

Holiday Childcare Costs Survey 2011



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This is the 10th annual holiday childcare costs survey conducted by Daycare Trust, the national childcare charity.

Summary

Over the last ten years local authorities, working together with schools and the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) childcare sector, have increased the number of holiday childcare projects. Some of this holiday childcare provision has been subsidised, targeting low income parents and those trying to return to paid work. But improvements in the availability and affordability of holiday childcare are being risked by cuts to local authority childcare and play services. Daycare Trust's 2011 holiday childcare costs shows that 62 per cent of English local authorities have cut their budgets for childcare and play services since 2010, along with 71 per cent of Scottish local authorities. In contrast, just 23 per cent of Welsh local authorities have cut their budgets. Budget cuts have contributed to a decreased level of holiday childcare provision – with 42 per cent of English local authorities and 53 per cent of Scottish local authorities seeing cuts in the number of holiday childcare projects over the last year. Cuts in holiday childcare mean that some parents are finding it difficult to find childcare. In over half – 52 per cent - of English local authorities, parents have reported a shortage of holiday childcare over the last 12 months.

The Childcare Act 2006 obliges local authorities in England and Wales to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for working parents and those undertaking training to enable them to work. Given this legal duty, it is very disappointing that, five years after the Childcare Act 2006, our survey showed that just 27 per cent of English local authorities have sufficient holiday childcare for working parents. Unless a particular local authority is taking steps to increase holiday childcare provision for working parents, its ab-

sence puts the local authority at risk of legal challenge.

A lack of childcare affects some families more than others. Single parent households generally use more childcare, but often have less means to pay for it. Parents with older children and those with disabled children find it particularly difficult to find holiday childcare. Daycare Trust's 2011 holiday childcare survey shows that in 89 per cent of English local authorities there is not enough childcare across all of the local authority for disabled children. A similar proportion of English local authorities – 88 per cent – do not have enough childcare across all of the local authority for children aged 12 and over.

Many families find holiday childcare unaffordable, even if they can afford term-time childcare. The average weekly cost for holiday childcare is £96.85 in England, £89.79 in Scotland and £81.98 in Wales. PVI provision is more expensive than public sector (local authority and schools) provision in almost all local authorities, and in 2011 across Britain PVI provision is 24 per cent more expensive than childcare offered by schools and local authorities.

Holiday childcare costs have increased by 3.5 per cent across England since 2010 and 2.2 per cent in Wales. In Scotland, costs have fallen by 10.6 per cent. The biggest increase in price has been in the North East of England. Increase in costs needs to be seen alongside recent reductions in Tax Credit subsidies for childcare which have resulted in many families with low and modest incomes having to pay a higher proportion of their childcare costs.

There are no affordable clubs that are suitable for the ages of our children. Since we have had children, my wife and I have had to share out our holiday time to care for the children, which means that we have not gone away together as a family for ten years. (Father interviewed by Daycare Trust, 2011)

Introduction

School holidays, particularly the long summer holidays, present many challenges to working parents. Schools and school nurseries are closed and working parents have to find childcare during the day. While the number of holiday childcare projects has seen a substantial increase over the last ten years, in some parts of Britain holiday childcare can still be difficult to find, particularly for older children and those with disabilities. Holiday childcare provision in rural areas is also patchy. Moreover, holiday childcare is also expensive – well over £100 per week in many areas. For a family with two children, this could mean a cost of more than £1,000 over the course of the long summer holiday. While parents on low incomes can have some of their holiday childcare costs met through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, recent changes to the levels of Tax Credit support have reduced the level of this subsidy.

Parents resort to many different strategies to find childcare in the holidays. A lucky few have employers who support flexible working, with the most recent statistics suggesting that 4.9 per cent of the working-age population have term-time working contracts.¹ Tax Credit support as well as supply-side subsidies (usually local authority subsidies to public and voluntary sector provision) make holiday childcare cheaper for many parents, although there is evidence that many parents entitled to Tax Credit support for holiday childcare do not claim it. Employer-supported childcare, often arranged through childcare vouchers, is also available to assist with childcare costs. Parents can ‘bank’ their childcare vouchers over the year to pay for holiday childcare if they wish, although this will only be feasible if they have limited or no childcare costs throughout the rest of the year. Additionally, not all holiday childcare projects accept childcare vouchers.

