him a few times before I can leave him alone.'



How providers can meet demand

In order to assess the issue of atypical hours childcare, from the perspective of childcare providers, both provider organisations and a range of individual providers were interviewed over the telephone. Provider organisations furnished Daycare Trust with case studies, to help to demonstrate best-practice (see 'Methodology' for further details). The following section incorporates findings from these interviews and from existing research. This will help to outline how providers meet demand; the level of childcare that is provided at atypical times; the barriers to the provision of childcare at these atypical times; and how these barriers can be overcome.

Current picture of childcare at atypical times

Looking at existing provision, Statham and Mooney (2003) explored the level of provision available at atypical hours, contending that nannies and

childminders were two types of formal care that may meet the needs of parents in need of this provision. The majority of day nurseries provide at least seven hours of care a day, pre-school playgroups and out-of-school care provision usually last only three to four hours a day (citing Callender, 2000). Playschools have traditionally offered only sessional care, for two to three hours either in the morning or afternoon. Furthermore, they have relied on parents to help run and staff them. Often they are accommodated in church halls or community centres. For these reasons, they have generally not provided a childcare service for working parents. Over recent years, and encouraged by the National Childcare Strategy, some pre-school playgroups have begun to extend their opening hours. However, according to the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA), expansion of this service is hampered by the lack of facilities and limited funding. Although some PLA members do open at 7.30am and some close at 7.00pm,

persuading members to extend hours to cover standard, as opposed to atypical working hours, remains PLA's focus (Statham and Mooney, 2003).

Research has found that a significant number of childminders, over one-third, were willing to consider regularly working outside their usual working hours, although only 7 per cent were definite that they would do this and well over one-half were not willing to at all. Half of the providers were willing to supply childcare in the early morning, and four-in-ten at times that varied from week to week. However, fewer than one-in-ten said that they would be willing to care for children in the late evening and very few (3 to 4 per cent) were willing to provide care overnight or at the weekend (Statham and Mooney, 2003). In terms of meeting demand, none of the childcare providers in the survey offered care before 6.45am or after 9.00pm. Asked if they had ever provided childcare outside of standard hours, a small proportion of childminders said that they had regularly cared for children overnight (8 per cent) and at weekends (6 per cent), but none were currently doing so, and none of the other provider types had ever done this. Over one-half of childminders and nearly one-quarter of day nurseries and out-of-school services had, however, taken children at times that varied from week to week (Statham and Mooney, 2003).

A study by Daycare Trust for the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES), looking at atypical hours, surveyed 40 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) in England and found that fewer than half of them were able to identify any childcare services that could meet the needs of families working outside the hours of 8.00am–6.00pm. This is despite the fact that 86 per cent knew of local employers who required employees to work at these atypical times (DfES, 2001).

Community nanny schemes are in a better position to provide flexible, affordable care in the child's home – enabling nannies to register with Ofsted so that parents can use the childcare element of Working Tax Credit to help pay for their care. This is discussed in further detail in the 'Overcoming barriers' section.

It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive picture of how demand is met for parents working atypical hours as this would involve a large scale study – assessing local labour markets, parental demand, and childcare providers. This is the role of local authorities and is discussed in further detail in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment section. However, we have spoken to both providers and provider organisations in order to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers to assessing and providing demand and how such barriers can be overcome.

Barriers to providing childcare at atypical times

Establishing demand

From a childcare provider's perspective, there are various barriers to providing care at atypical times. Assessing demand is a significant problem, as the majority of providers will need to know that there is steady demand in order to ensure financial sustainability. According to Statham and Mooney (2003), for example, evidence suggests that when providers have attempted to provide cover at non-standard times in the past, it has taken time for the demand to build. For this reason, it is vital that building awareness is seen as a key issue, as parents often do not realise that care might be available at atypical times and so do not attempt to seek it. Also, as Statham and Mooney (2003) have reported, even when parents say they would like formal care at non-standard hours, they do not always use it in practice, or at least do not use it as soon as it is available. The authors move on to explain that changing childcare provider is more complicated than changing cars or other products, as parents believe that their child becomes attached to the carer and so ensuring continuity of care is a key factor in any childcare decision that they make (citing Mooney and Munton, 1997).

Demand for irregular care

Another factor which affects the steady flow of demand is that the nature of a lot of atypical hours work means that it can vary and change at short

notice (that is, shift work which can vary from week to week). Furthermore, even if parents work relatively stable hours, their demand for childcare may still be ad hoc because they may try to rely on informal care to either save money or because they prefer it. This type of demand can cause different challenges for providers as it is more similar to emergency care – that is, parents need it for the odd session at short notice. Either way, providers usually need to be able to predict demand in advance. For example, nurseries usually require a few weeks notice and a regular place, in order to staff their services in a cost-effective way that also meets regulations (Statham and Mooney, 2003). In rural areas, sustainability is even more of an issue, in light of the fact that demand tends to be more scattered. One partnership representative commented:

'The rural nature of [our area] makes any viable childcare difficult. The low demand for atypical hours simply exacerbates this' (Statham and Mooney, 2003).

Demand for irregular care, in concurrence with much of the research, is mentioned consistently by both providers and provider organisations. An NHS childcare coordinator (NHS Trust, East Midlands) reported that the hospital's onsite nursery opened at fairly limited atypical hours (7.00am–6.00pm) and had experimented in the past with extended hours, but had given up due to limited take up. It is set up to be able to open later, upon request, but this rarely happens in practice. The coordinator explained in the interview that the problem was that a certain number of children would be needed to make it cost-effective, even though the service was subsidised. The coordinator also pointed out that demand from hospital staff was likely to be very irregular which also made it difficult for providers to meet demand. In addition to this, hospital staff often work different shifts each week, which means that they do not need to keep their children with their provider for every day of every week (as for some weeks they may well be working nights). In stark contrast, however, the nursery needs to have a place that is paid for and needs to know how many children will be in

attendance on any given day, so that it continues to achieve financial sustainability.

Suitability of childcare at atypical times

Parents' beliefs about the suitability of informal care at certain non-standard hours have already been documented. However, providers interviewed for Statham and Mooney's (2003) study were also concerned about this issue. Although these organisations recognised the need to develop services which covered atypical hours, some were not actively encouraging their membership to do so, because they were not convinced that childcare at atypical times was 'in the best interest of children'. When surveying providers, one-third of them concurred with this view, stating that childcare at these hours was not necessarily good for children, particularly in the early morning, late evening and overnight. Weekend and extended hours care (between 7.00am and 7.00pm), on the other hand, seemed to raise less concern. The belief that children needed to be with their families at these times was mentioned by over one-half of day nurseries and over one-third of other services in the survey. Concerns were also voiced over the number of hours that a child should be in childcare (in terms of how it may affect their welfare). In addition to this, some of the provider organisations cited concerns over ensuring that children had continuity of care when parent's shift patterns changed from week to week.

Consistent with the research, many respondents cited the unsuitability of formal care, in group settings in particular, as a reason for a lack of childcare provision at atypical times. Many report that even when care had been made available, it had not been taken up. For example, one NHS childcare coordinator explained that, based on anecdotal evidence, parents did not feel comfortable leaving children in formal care late into the evening and would prefer that a member of their family, their partner, for example, take care of them instead. Even those who use the nursery and work beyond closing hours will have a member of the family pick up the children rather than leave them there later, in his experience.

Similarly, the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) reported that they had not seen any growth in demand for extended hours nurseries over the years, because it was likely that most parents did not want their children in formal care during these times. They also accept that it could also be because parents do not ask for what is there.

Early Education also advocated the importance of children being able to sleep in their own bed – which means that they do not encourage formal childcare that does not enable children to do this.

Reliance on childminders

Childminders tend to be heavily relied upon to provide atypical hours childcare at least partly due to feelings regarding suitability (Statham and Mooney, 2003). In comparison, the costs of providing centre-based care are prohibitively high for providing unsteady childcare at atypical times, according to research by Statham and Mooney (2003). For example, for a centre to care for even one child overnight, two registered carers must be present. Also, childminders are often seen as the best option for certain atypical times because of the nature of the environment in which the care is provided. One Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) described childminders as being perceived as offering continuity and ‘a homelike’ environment which may be important for non-standard hours care, particularly overnight care (Statham and Mooney, 2003). While some childminders may be able and willing to offer services during non-standard hours, not all will. For example, childminders often have their own families to care for.

A case study for this report also provides further reasons as to the potential limitations of childminders. The At Home Childcare Service Coordinator for Southwark (AHCS), for example, coordinates childminders on a network which was set up to fill the need for atypical childcare. However, they have found that demand can come from parents who need extremely flexible cover. Parents might want a childminder to cover the early morning shift, take their child to school/nursery and then pick them up later in the afternoon, and

spend a few hours with them until the parent returns, mid-evening, for example. This accounts for parents who work very long days or perhaps broken shifts. The problem with this, however, is that the network employs childminders who already have jobs, working a standard day and looking for extra work at atypical times – such as weekends. It would not be possible to work these shifts and their standard day, and it would not provide enough hours for them to be able to give up their current work. However, the network does cater well for parents who want childminders to cover longer, atypical shifts and AHCS plans to target those parents who might wish to use such a service better in the future.

Affordability

Cost is also an issue as parents that are most likely to work atypical hours tend to be low-income and so providers have to offer services at low-cost to attract such parents (Barnes *et al*, 2006; Family Commission, 2009). However, providers believe that they need to pay staff higher rates in order to attract workers who would be willing to work non-standard hours (Statham and Mooney, 2003).

Developing childcare services that meet the needs of parents working atypical hours can also find current registration and inspection procedures to be a challenge. Ensuring appropriate adult-to-child ratios for overnight care, or the standards that need to be met if a community nanny is providing care in a child’s own home, are two examples of this. Furthermore, if childcare is needed at varying and unpredictable times, most services will also need to combine this with caring for children during standard working hours, in order to remain economically viable. Yet providers reported that this made it difficult to maintain consistent adult-to-child ratios (Statham and Mooney, 2003). However, as our case studies show, it is challenging but possible to make adjustments. This is discussed in detail in the ‘Overcoming barriers’ section.

Lack of support from government and employers

A lack of support from employers and government was also cited by a quarter of EYDCPs as a barrier



to supporting childcare at non-standard times (Statham and Mooney, 2003). One coordinator felt that small-and-medium-sized businesses, which make up the majority of employers, were likely to need incentives to support childcare providers to offer these services. Less frequently mentioned barriers included the lack of government encouragement, government guidance and planning requirements (Statham and Mooney, 2003).

Registration procedures as a barrier

Registration processes for overnight care are also a particular issue and almost one-half of day nurseries and between one-quarter and one-third of other services saw registration requirements for overnight care as a barrier.

Having suitable premises with the space and appropriate sleeping arrangements to accommodate evening and overnight care was also an essential extra requirement for settings to provide overnight care (Statham and Mooney, 2003).

Furthermore, in our interviews with providers, NDNA reported that demand was just too low, particularly for overnight care, to be sustainable, pointing out that providing overnight care in particular, has many barriers. For example, carers must register with Ofsted regarding the provision of overnight care and there needs to be substantial demand from parents. As previously mentioned, if only one child was in attendance, then the centre would need two members of staff. This is prohibitively expensive and financially unsound.

Overcoming barriers

This section uses findings from existing research and interviews with providers who have managed to offer services at atypical times, to demonstrate how those barriers that have been highlighted can be overcome.

Community nanny schemes and the importance of external support

Community nanny schemes, whereby parents share a nanny who provides care in their own home with one or more parents, can prove to be a useful solution for those parents seeking flexible care that will enable their child to stay in his or her own home. This may not be sustainable where aimed at low-income families and may need external funding initially, whilst demand is established.

Statham and Mooney (2003) provide one as a case study. Gingerbread is a charity that supports lone parents and worked hand in hand with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and Bradford Social Services Registration and Inspection Unit. The EYDCP agreed to fund a coordinator's post for a year, establishing the Bradford Community Nanny Scheme (2002) which offered childcare seven days a week from 7.00am–10.00pm for lone parent families. Parental fees are set on a sliding scale that is related to earnings, although most parents are on low incomes. The cost of the service is £18 an hour, but the most that parents are required to pay is £6 an hour (the rest is subsidised), ensuring the scheme is affordable. The community nannies employed by the scheme provide childcare in the child's home. This is an important aspect of the service as it has the potential to help parents feel more comfortable using care at non-standard times. Seven nannies worked for the scheme and all are qualified nursery nurses. The nannies are employed as casual workers, work as and when they are required and are paid an hourly rate. All have agreed to work atypical hours, but are not able to choose their hours.

The Southwark At Home Childcare Service (AHCS) is a good current example of how a network of childminders can effectively provide atypical hours childcare. It is similar to a community nanny scheme, in that childminders provide care in the child's home. As it is registered with Ofsted, parents can receive help with the cost through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (see the 'Case studies' section). AHCS was set up by Southwark Council and again provides a good example of the importance of local government support, with a childcare coordinator funded by Southwark to coordinate a network of childminders, linking up demand and provision. Their approach is to seek out parents who may be in need – going to Jobcentre Plus to connect parents to childminders. If a parent is considering a job which will mean they might need childcare at atypical times, the coordinator will put out a call to childminders on her list to see whether any childminders are available to fulfil this need. This enables the parent to have complete confidence when accepting a position, which they might otherwise not be able to do. There are also ongoing plans to target parents who are likely to need out-of-hours care – such as those working in the transport and service sector.

In an interview with Early Education, examples of children's centres that provide out-of-hours networks were cited. These centres put parents in touch with childminder networks that are slowly managing to meet this specific type of demand. However, a search carried out for similar schemes currently in operation found very few examples, highlighting a real need for many more of these services to be supported.

These examples demonstrate that nannies are a good option for parents who are more comfortable with atypical hours childcare delivered from home. However, if it is not linked to a network or scheme, it is less likely to be registered with Ofsted, which will mean that low income parents will not be able to use the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or childcare vouchers to pay for a nanny. Currently Ofsted only requires childminders to register, although nannies can register voluntarily – which

means that far fewer nannies are registered than childminders (Rutter, 2011). Nannies who wish to register must have an Enhanced CRB check, a valid paediatric First Aid certificate, public liability insurance and have successfully completed a minimum level 2 in an area relevant to childcare, or training in the core skills in the Common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce.

Campbell-Barr and Garnham (2010) discuss the CNS in their review of childcare research, explaining how, from the project's inception, the coordinator had a close working relationship with the Registration and Inspection Unit at the local authority, which was seen as being critical to establishing the service. The unit's support, together with the additional help from the EYDCP, was influential to securing funding for the project.

The authors of this report also cite other potential solutions to providing care at atypical times, including examples of maintained provision offering approved 'sitter services', where children stay at home, helping to reassure parents wary of formal provision. As with nannies, at present, the Home Childcarers System allows those who provide care for children within the child's home to register voluntarily with Ofsted. Most commonly they represent nannies, but the system could be developed to include childminders/sitters who provide out-of-hours care, or services, to help make such provision more affordable for low income groups.

Schemes such as the CNS and Southwark's AHCS also support Statham and Mooney's (2003) research, which found that the right support from government can really help those businesses offering atypical care and struggling to attract enough demand. For example, Statham and Mooney (2003), found that any service looking to provide out-of-hours care relied on support through grants. However, these so called 'pump-priming' grants were usually only provided for one year, which did not allow sufficient time for services to find alternative means of funding, or to become self-sustaining businesses. For example, the same research found that new childminding networks, which are eligible for government funding, have to

become self-financing after the first year and this can prove to be problematic as they often take longer.

An earlier survey of childcare providers found that the time taken to fill vacancies and financial viability were two key obstacles that hindered the development of services (Callender, 2000) cited in Statham and Mooney, 2003). A review of childminding networks for the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) revealed further details of these childminder networks. Each of the 150 local authorities in England were asked to set up 3 new networks in 2000 (one each year for the following three years), and given a childminder network grant of £25,000 (per year) (Dawson *et al*, 2003). The report echoes Callendar's (2000) findings, concluding that although the grant was felt adequate for basic development costs, it was not felt that it was adequate enough for the promotion of networks to parents and employers. As such, it was a key obstacle to development. Lack of demand from parents also tended to be an issue preventing the development of some networks. Furthermore, local authorities reported that they did not expect their networks to be self-sustaining after the grant ran out, and running costs were being met out of the then Childcare Grant. The report also found that access to outside funding was, 'limited by lack of guidance on sources, by the perceived complexity of public sector funding streams and by scepticism about support from employers' (Dawson *et al*, 2003).

Statham and Mooney (2003) have found that partnerships set up to deal with childcare issues have credited the government's encouragement and guidance by helping them to develop atypical hours childcare services. They have also cited examples of good practice from other partnerships as particularly useful.

Providing joined-up care and giving parents a package of care to choose from

Interviews with parents highlighted the demand for a flexible package of provision that provides parents with a choice of care that covers their long working days. For example, parents needing

someone to pick their children up from school for when they work late evenings (see 'Demand for joined-up care'). Potential solutions for this particular need can be found in existing research. EYCDPs in Statham and Mooney's survey (2003), for example, highlighted the need for universal, integrated services which include a mix of home-based and centre-based care, so that parents can mix and match to suit their needs. Suggestions included having centres with home-carers attached, with someone coordinating the partnership, to ensure that services meet the specific needs of parents (Statham and Mooney, 2003). This could be a potential role for children's centres. Another suggestion in this report was for a 24-hour centre-based service that is large enough to support a drop-in crèche and out-of-school provision.

Attempting to meet irregular demand

As has been seen in the previous section, meeting irregular demand can be a challenge. However, one of the case studies of an NHS childcare coordinator in the East Midlands is a good example of a large employer using their clout to negotiate with nurseries for the benefit of parents who need ad hoc care. The coordinator negotiated with a nursery to keep a full-time place open at half the usual price, so that when their staff needed emergency provision, it would be able to secure a place for the day, without much notice, and parents would not need to pay for a regular place (as is normally the case with private nurseries). However, take up was low. In the opinion of the NHS childcare coordinator, parents who usually rely on a trusted partner or family member were wary of dropping their child off in a place that they knew nothing about. In this instance, the coordinator tried to get around this by setting up open days on weekends so that parents could bring their children and get to know the nursery.

Overcoming staffing issues

Honeybeez nursery is a good example of a group-setting that has successfully managed to overcome the staffing issues associated with opening at

atypical times in previous research (Statham and Mooney, 2003). The nursery is open from 7.00am–8.30pm and was originally set up to meet the demand from a nearby hospital. The setting is able to provide a flexible service at relatively short notice, to meet the needs of staff that are employed at the hospital and who work irregular shifts with little notice. Officially they ask for around two weeks notice from parents. However, in reality they accept that many parents cannot give this, particularly in a work environment such as the NHS, where employees carry out their rotas with much less notice.

The centre's manager is usually given one week's notice from parents, which enables her to work out her own staff rota to ensure that there are enough staff available – particularly in the early mornings or late evenings. She has a core group of staff that work more or less set hours, six days a week. She also has a set of four staff who work hours that change each week, according to parental demand. These four members of staff tend to work evening shifts. The centre's manager does not have a problem recruiting staff to work these hours, because they are usually young people with no children of their own and are happy to work evenings. It is important to note that this setting provides care at these times because of demand from a large employer nearby. Originally, when setting up the nursery, the NHS childcare coordinator had been in contact with the nursery and led its manager to believe that demand for early and late openings would be significant.