Many parents also combine different types of holiday childcare, splitting their own annual leave between them and using relatives and friends along-

side formal holiday childcare projects. Sports camps and holiday activities run by museums, orchestral, theatre projects and other cultural organisations often function as *de facto* childcare for older children. But not all families are able to organise sufficient affordable childcare over school and nursery holidays. A single parent, for example, may not have a partner to call on for holiday childcare and not everyone has nearby friends and relatives who can offer informal childcare. Public spending cuts seem to have reduced the range of school holiday cultural and sporting projects in many areas.

The high cost and patchy availability of holiday childcare has a major impact on families and wider society. Much research suggests that the high costs of holiday childcare prevent some parents from re-entering the labour market.² Others who do manage to return to work are forced to give up their jobs during the holidays because of a lack of childcare. This enforced worklessness has an economic impact: lost tax revenues and increased benefit payments. Working parents who cannot find or afford holiday childcare may also leave their children unsupervised and therefore at greater risk of getting into trouble or suffering an accident. As a consequence of these impacts of insufficient holiday childcare, Daycare Trust has long campaigned to increase the availability and affordability of this form of childcare. Our annual holiday childcare costs survey enables us to gather evidence to feed into our advocacy.

Methodology

In June 2011 Daycare Trust asked all Family Information Services (FIS) in England and Wales and all Childcare Information Services (ChIS) in Scotland to complete a short questionnaire about the availability and average cost of full-time holiday childcare in their area. A distinction was made between public sector holiday childcare (local authority, school and other public sector) and PVI-run provision, with average costs being calculated for these two types of holiday childcare. The survey also collected data on the sufficiency of holiday childcare for different groups of children, including disabled children and those over 12 years old.

Over the last 12 months Daycare Trust has received accounts of holiday childcare projects ceasing to operate, as well as cuts made to local authority

budgets for organising holiday childcare and play schemes. We were concerned that these cuts may reduce the availability and affordability of holiday childcare. Our 2011 survey included questions that probed budget reductions as well as changes in the numbers of holiday projects and play schemes between 2010 and 2011. This evidence has enabled us to build a more complete picture of cuts to local authority childcare and play budgets and ensured a better understanding of the impact of these spending reductions.

We received survey responses from 125 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales. We secured a 60 per cent survey response from all regions and nationals apart from one English region. Freedom of Information Act requests were used in this one region to increase the response rate.



Table 1: Typical weekly cost by region and percentage change 2010 – 2011

Region	Typical weekly Cost (public sector) 2011	Public sector percentage change 2010-11	Typical weekly Cost (PVI) 2011	PVI percentage change 2010-11	Overall average weekly cost 2011	Overall percentage change 2010-11
East of England	£76.07	-8.3%	£100.82	-15.5%	£88.45	-12.6%
East Midlands	£97.50	29.7%	£90.65	2.2%	£94.08	14.8%
Greater London	£82.11	11.0%	£104.11	2.1%	£93.11	5.8%
North East	£94.30	49.6%	£114.46	5.9%	£104.38	22.0%
North West	£95.53	13.3%	£113.94	7.2%	£104.75	9.9%
South East	£97.69	-0.7%	£121.14	7.1%	£109.41	3.5%
South West	£102.50	7.0%	£119.38	5.6%	£110.94	6.2%
West Midlands	£81.25	24.4%	£101.32	9.3%	£91.29	15.5%
Yorkshire & Humber	£65.20	-37.5%	£86.73	-11.5%	£75.27	-25.6%
England (Regional Avg.)	£88.02	6.6%	£105.84	1.2%	£96.85	3.5%
Wales	£59.49	1.0%	£104.47	2.8%	£81.98	2.2%
Scotland	£78.60	-24.6%	£100.92	4.6%	£89.79	-10.6%
Great Britain ³	£84.57	2.6%	£105.27	1.7%	£94.78	1.9%

The cost of holiday childcare

The average weekly cost of holiday childcare across Britain is £94.78. This is a 1.9 per cent increase since 2010, with the highest increase (3.5 per cent) being in England.