Overcoming the suitability issue

One childminder provides a good example of how formal care can meet the needs of parents seeking atypical hours childcare as close as possible to the home environment. This childminder provides care at all times requested by parents, including overnight care. She usually only provides overnight care for those parents that are existing customers. In her opinion, this is significant, because these parents already trust their children in her care. She includes the children in her care in family activities – something which enables her to provide flexible

care and also makes her clients happy, because they know that their children are experiencing care from a family perspective (even if it is not their own). Furthermore, parents are secure in the knowledge that even though they cannot attend family activities with their children (due to work or other commitments), at least their children are able to be with and carry out activities as they would with their own family. For example, the childminder takes children out to dinner and to the cinema.

Furthermore, schemes such as the At Home Childcare Service (AHCS) in Southwark show that it is possible for registered childminders to provide care in the child's home, through a network scheme, whereby a coordinator links up provision to demand.

Assessing demand at a community level

4Children and Southwark's AHCS provide good examples of ways to overcome the problems associated with assessing demand for atypical hours childcare. 4Children is aware, from its policy and campaigning work, that there are a lot of parents who now work atypical hours. However, from a business perspective, it is hard to actually be able to judge demand for atypical hours in a way that would allow them to run a sustainable business that can cover these hours. 4Children

understands that it is difficult to generalise in terms of need in different localities. It believes that the most important thing is to understand a local community, so as to have a real understanding of each community's particular needs, so that they can respond to that need.

The organisation is currently considering providing crèche services in specific locations where demand is located (such as community centres), to cover atypical hours or ad hoc demand. In this way, they can locate exactly where the demand is. For example, the service might be located in a community centre in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, where local people do not usually use, or engage with, mainstream provision. By attaching the care to these centres, they can offer childcare to those who need it most. It does not believe that extending hours for their usual nurseries would be the best solution, as the same people who use their nurseries may not be the same people who would need cover for atypical hours.

In this way, Southwark is also a good example of a local authority that has used its CSA to understand better the needs of working parents, finding demand for atypical hours childcare and specifically identifying and targeting those parents with awareness campaigns (about its AHCS service).



Case studies – providers

Southwark At Home Childcare Service (AHCS)

The Southwark At Home Childcare Service (AHCS) is a good example of how a local authority, responding to a need for childcare at atypical times identified in their Child Sufficiency Assessment (CSA), has coordinated providers to meet demand for childcare provided 24/7. The aim of AHCS is to provide flexible childcare for parents or carers who work unsociable hours and those who wish to access training or education, so that they can progress into employment. Additionally, the service can provide respite care to families in need.

Its one main coordinator works full time, matching childcare providers and families. The coordinator has established contact with around 50 self-employed providers – mostly registered childminders (who are already working from 9.00am–5.00pm in their own homes), the self-employed and some nursery nurses who work a standard day shift. These childminders work with

AHCS because they are looking for some extra, essentially atypical hours, to supplement their main income.

In terms of providing care in the child's home, there are no additional checks necessary, other than the usual enhanced CRB checks conducted by Ofsted for all childminders (all childminders on the network are already registered). If childminders intend to provide overnight care, then they will also need to mention this to Ofsted. In this case, the childminders are also required to purchase their own insurance to work in the family home as they are self-employed.

On average, 15 childminders will be able to actively respond to the coordinators' requests for childcare at any one time. The care will mainly be provided in the child's own home from 6.00am–11.00pm, seven days a week, with the option of overnight care. Parents can decide whether childminders come to their home or the child goes to the childminder's home. However, parents tend to prefer the former. The coordinator explains why:

'During evenings, overnight and early mornings particularly, parents want their children to be able to stick to their home routines – sleeping in their own beds, eating dinner at home and getting ready for school.'

ACHS provides suggested rates for any hours outside of 9.00am–5.00pm (£7–£10 per hour compared to £6–£8 per hour for a normal shift). They are keen that childminders charge similar prices, so as not to out price each other. All parents pay the childminders directly.

As part of her role, the coordinator carries out extensive outreach work, for example, going to Jobcentre Plus to talk to parents who are looking to move back into work that might include atypical hours. If the parent requests it, the coordinator will put out a call to providers working with the service, to see whether anyone will be able to cover the hours requested. This enables the parent in question to apply for the job in confidence, knowing that they will have childcare to cover their hours.

Demand can also come from working parents whose usual (informal) childcare arrangements have broken down, or whose hours have changed. The coordinator also receives requests from parents who have recently divorced, who can no longer always share childcare with their partners.

One of the current challenges facing the service is through parents needing extremely flexible cover. For example, a parent might want cover before 8.00am to take their children to school or nursery, followed by a late afternoon pick up that concludes with a few hours with the children until the parent picks them up mid evening. This demand comes from parents who work long shifts that are not covered by their main form of childcare. However, the problem is that childminders working in the service are unable to meet this demand, as it tends to conflict with their main job. Typically, childminders work from 9.00am–5.00pm and are unable to fit this type of outside hours care around their current job. Currently a lot of demand comes from those in need of respite care for families whose children have disabilities or who

are disabled themselves. However, the service was set up to mostly provide care for parents who work atypical hours, yet this group does not provide the most demand as yet. Southwark Council understands, from its CSA (2007), that there is demand at these times, but it has yet to fully penetrate this group of working parents. The coordinator feels that many parents are unaware there would be childcare available to meet their atypical working hours and so do not request it. Another group who the coordinator believes would be in need of this service, but are perhaps also unaware of its existence, are recent immigrants who will not have extended family upon which they can rely for atypical care.

AHCS plans to increase outreach work by targeting particular employers (such as London Transport), to find people who need care at these atypical times. An intensive leafleting campaign is to be launched imminently, in target areas.

London Early Years Foundation (LEYF)

LEYF is a charity and provider of early years care and education for young children in London. In one of its care settings, the opening hours are later than any of its others (until 10.30pm on Monday and Tuesday, 7.30pm on Wednesday and 6.30pm on Thursday). Any care that is provided after 6.00pm is charged at a slightly higher rate, although the cost is in line with average prices for London. In addition, those staff who work after 6.00pm are paid time-and-a-half for their efforts.

The setting has opened at these hours because the major employer in the area recognised that there was a staff requirement for this service. As a result of this, the organisation could assure the provider that there was sufficient demand. The nursery has only just opened but there does appear to be adequate demand for evening opening hours. It was felt that because the service was within the place of work, parents found it convenient to be near their child. This factor has been critical to the take up of childcare in this setting.

LEYF did not have any trouble in finding staff that were willing to work in the evenings for a number of reasons. First, the increased time-and-a-half pay rate for evening shifts was an attractive proposition. Second, staff who were able to work flexibly, could work later the next day if they chose to. Third, staff were recruited locally from nearby LEYF nurseries, which helped, as many of the staff lived locally and often have families of their own.

Parents are charged a slightly higher rate for using the service during the evening. In general, the costs of this nursery were described by the manager as quite usual for the quality of the setting and the area that it is in.

The setting is particularly useful for atypical hours parents as they only have to let the nursery know that they will be using their services on the day before (this is true of all LEYF's settings).

LEYF nurseries are open at least ten hours a day (from 8.00am–6.00pm) although its policy

is to encourage parents to leave their children in their care for shorter periods, particularly if they are leaving their child for long periods on a regular basis. The approach is to set up a working partnership with the parents to discuss their childcare plans and help them to find solutions. For example, if parents are working long hours then they are encouraged to organise other forms of childcare to make up part of the day (such as family members or childminders). LEYF's main aim is to protect the child and ensure that the care setting is optimised to each individual child. This tends not to be much of an issue anyway, according to the setting's manager:

'Even in the setting which is open late, parents do not leave their children in the evening on a regular basis and on days which they do leave their children late, [they] will drop their child off later in the day so they are not there for longer than eight hours.'

Other LEYF settings are only open standard hours and have not found any demand for significantly later opening hours. This is confirmed by LEYF's annual survey which asks parents to express their opinion on hours in settings. The feedback confirms that there is no unmet demand at this time.



Honeybeez – private nursery

Honeybeez Nursery is a privately run nursery that is open from 7.00am–8.00pm. Having previously worked in the NHS and found that there was no childcare for people who work later into the evening, its manager decided to found a nursery to meet this gap. Before set up, the manager consulted with the childcare coordinator for the local hospital, who reported that there would be a high level of demand for childcare at these hours. In reality though, the demand from NHS staff was lower than expected. The manager believes this may be because parents working at the hospital prefer childminders or family members. It also took some time to build demand, and so at first there were only a handful of children in the setting. The manager surmises that this may have put off parents who were looking for a setting in which their children could socialise with lots of other children.

One of the most significant aspects of the setting is the flexibility that it provides to parents. Officially they ask for a notice period of two weeks from parents. However, in reality they accept that many parents cannot give this, particularly those working for the NHS (who have much shorter working hours notice periods). Usually parents can give around one week's notice. This enables the manager to work out her own staff rota, to ensure that enough staff members are available, particularly in the early mornings or late evenings. The centre is able to respond to changing shift patterns and demand by employing two groups of staff. The first core group of staff work more or less set hours, five days a week, while a second group consists of four extra staff members who work hours that change each week, according to demand. These extra staff members also tend to work during the evening shifts.

Recruiting staff has been relatively easy, as the nursery workers who work flexible hours are usually students, or do not have children of their own and so are happy to work evenings.