As soon as the holidays came, I couldn't pay the childminder, her fees were extortionate for the whole day. So she (her daughter) used to go to my grandmother's – rather than my mum because my mum was working full-time. But since my grandmother died, there has been no-one to care for my daughter. I just can't afford the childminder or the club. So until she is older, I take unpaid leave over the summer holidays. We can't afford it and I would rather work (Mother interviewed by Daycare Trust, 2011).

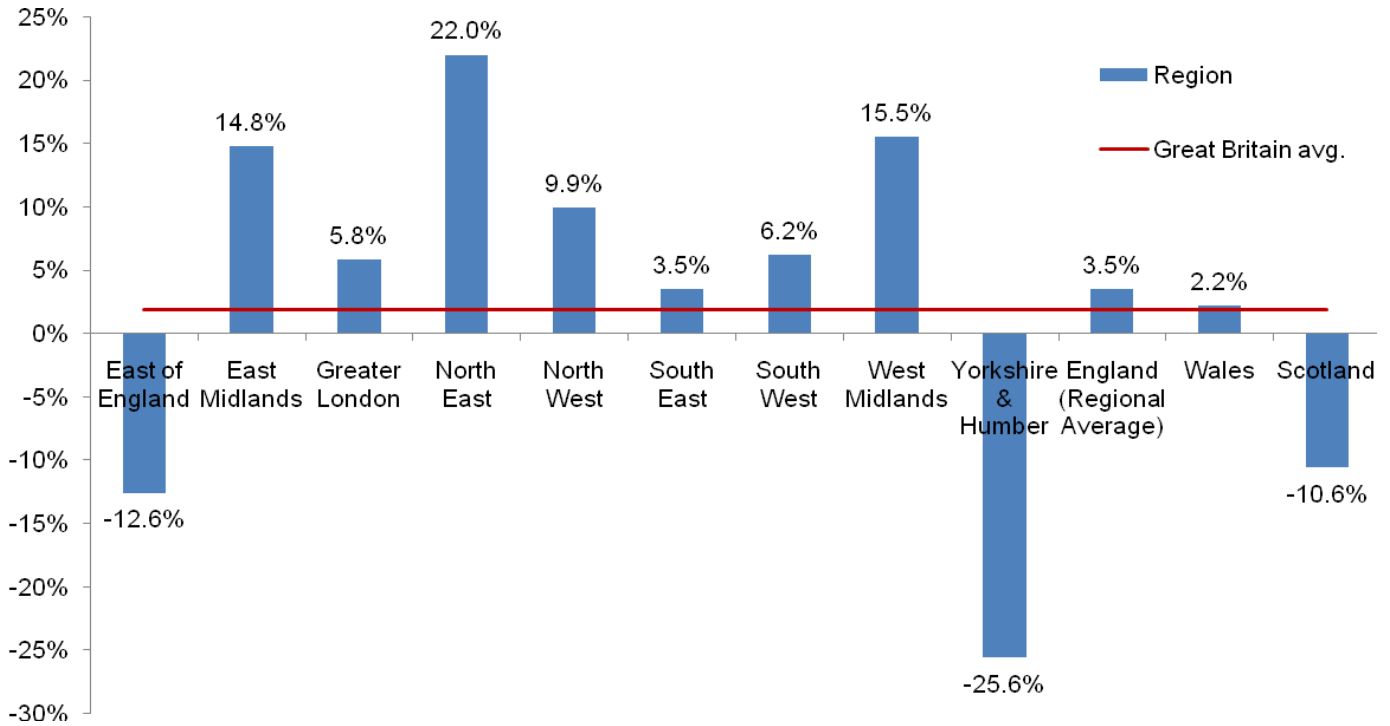
England

The average weekly cost for holiday childcare is £96.85 in England in 2011. There are significant regional differences in price across England, with the South West having the most expensive childcare, with overall weekly charges averaging at £110.94 per week (see Table 1). Over the 10 years of the Daycare Trust's holiday childcare survey, costs have always been high in the South West. This may be a consequence of the higher costs of childcare in rural areas, as well as a higher proportion of more expensive PVI providers in this region.

Since 2010 there has been a 3.5 per cent increase in the average weekly cost of childcare in England. The biggest increase in price (22 per cent since 2010) has been in the North East (see Figure 1).

The most expensive holiday childcare cost reported is £405 per week charged by a holiday project in South East England. Some 10 per cent of local au-

Figure 1: Percentage change in average cost of holiday childcare 2010-2011



thorities reported holiday childcare projects charging £200 per week or more.

Holiday childcare is cheaper when offered by public sector providers – the average weekly cost for a public (school/local authority) holiday club was £88.02 in England, compared with £105.84 for the PVI sector. The low cost of public sector provision may be explained by the fact that many local authorities subsidise their own provision to some extent, or offer subsidised places to low income families. Public sector providers also tend to offer childcare for slightly shorter stretches in the day (average of 8.8 hours in England) than the PVI sector (average of 9.6 hours per day in England). Parents usually pay more for longer hours of care.

As in previous years there are differences in the price of holiday childcare across Britain. As already noted, holiday childcare is most expensive in the South West of England. While most term-time child-

care in London is more expensive than elsewhere in the UK, holiday childcare is cheaper in the capital than most other English regions. We believe that this is because there are still some subsidised play services that target children living in high density housing. Additionally in London there are a higher proportion of public sector providers of holiday childcare and, as noted above, public sector holiday childcare is on average a little less expensive than childcare offered in the PVI sector.

Wales

At £81.98 per week, the average cost of holiday childcare in Wales is lower than England and Scotland. This is primarily accounted for by the lower cost of public sector holiday childcare in Wales, which at £59.49 per week is the lowest in Britain. The cost of PVI holiday childcare provision in Wales, however, is more expensive and costs are similar to the averages for England and Scotland.

Scotland

The average weekly cost of childcare is £89.79. This represents a fall in costs of 10.6 per cent since 2010. Almost all of this drop can be accounted for by cheaper public sector provision, which is now an average of £78.60 per week, compared with £104.28 in 2010. This is a welcome change, as until 2011 public sector holiday childcare in Scotland was among the most expensive of any part of Britain.