The setting was originally planned to provide overnight care to meet the potential demand from NHS staff working night shifts. However, it was not feasible from a business perspective, as it would have been necessary to have a minimum of two members of staff in order to provide care for a maximum of eight children. In addition, under Ofsted regulations, members of staff would not be permitted to sleep in the venue. The manager goes on to explain:

'Even if the demand was there, which I think is unlikely, paying staff at least double their usual rate would mean charging higher fees and the parents who use the nursery would not be able to afford this so I ruled out providing this service.'





NHS childcare coordinator, NHS Foundation Trust – East Midlands

The overall role of the childcare coordinator in this particular NHS trust, is to give parents who work for the trust the information they need to find the right childcare for them. Their role is also to negotiate with providers to help meet any gaps, as far as this is possible. The NHS trust also has an onsite nursery which opens slightly earlier than most nurseries at 7.00am and finishes at the standard time of 6.00pm. In the past, extended opening hours were trialled, but there was limited take-up. At present, parents can, in theory, request later opening hours. However, in practice, this does not happen, as they would need a certain amount of children to make this possible and, even though the service is subsidised by the trust, it is not cost-effective to remain open for only one or two children.

Anecdotally, the coordinator believes that the reason for this low take up for evening care could be 'psychological':

'Parents do not feel comfortable leaving children in formal care late into the evening and most would prefer that a member of their family, their partner for example, take care of them. Parents seem to prefer other family members picking up their children when they are working late into the evening.'

The unreliability of demand from parents also acts as a barrier to providing care late into the evening. Hospital staff will usually work different shifts each week (even though the trust makes an effort to ensure that staff with dependent children work the hours that best suit their childcare arrangements). This means that parents need childcare on different days each week as, for example, they may be working nights. Providers, including their own nursery, need to have a place paid for and also need to know how many children they will have on any given day in order to be sustainable.

The coordinator felt that it was rare for parents to request overnight care, as they tend to prefer

that their children are taken care of by members of their family. The trust is in contact with two or three childminders who are registered to care for children overnight and also provide care in the evenings and at weekends upon request (the children must go to the childminder's home). However, very few parents have requested this facility. Higher paid staff, such as doctors and consultants, have done so, but they tend to prefer nannies who can come to their homes – as it means that their children can stay at home. These are much more expensive but affordability is less of an issue for this group.

Where they have found the most demand for atypical hours is when parents' informal arrangements have broken down (grandparents have been taken ill, for example). In the past the childcare team tried to meet this ad hoc demand by negotiating with a private nursery which had just opened (and so was in the process of building its customer base), to keep a full-time place open for half the cost. This enabled the trust to offer emergency care, for one parent at a time. The nursery was open standard hours although it was, at the time, experimenting with opening on a Saturday. However, this stopped as demand was so low that it was not sustainable. Instead they have negotiated with another nursery to offer emergency childcare as and when possible (so parents are able to use the nursery on an ad hoc basis, rather than having to secure a regular place). This also has relatively low take-up because parents, who usually rely on a trusted partner, or family member, are wary of dropping their child off in a place that they know nothing about, at short notice. The trust has tried to overcome this barrier by offering open days so that parents can bring their child and get to know the nursery, although very few parents have attended.



NHS childcare coordinator – Sunderland

The focus of the childcare coordinator for NHS Foundation Trust for

Sunderland is to help with the recruitment and, more importantly, the retention of staff in the NHS by helping parents with their childcare needs. In recognition of the time and money spent on recruiting staff, the trust employs a childcare coordinator to minimise the risk of losing staff once they go on maternity leave – as many of them find they cannot find adequate, affordable, childcare.

The coordinator works with local childminders and nurseries to ensure that they meet the demand of NHS staff in the area. Another aspect of this role is to coordinate childcare for parents who do not have the time to do it themselves.

The coordinator asks staff to complete questionnaires in order to assess demand. Through this questionnaire it became apparent that many staff had a problem finding childcare in the school holiday period. The coordinator responded to this problem by liaising with 'playschemes' – private settings with registered carers. This has worked quite well as most of the time the coordinator is able to secure appropriate care for each parent. If members of staff work outside of these hours, then they can arrange for people to pick up their children and they tend to be happy with this facility. The trust pays for this care upfront and then deducts it from their pay packet the following month – they also receive a £5 discount per day. The opening hours for these playschemes are from 8.30am–6.00pm – covering what would usually be a school day (if the children normally attended breakfast and after-school clubs).

Additionally, the coordinator has had some success negotiating with private nurseries to increase their opening hours to fill gaps in care. As the coordinator explains:

'A local nursery is now open [from] 7.30am, with the option of opening [at] 7.00am if there is demand, and [can also] close at 7.00pm. This covers staff working long day shifts.'

These providers are also fairly flexible with the days that parents can use them – on the basis that NHS staff can usually only give one week's notice. Parents can use the nursery on different days each week – with very little notice. There is no extra cost incurred for using the nursery outside of standard hours.

The coordinator also reports linking parents with childminders a lot as they are more flexible with the hours that they can provide. Most childminders are affordable as they charge only £2.50 per hour.

If parents, mostly doctors, request overnight childcare, the adviser finds it sufficient to point them in the direction of nanny agencies. The general policy of the coordinator is that it is not appropriate for children to go to a childminder's house overnight and a nanny coming to their home is much more advisable. Demand is not particularly strong for overnight care and it mostly comes from doctors who can afford a nanny, according to the coordinator.

Similarly, demand at weekends is fairly low. A local nursery piloted opening on Saturdays but demand was poor, despite many staff previously reporting unmet demand. Anecdotally, the coordinator feels that this could be due to the fact that if doctors are working on Saturday, then they will also be working on Sunday. In this situation, they would not want their child to be at the nursery on Saturdays if their child could not be there on Sundays. In the main, childminders are flexible and can meet any demand for weekend care quite adequately.



Independent childminder

Sharon is an independent childminder providing flexible care in her own home. She can provide care at any

time that parents request it, depending on how many children are in her care at that time. Sharon's husband is also a childminder and works part-time. When working alone, Sharon can care for five under eight year-olds and five over eight year-olds (more if her husband works). She also cares for a child on the autistic spectrum. Generally, Sharon cares for children in the early mornings, typically starting from 7.00am.

Sharon decided to start offering overnight care after a parent, who had just split up with her partner, was no longer able to share parenting duties. Setting up overnight care was relatively easy, with the registration process with Ofsted for caring overnight being quite straightforward. Sharon feels that a lot of the demand for overnight care comes from parents in these circumstances. It is significant that only those parents who have been using her services for some time have ever requested overnight care, as trust is particularly important to those parents who leave children in care overnight.

There are limitations on how many children Sharon can cater for overnight, as it is against regulations for a boy and a girl to sleep in the same room (unless they are brother and sister and under seven-years-old). She is thinking of getting a day bed in the lounge so that she can accommodate another child, although she does not feel there is an overwhelming demand for overnight care at present. Sharon currently provides care for one girl overnight, after her parents' shifts changed to overnight work. Sharon charges one-and-a-half

times the normal rate for 6.00am–8.00am and 6.00pm–8.00pm and double time for care provided overnight.

Parents can leave their children in Sharon's care at relatively short notice – most parents can give notice of a few weeks, but some can only give a few days. Sharon will usually accommodate parents at quite short notice, so long as she is not breaching regulations (on numbers of children allowed) and that it is not impacting negatively on her own family. If this is not possible, Sharon will discuss it with the particular parent. For example, she will see if they can change their shifts to work when she has more availability and fewer children.

One of the main reasons that Sharon finds it so easy to care for children at flexible times is because her own family are able to accommodate:

'My own children are used to having other children around at all hours and are quite comfortable with the situation. My husband is also understanding, which helps me to provide such flexible care.'

Also incredibly important is that Sharon includes every child in her care in all of her family's activities. Many parents are particularly happy with this aspect, as Sharon goes on to say:

'Parents know that even if they cannot attend family activities with their children, they are still able to with another family. If I am going out with my family for dinner or to the cinema, then children in my care will also come. This also means that I can still work in the evenings and it doesn't affect my own family life.'

Families found out about her through word of mouth or through the local Family Information Service (FIS). As far as Sharon is aware, there are no other similar providers in the area.



The role of local authorities

The importance of external support in the demand assessment, coordination and provision of childcare at atypical times is clear from the section on 'How providers can meet demand'. This section looks at the current role that local authorities play in helping parents that work atypical hours access the right type of childcare to meet their needs.

Under the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities in England and Wales have a duty to secure adequate childcare for their local population. Specifically councils are required to:

- secure sufficient childcare provision for the needs of working parents in their area for children up to the age of 14 (or 17 for disabled children);
- carry out a sufficiency assessment of all the childcare in their area at least every three years (local authorities carried out their first assessments in 2008, so unless a further assessment has been instituted in the

meantime, the next one must be completed by April 2011); and

- publish details of their assessments in the prescribed manner.

Local authorities are required to undertake a detailed investigation of their childcare market in terms of supply and demand, now and in the foreseeable future, to establish where there are gaps in provision. The intention is that the assessment will enable local authorities to confidently plan the action needed to meet their duty to secure sufficient childcare. Moreover, in this climate, it makes economic sense to support parents, many of whom are likely to work atypical hours, remain in, or re-enter into, work.

Particularly relevant in terms of atypical childcare, local authorities are asked in the latest guidance document to take account of any gaps in demand and supply in their analysis:

'the times at which childcare is available, including the need for flexible childcare that caters for irregular patterns of usage across the day, the week and the year... [Furthermore, new data in the updated assessment should include, amongst other things] employment patterns across the area, taking account of the opening, closure, expansion or contraction of local businesses and other organisations which may impact on parental work patterns and their demands for childcare' (DfE, 2010).

More specifically, the guidance states that the local authority will need to understand the local labour market, including working patterns, such as shift work, outside of the core 8.00am–6.00pm working day.

Findings from 2008 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments

According to the Campbell-Barr and Garnham (2010), 93 per cent of local authorities report gaps in childcare provision including: childcare before and after-school, holiday care, provision for children with SEN and disabilities, childcare for parents working atypical hours (citing Office for Public Management, 2008). Moreover, Daycare Trust's analysis of Family Information Services (FIS) found that a mere 12 per cent said there was sufficient childcare for parents working atypical hours (that is, outside 9.00am–5.00pm, Monday to Friday), across the local area (Daycare Trust Childcare Costs survey, 2011). Many CSAs acknowledge the existence of parents working atypical hours, or at least those working flexible or irregular hours, and recognise that this may form part of unmet demand. However, overall, this form of childcare need is treated as a relatively minor issue and very few indicate that they plan to take action on it. There are various reasons as to why local authorities may report this as a smaller issue than it actually is. The full extent of atypical hours childcare needs may be suppressed due to the way in which these CSAs are conducted. For example, one CSA reported that a small number of parents working atypical hours had highlighted opening times causing problems but had only gone so far

as stating that childcare providers were less likely to see this as a gap. On the contrary, providers rated their opening times as satisfactory and good.

Furthermore, not all local authority CSAs yield rich information due to methodological reasons, the questionnaire to parents being particularly lacking. This questionnaire is usually distributed through formal childcare providers and so under-reports those who use informal childcare or no childcare at all. Very few local authorities utilise research methodologies in their attempts to understand demand for childcare in disadvantaged families and analysis regarding the childcare needs of such groups appeared to be superficial in many, but not all, CSAs. Furthermore, as already mentioned, it was found that the now defunct EYDPs, which carried out similar work before the introduction of CSAs, were unlikely to be able to monitor the full extent of unmet need for atypical hours childcare, as parents may not ask for what they do not think is available, and responses to parents surveys are low. It would therefore be helpful if there was an overall evaluation of CSAs in order to see how beneficial they are.

Examples of good practice from the 2008 CSAs

Swindon

As part of its CSA, Swindon has produced an action plan which includes: 'promoting the flexible offer for childminding, encouraging the availability of childcare at atypical times.'

The CSA recognises that a lack of atypical care is a barrier to parents returning to work:

'As part of the work Jobcentre Plus carries out with parents returning to work, consideration is given to whether childcare is a barrier. The number of children living in workless households drives this agenda. Availability of childcare in Swindon is not reported to be a barrier in general terms. The exceptions to this are the need for atypical care, and care to support shift work, for example parents returning to work in the retail or manufacturing sectors.'

Furthermore, surveying all schools in Swindon to ask about the provision of childcare for the families in their communities, they asked if there were any local barriers to accessing childcare. Care to support shift work and atypical work patterns were reported as the most significant barriers.

Southwark

Southwark has identified a lot of parents working atypical hours and is taking action to try and meet their needs with a childcare coordinator and a list of childminders who can provide flexible care in the children's home (see the 'Case studies' section for further details).

Derbyshire

In its recommendations Derbyshire's CSA states that:

'All settings should be supported to meet the expressed demand for flexible and responsive childcare as much as is practicably possible. Support should seek to enable childcare providers to meet this need and demand, balanced by meeting the business challenges that this may present. Given the identified types of provision preferred by parents and carers, it will be necessary to work with childminders and group providers to achieve greater provision of out-of-hours childcare, linked to extended schools.'

Coventry

Coventry also includes atypical hours in its recommendations, although it finds only a small, dispersed demand:

'[To] work in partnership with current and future childcare providers to encourage more flexible hours for those parents who require access childcare at atypical times, that is, to support shift patterns. However, this needs to be balanced against the sustainability issues for providers, as this is only applicable to a small number of parents dispersed across the city.'

Barnsley

Barnsley identified a need for atypical childcare in its 2008 assessment and then showed in an update the following year how it has gone some way to trying to meet it. In its 2008 CSA one of the main barriers identified included, 'unmet need for more flexible childcare – early, late opening hours, evening and irregular care.' In an update, as at March 2009, Barnsley had the following: '40 offer overnight or weekend care: one holiday care scheme, one day nursery (by request) and 38 childminders, in an effort to meet this demand.'

Bromley

Bromley's CSA is a rare example of a local authority recognising that demand for flexible childcare may be hidden:

'Flexibility of places may be a hidden issue (with parents finding alternatives to registered care) and providers may need to consider offering "out-of-hours" childcare in order to meet this demand. Whilst the majority of respondents and their partners worked standard hours, one in ten worked "mixed shifts", although "overnight", "shift" and "weekend" provision was not shown to be a priority for parents who may have informal support to cater for these times. However, approximately one in twenty parents would like to have evening care (after 6.00pm) or early morning (before 8.00am).'

The CSA recommends incentives to encourage providers to increase the flexibility of their hours of operation, specifically accommodating 'travel' times should be considered. It also reports a need for both employers and providers to work together in creating a more flexible approach and to create an employers and provider Forum, linked with the local Childminding Network and Chamber of Commerce. This is to facilitate a better understanding of the needs of the local workforce and business.

Rochdale

Rochdale's CSA similarly recommends that the Childcare Strategy Team continues to incentivise new providers to offer services providing atypical

hours that, wherever possible, reflect local working patterns. It also states that they will ensure that discussions take place with the Extended Schools Team, Headteachers and Governors, regarding the timing of out-of-school activities to better reflect local working practices. It pledges to continue its work with the local Employers Forum and review any demand for provision and hours of operation that may not be met by existing provision.

Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire Council had an interesting approach to dealing with overnight care in particular – listing the childminders who were registered to offer overnight care in the county – with a more detailed breakdown listed in the full CSA. It was carried out to help identify how many providers were working atypical hours in the county, which they felt was useful when working with partners such as the NHS, Police Authority and so on. As these are organisations with employees who work in 24/7 operations and require childcare at all times.





Conclusion

This study set out to assess demand for atypical hours childcare at different times (that is, early mornings, overnight and so on) and more specifically, what the reasons were for the difficulties that parents faced at these times (whether they were trying to access formal or informal care, for example). For this an online survey and interviews were conducted with parents. In order to discover what could be done to improve availability, providers who delivered, or had attempted to deliver childcare at atypical times, and national childcare organisations, were interviewed.

Who needs atypical hours childcare

One key aim of this research was to discover the profile of parents who work atypical hours (that is, income level, family type and so on) and whether their socio-economic position affected the likelihood of having a lack of choice in working such hours (see research questions one and two). Analysis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data found that a significant number of parents worked atypical hours in one form or another – 16 per cent

of parents work shifts (a good proxy for atypical hours); 1 in 10 work over 40 hours and a staggering 4 in 10 parents work hours which vary week to week – this may not necessarily be atypical hours but it has an impact on demand for childcare, making it irregular and unpredictable.

In terms of the socio-economic profile of parents who work atypical hours there is much existing evidence which finds that parents in a weak labour market position are more likely to be concentrated in jobs which demand they work at least some atypical hours. This indicates that low-income groups form a large part of the demand for atypical hours childcare and so affordability needs to be a key consideration.

It was beyond the scope of this study to substantiate these findings as it was not possible to analyse LFS data by income group and our parents survey was not representative of different socio-economic groups. However, the survey did find that the majority of parents did not have a choice in the hours that they worked, rather the industry they worked in dictated when they

worked. Interviews with parents revealed that this proved problematic, as they were unable to change industries when they had had children and realised that childcare did not fulfil their needs.

Lone parents are highlighted in existing research as a group most likely to be working jobs which require atypical hours. This is particularly significant because research also finds that lone parents are most likely to be in a position where they need to rely on informal care (for reasons of affordability) and are also most likely to find problems with this (a lack of partner to share childcare duties is likely a significant factor). Our research also found that lone parents largely supported this (finding that they were almost as likely or slightly more likely to work shifts as coupled parents). Interestingly, LFS analysis also found that parents tend to be more likely to work shifts if they have a mix of dependent and non-dependent children. This could possibly be because some parents ask their older children to take care of younger siblings and so can find childcare which covers atypical work, although further research is needed to understand these patterns more thoroughly. In addition, existing research found that lone parents working atypical hours are slightly more likely to have an older child. Given what is known about the issues that lone parents have finding affordable childcare and their ability to find family-friendly employment, it is possible that having a child who is old enough to look after him or herself at certain times is a significant factor in allowing lone parents to move into work. An additional factor is that lone parents are required to look for work when their child reaches seven, to be reduced to five in October 2011 (although they are allowed to restrict their job search for times during the school day or when childcare is available).

Ethnicity appears to be a factor in predicting atypical hours. According to our LFS analysis the following groups were all more likely than those defined as British White to report working shifts: Black African, Other Black, Indian, Chinese, Other White and Other Asian. Further research is needed to understand this pattern in more depth but this is significant because, as with lone parents, some

black and minority ethnic (BME) groups tend to be in a weak labour market position and so with a view to preventing or reducing unemployment, atypical childcare policies need to focus on this group.

In addition to this, those least likely to be able to always rely on a partner or family for childcare, such as lone parents, those who have moved away from extended family and recent immigrants, and who are in a vulnerable labour market position, are of particular concern.

What are the reasons for parents facing difficulties accessing childcare at atypical times

The second key aim of this research was to understand at what times parents faced the most difficulty accessing childcare and what the reasons were for this. The parents survey revealed that parents had difficulties accessing childcare at a range of atypical times – early mornings, late evenings, weekends and overnight – largely mirroring existing research. However, it also revealed that overnight care caused more difficulty than previously assumed, suggesting that those with a responsibility for helping parents enter and stay in work (particularly local authorities) need to pay more attention to this issue.