Support for childcare costs

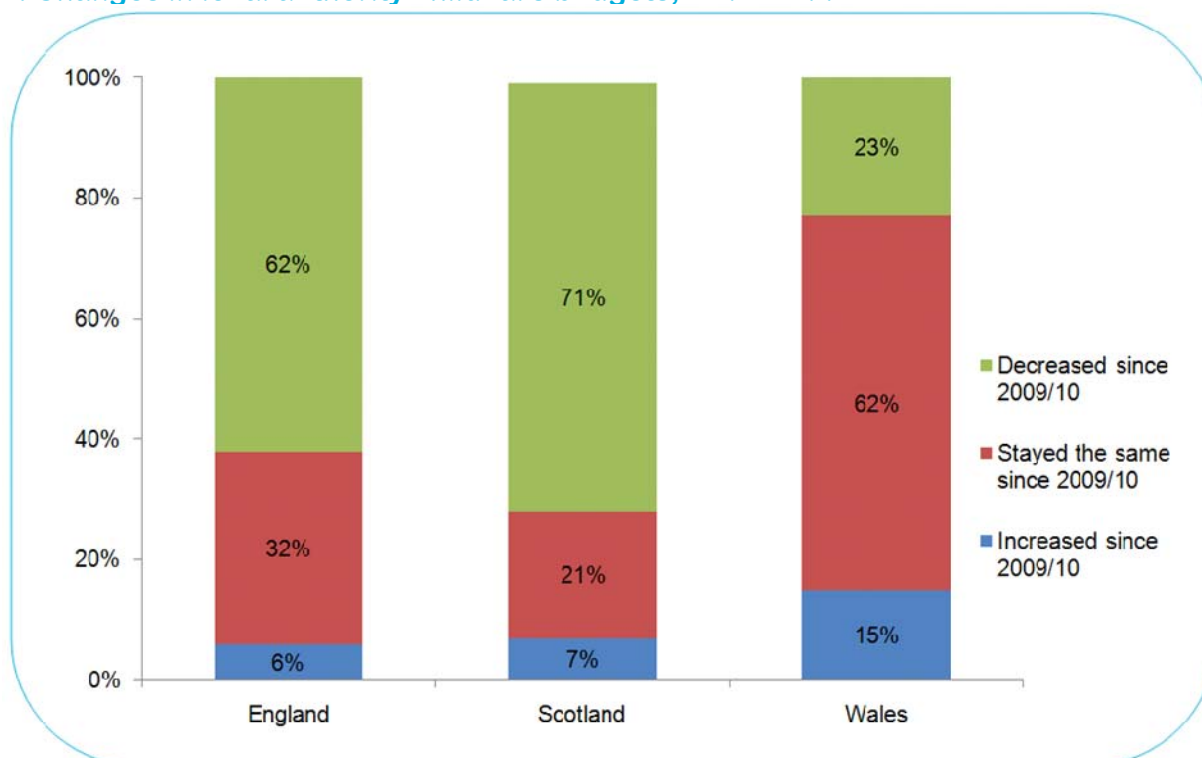
The high cost of holiday childcare sits alongside recent changes to the Tax Credit system which will make holiday childcare less affordable for some families. Since April 2011 the maximum amount of childcare costs paid through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit has been reduced from a maximum of 80 per cent of childcare costs to 70 per cent, resulting in a loss of an average of £546 per year for the half a million families who receive this support. For many families this change will have a much greater impact over school holiday periods, with their higher childcare costs. Moreover, the taper with which Tax Credits are withdrawn as a parent's income rises is now steeper. Overall, recent Tax Credit changes mean that by 2012 a two child family will not receive any tax credits if their gross household income exceeds £31,000.⁴

In addition, the Government is currently legislating to replace Tax Credits with a new Universal Credit. Firm proposals on how childcare support will be calculated within Universal Credit have not yet been published, but there are indications that this support will be less generous for many families. The Government has signalled its intention to extend support to families working fewer than 16 hours per week. This is a welcome change, but since it is not accompanied by an increase in the budget, it will mean that the Government needs to lower either the percentage of costs covered or the maximum limits. One option is to reduce the maximum limits to £125 for one child or £210 for two or more children, with up to

70 per cent of costs covered. This would mean that in practice a family could not receive more than £87.50 for one child or £147 for two or more children. This would not cover the cost of a week's holiday childcare or 25 hours of nursery care in most parts of the country, leaving parents to meet the extra costs themselves. In effect, this would amount to a disincentive for parents to work longer hours. Recent research by Gingerbread and Resolution Foundation found that a single parent with one child earning the minimum wage would keep only 6 pence of every pound earned for every hour worked over 24 hours a week.⁵