Challenges in the reliance on informal care

It was found in both existing research and in our survey, that a large proportion of these parents relied on informal care such as grandparents, other family members or friends during non-standard hours. However, as our studies revealed, in a lot of cases this is a reactive decision, rather than proactive choice. That is, parents report using informal care because they cannot access formal care, or assume it would not be available or affordable and do not attempt to access it. Moreover, even those parents who actively seek informal care at atypical times find that they cannot rely on it all of the time – and there is much evidence to suggest that a significant amount of demand comes from parents where informal arrangements have broken down.

For some, ageing grandparents can no longer be relied upon, or they have had to move away from family for work reasons. For others operating a shift-parenting arrangement, hours have not matched up to allow for adequate crossover. Moreover, it has been posited in some research on childcare that informal care will be in reduced supply, for some groups at least, in the future (due to demographic changes) and so this problem is likely to grow for all parents working atypical hours, which goes across many professions and sectors. Our research with parents confirms the need for formal childcare at atypical times.

Demand that varies

The survey also revealed that many parents had trouble accessing childcare at times that vary from week to week. This was largely because their shift patterns changed from week to week but also because informal care which they relied upon was not always available. This is significant because it shows the importance of providers enabling parents to use childcare on a more irregular basis than is currently available (in the majority of cases). Many parents report this being an issue as most formal group-settings require parents to pay for a regular place in order to secure provision, which is not economically viable for many parents, particularly those with a low household income. Providers usually need to be able to predict demand in advance, nurseries in particular usually require notice of at least a few weeks and a regular place, in order to staff their services in a cost-effective way (which also meets regulations). A separate but related issue is that parents reported needing childcare on an ad hoc/emergency basis – so not just on different days each week but much more irregularly and at very short notice. Short notice was also an issue for parents whose hours varied weekly as they did not have much notice from their employers as to when they were working.

Suitability of childcare at atypical times

Supporting existing research findings, parents expressed concerns around the suitability of formal care at some non-standard times – late evenings

and overnight in particular. However, parents who could not rely on informal care were willing to use it, on the basis that they trusted the provider, and in the case of overnight, late night, and early morning care, it was preferable that a childminder could come to the child's home to provide the care. It is also important to note that some parents were not happy with using childminders as they felt that they did not have the same 'checks and balances' as care provided in a group setting, and were unreliable. However, registered childminders are required to follow the same Ofsted requirements as group-settings. This shows that government, at both a national and local level, and childminding organisations must do everything they can to communicate this to parents and to promote the benefits of childminding.

Suitability was less of an issue for parents requiring childcare at weekends when both nurseries and childminders tended to be very unlikely to be available.

Need for flexibility

For those parents who had school-age children in particular, there was a strong demand for a flexible package of provision which gives parents a choice in care which covers their long working days. For many parents this included affordable breakfast and after-school clubs which were able to cover their working hours (that is, opening slightly later than 6.00pm). For those who worked very long days, concerns were expressed about their children being in group-based care for too long, especially those who attended both breakfast and after-school clubs. For these parents, the preference was for a family member to pick children up from school, although this was not always possible and so there is unmet demand for care which imitates this as much as possible, such as a childminder or babysitter who can fill in these gaps and take children to their home so they do not stay in a setting for too long.

Workplace culture

Although this study was not explicitly looking at workplace culture, a few of the parental interviews mentioned the inability of their jobs to accommodate their needs for family-friendly hours as a major issue – preventing them from working in some cases, as they could not and did not want to find childcare to cover these hours. Technically, the right to request flexible working should encompass the right not to work atypical hours, although regulations leave it to employers to decide whether requests are reasonable and in industries where atypical hours dominate, it is unlikely to be seen as reasonable.

Lack of atypical hours childcare as a barrier to employment

This research attempted to discover how many parents do not work because they cannot find childcare which fits around their work patterns. However, the survey was focused on parents working atypical hours, and, as such, very few parents who took part were unemployed. Results indicate that, as with much of the literature, childcare was cited as the biggest barrier for unemployment. As already mentioned, the interviews with parents who were unemployed showed that the point at which first-time mums tried to re-enter the workforce after maternity leave is when mothers are at most risk of unemployment, as they struggle to find childcare which covers their atypical hours and also find employment with more suitable hours. Further research, which focuses on unemployed parents, is necessary to understand this issue in more depth.

Level of care available

It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive picture of how demand is met for parents working atypical hours as this would involve a large scale study – assessing local labour markets, parental demand, and childcare providers. This is the role of each local authority under their Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs). However, this research shows that when parents

are consulted in more detail about their childcare needs, a more pronounced demand for services at atypical times is revealed. Existing research finds that nannies and childminders were two types of formal care that may meet the needs of parents in need of this provision but even then, coverage often failed to meet demand. Coverage provided by group-settings were few and far between and even so, only tended to provide slightly longer opening hours during the week.

Meeting demand

Multiple barriers to providing childcare at atypical times were uncovered from this research, although case studies largely showed solutions to these barriers.



Establishing demand

The difficulty of establishing demand was one of the most significant barriers – as this prevented providers from even attempting to set up services in the first instance. The biggest reason demand is so difficult to establish is that parents might fail to report unmet demand for formal care as they do not feel it is available and do not request it. For these reasons, and other methodological problems (such as low response rates, a lack of qualitative data), local authorities have found it very difficult to uncover a comprehensive picture of demand. The evidence from CSAs bears this out, with very few reporting atypical hours as a significant issue that they intend to deal with (despite the figures from LFS showing that atypical hours is widespread).

Both the case studies and this report show that it is possible to establish demand once parents are asked in more detail about their needs for atypical hours childcare. Southwark's At Home Childcare Service (AHCS) is a good example of a local authority service that has carried out an in-depth CSA and identified a demand for atypical hours and then attempted to join demand with provision. Another example is 4Children, a provider and campaigning organisation that has recognised the problems with generalising demand across different localities. It intends to go into local communities (to locations, such as community centres, where parents might be working atypical hours but are not generally engaged with formal provision), to gain a unique understanding of their specific needs. Once in place, this approach can facilitate crèche based services at centres that are already used to provide ad hoc provision.

Irregular demand

Demand for childcare which is irregular, ad hoc or requested at short notice, was cited as a problem by providers, as it made it difficult to arrange staff adequately (to meet regulations and to give their own staff enough notice) and cost-effectively.

Childminder networks provide the best example of provision which is able to best meet these needs. Southwark AHCS shows how having a network

of childminders with a range of availability on-tap means that the childcare coordinator is able to, in theory, find someone who is available at relatively short notice.

One of the case studies (Honeybeez nursery) shows how the staffing issue can be overcome. It can provide evening and early morning coverage at a week's notice because it has a core group of staff that work more or less set hours, six days a week with a set of four staff who work hours which change each week, according to demand from parents (this group tend to work the evening shifts). These members of staff are usually students or young people with no children of their own who are happy to work evenings.

An NHS coordinator also shows how a large employer can partner with a local nursery, in theory, to provide staff with the possibility of childcare provided in a group setting at very short notice. To achieve this they negotiated with the nursery to keep a place open for half the price, should parents wish to use the place at the last minute – although this had limited success. It should be said that there need to be some limits on how irregular and ad hoc care should be, for the sake of the welfare of children. In this example, the employer arranged an open day so that parents could visit the nursery, should they need it at the last minute at any time. The onus should also be on employers to ensure that parents are given the notice and flexibility that they need to be able to use regular childcare that is best for the children.

Suitability of childcare at atypical times

As with parents, providers and provider organisations have also reported concerns about the suitability of providing care at atypical times. For this reason, some provider organisations were not actively encouraging their membership to set up such services, particularly group-settings such as nurseries and pre-schools.

However, this must be balanced against parental choice and our research with parents shows us that there is demand for childcare at all times – including early mornings, late evenings,

and overnight – and that parents will consider using formal childcare so long as they trust their provider. Furthermore, the case studies show that it is possible to meet these needs. Childminders interviewed have demonstrated that they can provide a home-environment that parents can trust. One childminder included children in family activities – alleviating parents concerns that their children may be missing out on evening activities.

Childminders

Childminders tend to be the providers most likely to offer childcare at atypical times, according to much of the research, at least partly because they will offer care that is more suitable at these times (that is, in a home, or in the child's home). The costs of providing centre-based providers are prohibitively high for providing unsteady childcare at atypical times also, whereas childminders can avoid this. For example, for a centre to care for even one child overnight, two registered carers must be present. However, research also finds that childminders are not always willing to provide this care, particularly if they have their own families to take care of.

Again, as has been shown, childminding networks provide the best example of overcoming these issues as childminders can pick and choose the hours they work and parents do not necessarily need to over-rely on one childminder for all the hours that they work atypical hours. However, again, caution is recommended here, as children should receive care that is as consistent as possible and so changing carers should be kept to a minimum.

Furthermore, insurance and liability issues could potentially act as a barrier to childminders providing care in the child's home, as their insurance may not cover this form of care. However, under National Childminding Association's (NCMA) insurance childminders are covered as this work would be considered 'incidental' to childminding as their major caring role.

Providing joined-up care and giving parents a package of care to choose from

The parents survey and interviews found that parents were struggling to find a package of care which fulfilled their needs, for example, parents needing someone to pick their children up from school when they work late evenings.

Potential solutions for this particular need can be found in existing literature. Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) in Statham and Mooney's survey (2003) highlighted the need for universal, integrated services that include a mix of home-based and centre-based care, so that parents can mix and match to suit their needs. Suggestions included having centres with a network of home-carers attached, with someone coordinating the partnership to ensure services meet the specific needs of parents (Statham and Mooney, 2003). A related point is that this study uncovered concerns from parents about using childminders, as they felt they did not have the 'checks and balances' of group settings – there is a role for coordinators and Children's Centres to alleviate these concerns and having childminders attached to the centre would also help build parents' trust in them.

Another suggestion in existing literature is for a 24-hour centre-based service that is large enough to support a drop-in crèche and out-of-school provision.

Affordability

It has already been noted that childcare at atypical times needs to be provided at low-cost, considering that the largest demand for this service is likely to come from low-income parents. However, providers may find it difficult to provide such services at low cost, due to the fact that their own members of staff need to be paid higher wages for unsociable hours. Also, when demand is inconsistent, high charges may be necessary to remain financially viable.

Many of the case studies show that it is not always necessary to charge higher fees for atypical hours, if staffing issues are dealt with. Another potential

solution to this issue is encouraging nannies to register with Ofsted, so that low income parents are able to pay for them using the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. The community nanny scheme is an example of where this has been successful but this was achieved through external support.

The importance of external support

Without support at a local authority level or from a major employer, very few providers had decided to set up their own atypical hours services, because they were unable to identify and attract demand, and ensure they would be financially viable. Where providers have attempted to provide this service many have failed as demand has taken too long to build – as parents do not tend to switch providers as soon as they become available. Furthermore, the study found that demand tended to be irregular, ad hoc and/or short notice, which makes it difficult to arrange staff adequately (to meet regulations) and cost-effectively.

Both the case studies and existing research show the importance of external support in setting up services at atypical times. Local authorities and large employers have an added interest in supporting such services, both financially and in terms of coordinating demand and provision, in that it is integral to keeping parents in their local population and their workforce in employment, which has economic benefits for both.

Regulations and procedures

Registration processes (through Ofsted) have been reported as an issue for childcare providers considering providing services at atypical times, particularly overnight care. A lack of perceived demand for care at this time compounds this issue – providers do not feel that it is worthwhile to go through the process if they are unlikely to find enough demand to warrant the extra time and money necessary. Moreover, nannies, who are most likely to be in a position to provide care in children's homes, which parents often require for childcare at night or early mornings, for example, do not have to register through Ofsted (only on

a voluntary basis). Parents can only use Ofsted registered nannies to claim the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit which acts as a barrier for many low income parents to using this form of care.

The case studies demonstrate that if providers believe that there is sufficient demand, then the procedures will not necessarily act as a barrier. This reiterates the need for some form of external support to help providers find adequate demand and also support them with any regulations and procedures.





Recommendations

Our recommendations are as follows:

Local government

Local authorities must play a greater role in coordinating childcare for atypical hours:

- Pay closer attention to atypical hours in their Childcare Sufficiency Assessments – probing more deeply, in both surveys and interviews, the needs of parents who work atypical hours, rather than assuming a lack of demand because parents are not actively seeking childcare.
- Promote and support childminder networks.
- Assess demand at a local community level by engaging with parents who work atypical hours but do not use formal care. This can easily be achieved through ‘on the ground’ visits to specific locations such as Sure Start Children’s Centres.
- Offer ‘pump-priming’ grants for an agreed period to provide sufficient time for atypical

hours childcare services to find alternative means of funding or become self-sustaining businesses (such as social enterprises).

- Support universal, integrated services that include a mix of home-based and centre-based care, so that parents can mix and match to suit their needs, consisting of centres with home-carers attached, with someone coordinating the partnership to ensure services meet parents’ specific needs.
- Help to set-up 24-hour centre-based services that are large enough to support a drop-in crèche and out-of-school provision, if the demand is there. International research illustrates how this can be achieved. For example, in Denmark one or two institutions in four different municipalities have attempted to establish a 24-hour service.
- Provide approved ‘sitter services’ where children are cared for in their own home by a registered carer.

- Help to secure funding for Community Nanny Schemes, whereby parents can share a nanny who provides care in their own home with one or more parents. Local authorities can also support these schemes to become social enterprises that will eventually self-fund.
- Encourage and support primary and secondary schools to provide wraparound care in the form of breakfast and after-school clubs with opening hours that genuinely meet the needs of parents.
- Ensure that childcarers who provide care in a child's home (for example, nannies or babysitters), register with Ofsted. Although registration is not compulsory, joining the Childcare Register on a voluntary basis means that parents can claim Tax Credits and use employer-supported childcare vouchers. Childminders will already be registered on the Early Years Register to provide care in their own home, but if they provide care in a child's home they will also need to join the voluntary part of the Childcare Register.
- Support parents to be able to access local information about providers who would be willing to provide childcare outside of standard hours and/or at short notice.

Central government

Government should offer the following types of support:

- Increase the level of support and guidance for providers developing atypical hours services. This could include help setting up partnerships (particularly with large employers), the funding of coordinators and the provision of best practice.
- Promote the take up of financial support for childcare – such as Tax Credits and childcare vouchers – making parents aware that these can only be used for registered childcare. Expanding the number of registered childcare providers who provide care in the child's home and/or out-of-hours, such as childminders/sitters, would make childcare more affordable for low income groups.
- Encourage and assist large employers of staff working atypical hours, such as the NHS, to form partnerships with local childcare providers to help build demand, connecting parents to provision.
- Implement a government and employer based campaign to change workplace culture and to increase the acceptability of parents who need to reduce atypical hours, leave on time or require more regular hours.
- Extend the hours over which parents are able to take free early education entitlement for three and four-year-olds in the forthcoming review of the same in the Code of Practice. Currently the entitlement may not be accessed outside of 8.00am–6.00pm, but this should be extended from 7.00am–7.00pm, to enable parents with long working days, or long travel to work times, to be able to use their free entitlement to cover this period. Since there are restrictions on the number of hours that may be taken in one day, and the number of days over which the entitlement may be taken, this change would not have an adverse effect on a child's welfare.
- Enable parents to request flexible working from day one of employment, with a stronger emphasis on their right to reject atypical hours and request more regular hours.

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Appendix A

Parent questionnaire

1. Introduction

Dear parent,

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey for Daycare Trust. It should only take 5–10 minutes. All responses will be used anonymously. None of the questions are mandatory, if you do not wish to answer a question, skip to the next one.

The survey is intended for parents who work 'atypical hours' – that is, any time outside of 8am–6pm, Monday to Friday. This could be as little as one hour either side on a limited basis, to working late evenings, early mornings, overnight and/or weekend work. However, if you are currently not working, we are still interested in hearing your views. For Daycare Trust, it will provide valuable information about how well childcare providers are meeting the needs of people working atypical hours.

If you have any questions about the survey you can contact us on policy@daycaretrust.org.uk or 020 7940 7522.

Thank you
Daycare Trust

www.daycaretrust.org.uk

2. Your circumstances

1. Are you:

- Female
- Male

2. Please tick the box which describes your family situation

- Two Parent Household
- One Parent Household

3. How many children do you have?

4. What is the age of your youngest child?

- 0–2
- 3–4
- 5–7
- 8–11
- 12–14

5. Do any of your children have a disability?

- Yes
- No

6. Do any of your children have special education needs?

- Yes
- No

7. What is your local council?

8. Describe your ethnic background

- White – British
- White – Irish
- White – Other
- Black British – Caribbean
- Black British – African
- Black British – Other
- Asian British – Indian
- Asian British – Pakistani

- Asian British – Bangladeshi
- Asian British – Other
- Mixed heritage – White & Black Caribbean
- Mixed heritage – White & Black African
- Mixed heritage – White & Asian
- Mixed heritage – Other
- Chinese
- Other ethnic background

9. Do you work?

- Yes
- No

3. Reasons for not working

1. If you do not work, what are your main reasons for not working? (please tick all that apply)

- I think it is beneficial for my child(ren) that I stay at home
- I cannot find free / cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile
- I cannot afford good quality childcare
- I cannot find childcare for the hours / days I would need to go out to work
- My child(ren) has / have a long term illness / disability / special needs and need(s) a lot of attention
- I cannot find a job which would offer flexible hours to be able to cover my preferred childcare choice
- I am currently looking for a job
- I am studying
- I have an illness or disability
- Other (please specify)

4. Childcare preferences

We would like to know more about your preferred childcare and your reasons for choosing it. If you are not currently in work and not currently using childcare, we are still interested in hearing your views

1. What is your preferred childcare? (please choose one)

- Day nursery
- Nursery school
- Nursery class in a primary school
- Childminder
- Playgroup or pre-school
- Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs
- Breakfast club/after school club
- Holiday scheme/club
- Nanny
- Au pair
- Child's grandparents or other family member
- Friend or neighbour
- No childcare
- Other (please specify)

2. Could you explain why it is your preferred childcare?

- It is affordable
- It is the best quality available
- It is the most convenient form of childcare available
- I prefer a member of my family looking after my child
- My children have a disability and this is the best care for them
- My child enjoys it
- It is the best option for my child's learning and development
- Other (please specify)

3. What is the main form of childcare you use? (please only tick one)

- Day nursery
- Nursery school
- Nursery class in a primary school
- Childminder
- Playgroup or pre-school

- Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs
- Breakfast club/after school club
- Holiday scheme/club
- Nanny
- Au pair
- Child's grandparents or other family member
- Friend or neighbour
- No childcare
- Other (please specify)

4. Is this your most preferred form of childcare?

- Yes
- No

5. What other forms of childcare do you use? (you can tick more than one option)

- Day nursery
- Nursery school
- Nursery class in a primary school
- Childminder
- Playgroup or pre-school
- Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs
- Breakfast club/after school club
- Holiday scheme/club
- Nanny
- Au pair
- Child's grandparents or other family member
- Friend or neighbour
- No childcare
- Other (please specify)