Figure 2: Changes in local authority childcare budgets, 2010-2011



Local authority budget cuts

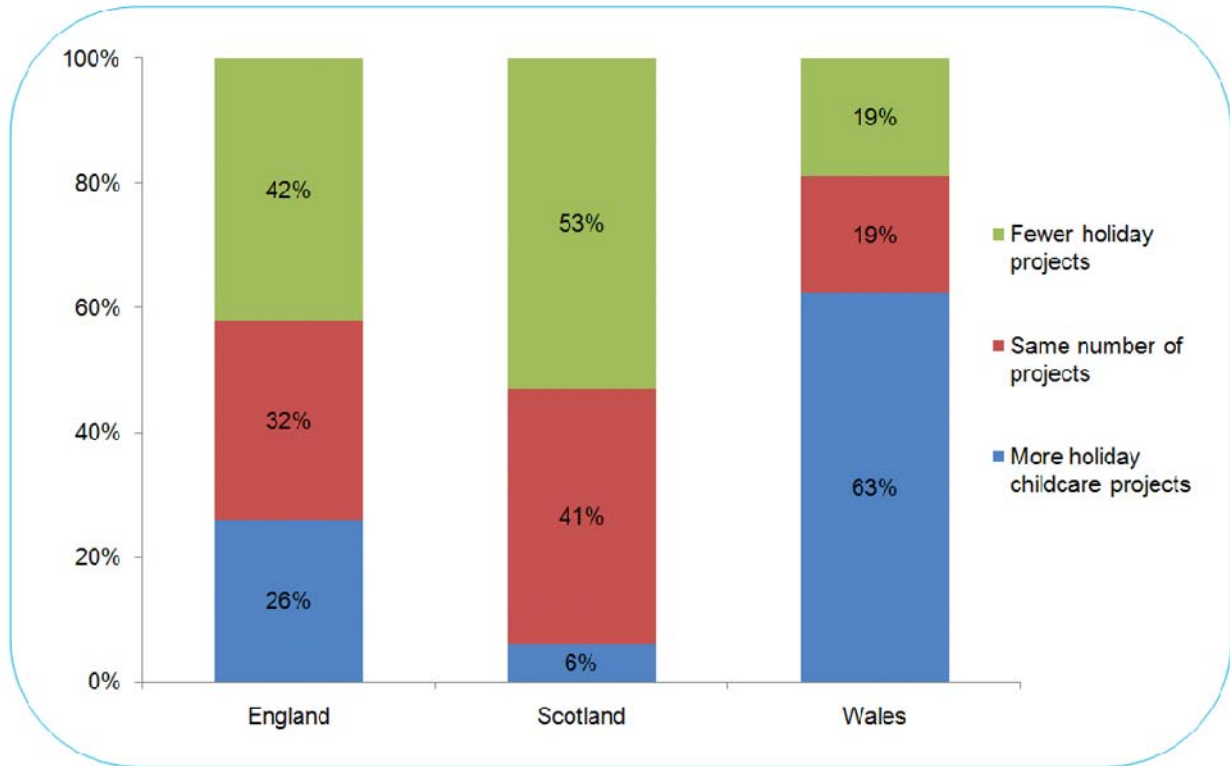
The budgets that local authorities set aside for holiday childcare and play services vary greatly. Some local authorities set aside modest budgets – about £50,000 – and focus their activities on ensuring that the childcare sufficiency duties of the Childcare Act 2006 are met.⁶ Other local authorities set aside larger budgets and provide some subsidised holiday childcare and play provision, often targeting low income families or children living in high density housing. Indeed, it has generally been urban local authorities that have larger amounts of subsidised holiday childcare and play provision.

Over the last year, cuts to local government expenditure have forced many local authorities to reduce spending on play provision and out-of school and holiday childcare. In some areas, these spending cuts have led to price rises in subsidised holiday childcare provision. In other parts of Britain, the number of holiday projects has been cut back.

Daycare Trust's 2011 holiday childcare costs survey probed cuts to local authority childcare and play provision, in order to build a comprehensive picture across all parts of Britain. Some 62 per cent of English local authorities have cut their budgets for childcare and play services since 2009/10, 32 per cent have kept them the same and 6 per cent have increased their budgets. The level of cuts is similar in Scotland, but less marked in Wales (see Figure 2). This greater support for childcare in Wales is a consequence of recent action by the Welsh Government to prioritise investment in high quality childcare.⁷

Please don't cut our services. Holiday childcare is so expensive and if the holiday club goes I will have to give up my job (Mother interviewed by Daycare Trust, 2011).

Figure 3: Change in the number of holiday childcare places, 2010-2011



Childcare gaps

Daycare Trust believes that local authority budget cuts have contributed to a decreased level of holiday childcare in many local authorities compared with 2010 levels of provision. Nearly half (42 per cent) of English local authorities and 53 per cent of Scottish local authorities have seen cuts to the number of holiday projects over the last year. In contrast, the numbers of holiday childcare projects has increased in Wales since 2010, albeit from a low base (see Figure 3).