6. What would help you to access your preferred form of childcare? (you can tick more than one box)

- If it was available at the times which I needed it
- It was available at short notice
- It was more affordable
- If it was available more locally
- Other (please specify)

5. Employment

1. What is your job? (please state job title and whether or not it is self-employed)

2. What is your annual household income pre-tax (please include any regular benefits that you receive)

- £10,000–19,999
- £20,000–29,999
- £30,000–39,999
- £40,000–49,999
- £50,000–59,999
- £60,000–69,999
- £70,000+

3. For each option please tick a box which represents your situation best?

I work before 8am (Monday – Friday)	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work evenings (Monday – Friday, after 6pm)	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work at times that vary from week to week	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work at times that vary from month to month	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work overnight	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work Saturdays	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work Sundays	Never	Sometimes	Always

4. Does the child's other parent work any of these shifts?

- No
- Yes
- (please specify)

5. Do you have any trouble accessing childcare at the following times? (you can tick more than one option)

- Before 8am (weekdays)
- After 6pm (weekdays)
- Overnight
- Saturday

- Sunday
- Any of these times but when I cannot give enough notice
- Other (please specify)

6. Please briefly explain why you have trouble accessing childcare at this time

[Open question]

6. Reasons for choosing your job

1. What is the main reason you work atypical hours? (please select only one option)

- To fit with childcare arrangements
- It is not a choice, it is the requirement of the job
- It is the only employment available to me locally
- So that my live-in partner can look after child/ children
- So my child's non-resident parent can look after child/children
- Other (please specify)

7. Becoming more involved with the study and Daycare Trust

Thank-you for completing this survey on atypical hours. Now, there are just a couple more questions on possible future involvement in Daycare Trust's work.

1. The results of this survey will be used to help with Daycare Trust's campaign for more affordable, high quality childcare. All results and examples will be used anonymously; however we may want to use your results to create a case study, if you are happy to be used as a case study please indicate here and we will be in touch with further information.

- Yes
- No

2. If you indicated that you are willing to be used as a case-study, please give your details below

- Name:
- Company:
- Address 1:

- Address 2:
- City/Town:
- State/Province:
- ZIP/Postal Code:
- Country:
- Email Address:
- Phone Number:

Appendix B

Results of parent survey

A small survey was conducted with almost 400 parents during September–November 2010 in order to gain further insight into parents' views on atypical childcare. A snowball sampling strategy was used to ensure the greatest number of parents with children under the age of 16 were made aware of the survey as possible. The survey was aimed at parents working atypical hours but parents who were currently unemployed were also encouraged to take part, to understand if lack of atypical hours childcare acted as a barrier to finding employment.

The survey asked parents asked basic background information, about their working habits, their feelings around different forms of childcare and how well they are able to access their preferred childcare, asking them to explain any barriers to accessing atypical childcare.

Profile of sample

- The majority of the parents were currently in employment (96 per cent).
- The majority of the sample identified as White British (86 per cent), White-Other (5 per cent), White Irish (2 per cent), Black African (2 per cent), Asian British-Indian (1 per cent), Asian British-Other (1 per cent). As the figures were so low for any group other than White British, it was decided that analysis against ethnic group would not be statistically significant.
- A small minority of parents had children with special education needs (SEN) – 7 per cent (representing 26 parents) and 5 per cent of parents had a child who was disabled.
- The majority of the parents answering the survey had pre-school children (49 per cent aged 0–2, and 18 per cent, 3–4).

- Most parents had one or two children (86 per cent), only 12 per cent had three children and only 1 per cent had 4 children.
- Most parents reported themselves as belonging to a two parent family 87 per cent (13 per cent were lone parents).
- Around three quarters of parents who answered the survey were female.
- The sample was not evenly spread across all income groups – those with household incomes between £30,000–39,999 and £40,000–49,999 were more highly represented (see table below). Fewer lower income parents took part (9 per cent reported a household income of £10,000–19,999). Also, not all parents answered this question (73 out of 386) which affects the significance of any analysis by income.

Table 1: Household income September–November 2010

Total household income	%
£10,000–19,999	9%
£20,000–29,999	15%
£30,000–39,999	22%
£40,000–49,999	22%
£50,000–59,999	14%
£60,000–69,999	8%
£70,000+	10%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 2: Comparing preferred childcare to main form of childcare September–November 2010

	Childcare type	Preferred childcare	Main form of childcare
Formal childcare	Day nursery	30%	31%
	Nursery school	4%	4%
	Nursery class in a primary school	4%	2%
	Childminder	12%	14%
	Playgroup or pre-school	3%	3%
	Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs	1%	0%
	Breakfast club/after school club	9%	11%
	Holiday scheme/club	4%	2%
Informal childcare	Nanny	6%	4%
	Au pair	1%	1%
	Child's grandparents or other family member	18%	16%
	Friend or neighbour	3%	3%
	No childcare	3%	5%
	Other	2%	3%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 3: Other forms of care used September–November 2010

	What other forms of childcare do you use? (you can tick more than one option)	
Formal childcare	Day nursery	8%
	Nursery school	4%
	Nursery class in a primary school	3%
	Childminder	13%
	Playgroup or pre-school	9%
	Specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/Special Education Needs	0%
	Breakfast club/after school club	24%
	Holiday scheme/club	23%
Informal childcare	Nanny	3%
	Au pair	0%
	Child's grandparents or other family member	46%
	Friend or neighbour	24%
	No childcare	11%
Other	3%	

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 4: What would help parents access preferred form of childcare

What would help you to access your preferred form of childcare? (you can tick more than one box)	
Answer Options	Response Percent
If it was available at the times which I needed it	63%
It was available at short notice	40%
It was more affordable	56%
If it was available more locally	23%
Other	7%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 5: Hours parents work September–November 2010

	Never	Sometimes	Always
I work before 8am (Monday – Friday)	25%	58%	18%
I work evenings (Monday – Friday, after 6pm)	16%	65%	19%
I work at times that vary from week to week	17%	40%	43%
I work at times that vary from month to month	21%	39%	41%
I work overnight	48%	47%	6%
I work Saturdays	26%	61%	13%
I work Sundays	29%	60%	11%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 6: Hours parents work, by family type September–November 2010

		Two Parent Household	One Parent Household
I work before 8am (Monday– Friday)	Never	25%	23%
	Sometimes	58%	58%
	Always	17%	20%
I work evenings (Monday–Friday, after 6pm)	Never	17%	16%
	Sometimes	64%	68%
	Always	19%	16%
I work at times that vary from week to week	Never	16%	25%
	Sometimes	41%	33%
	Always	43%	42%
I work at times that vary from month to month	Never	19%	31%
	Sometimes	40%	29%
	Always	41%	40%
I work overnight	Never	46%	58%
	Sometimes	49%	30%
	Always	5%	12%
I work Saturdays	Never	25%	34%
	Sometimes	62%	57%
	Always	13%	9%
I work Sundays	Never	28%	39%
	Sometimes	61%	53%
	Always	11%	8%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 7: Times which cause parents most difficulty with childcare, September–November 2010

Do you have any trouble accessing childcare at the following times? (you can tick more than one option)	
Before 8am (weekdays)	53%
After 6pm (weekdays)	66%
Overnight	32%
Saturday	42%
Sunday	38%
Any of these times but when I cannot give enough notice	30%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 8: Times which cause parents most difficulty with childcare – by family type

Do you have any trouble accessing childcare at the following times? (you can tick more than one option)	Two Parent Household	One Parent Household
	Before 8am (weekdays)	51%
After 6pm (weekdays)	66%	62%
Overnight	31%	38%
Saturday	43%	38%
Sunday	38%	35%
Any of these times but when I cannot give enough notice	30%	32%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Table 9: Reasons for not working

If you do not work, what are your main reasons for not working? (please tick all that apply)	
I think it is beneficial for my child(ren) that I stay at home	33%
I cannot find free/cheap childcare which would make working worthwhile	60%
I cannot afford good quality childcare	27%
I cannot find childcare for the hours/days I would need to go out to work	47%
My child(ren) has / have a long term illness/ disability/special needs and need(s) a lot of attention	7%
I cannot find a job which would offer flexible hours to be able to cover my preferred childcare choice	47%
I am currently looking for a job	33%
I am studying	7%
I have an illness or disability	0%
Other reason(s)	27%

Source: Daycare Trust (figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point)

Endnotes

- 1 The Labour Force Survey is a quarterly survey of 125,000 households undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), with the primary aim of providing information on the labour market. It now forms the main component of the Annual Population Survey and is one module of the Integrated Household Survey.
- 2 Formal is defined as day nursery; nursery school, nursery class in a primary school; childminder playgroup or pre-school; specialist day nursery or unit for children with disabilities/ Special Education Needs; breakfast club/ after-school club. Informal is defined as nanny; au pair; child's grandparents or other family member; friend or neighbour; no childcare; other
- 3 http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Flexibleworking/DG_184872
- 4 Lone parents who usually work more than 16 hours a week can claim up to 80 per cent of their childcare costs (reduced to 70 per cent, April 2011). Couple parents can claim if both are usually working 16 hours per week.

For 25 years, Daycare Trust has been championing childcare – campaigning for quality, accessible, affordable childcare for all. We do this because children are our future. We lead the national childcare campaign by producing high quality research, developing credible policy recommendations through publications and the media, and by working with others. Our advice and information on childcare assists parents and carers, providers, employers and trade unions and policymakers.

Daycare Trust offers a range of services which include:

- Professional consultancy service
- In-house and open training
- Membership

Our Childcare information line 0845 972 6251 is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10am–1pm, 2pm–5pm and Wednesday 2pm–5pm or via an email service info@daycaretrust.org.uk

To find out more about these services visit www.daycaretrust.org.uk

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