In England and Scotland cuts to the number of holiday childcare projects over the last year follows cuts made in the previous year when 39 per cent of English local authorities and 47 per cent of Scottish local authorities reported cuts in the numbers of holiday childcare projects in 2010. In Wales, however, there appears to be a reversal of policy – while 43 per cent of Welsh local authorities reported cuts in 2010, the amount of provision has increased in 63 per cent of Welsh local authorities in 2011.

Cuts in the number of holiday childcare projects mean that some parents are finding it difficult to find childcare. In over half – 52 per cent – of English local authorities, parents have reported a shortage of holiday childcare over the last 12 months (see Figure 4 overleaf).

My life depends on the holiday play centre. Without it I could not work and provide for my disabled son. Childminders around here won't take children on just for the holiday and many don't have the skills to deal with my boy (Single mother interviewed by Daycare Trust, 2011).

If the club closes, I really don't know what I will do. I can't give up my job and I'll just have to leave my son over the holidays (Mother interviewed by Daycare Trust, 2011).

Figure 4: Percentage of local authorities who said that parents had reported a lack of holiday child-care in the last 12 months

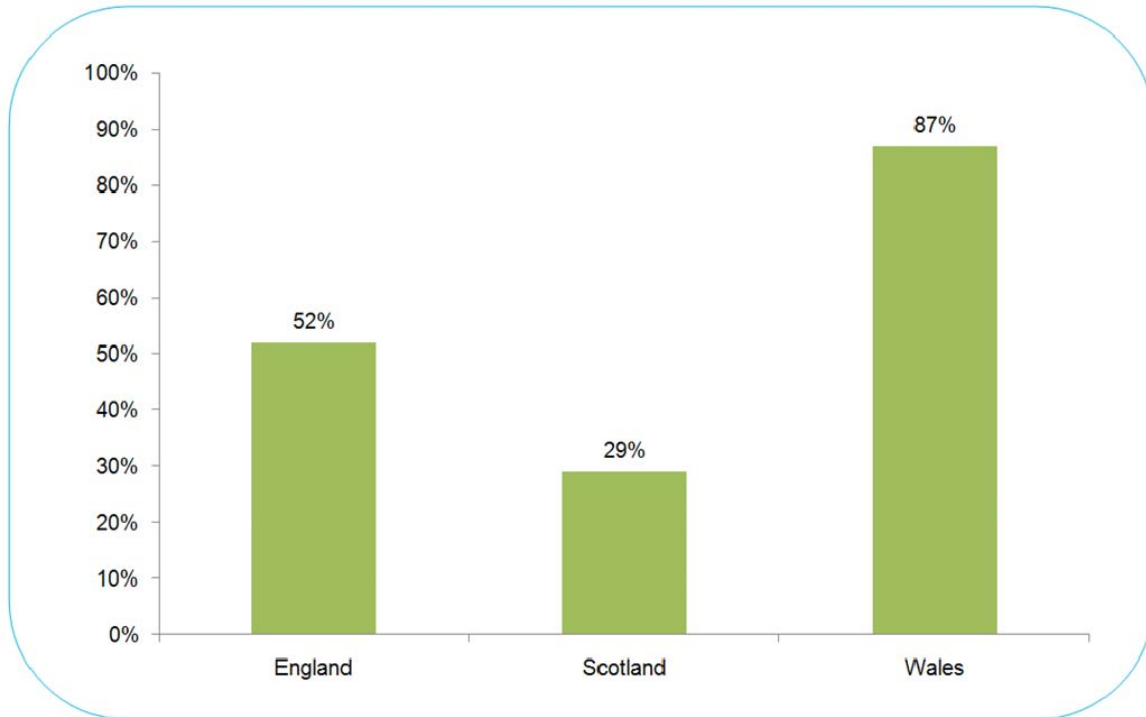
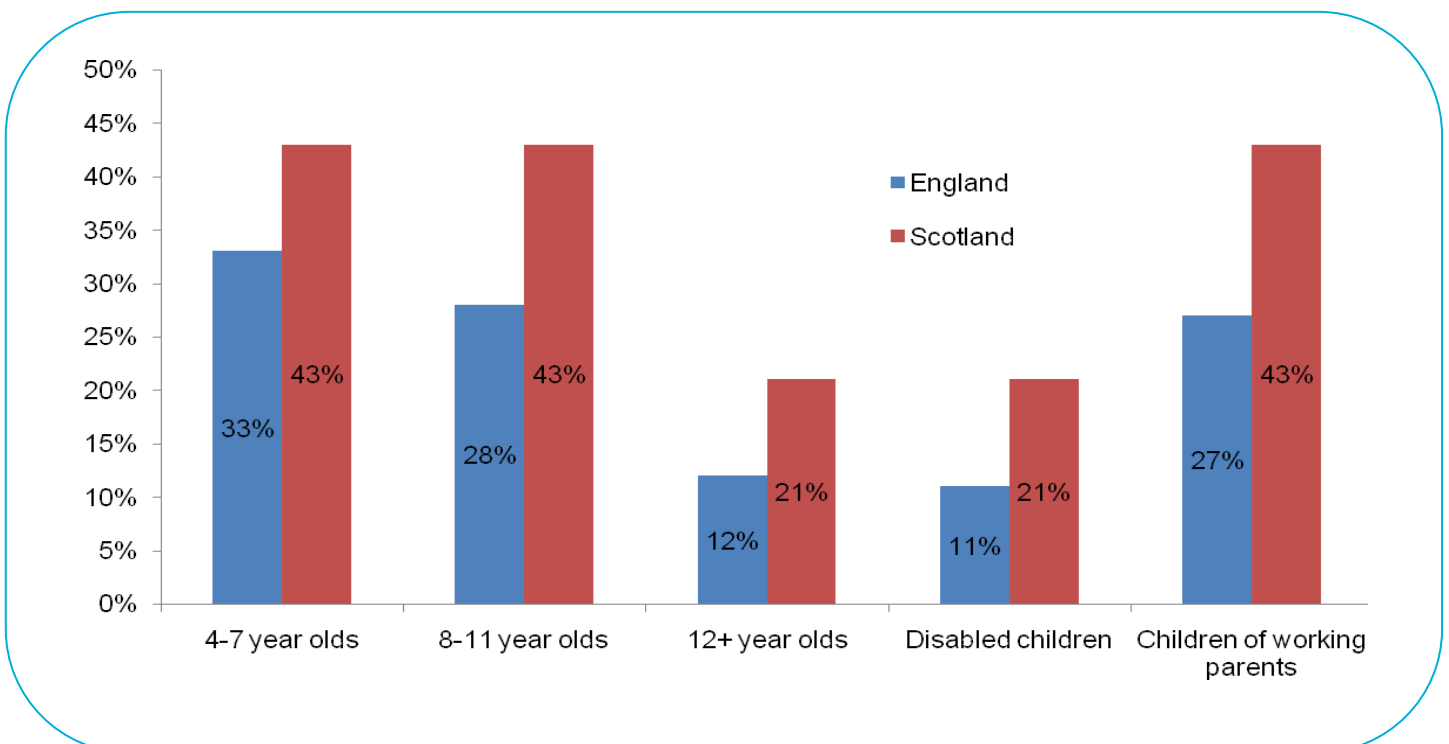


Figure 5: Percentage of local authorities with sufficient childcare across the whole authority for specific groups



Lack of childcare affects some families more than others: parents of older children and parents of disabled children face particular problems. Our 2011 holiday childcare costs survey indicated that 89 per cent of English local authorities do not have enough childcare across all of the authority for disabled children. A similar proportion of English local authorities – 88 per cent – do not have enough childcare across all of the authority for children aged 12 and over (see Figure 5 on previous page).

The numbers of predominantly rural local authorities reporting sufficient childcare was much lower than local authorities with an urban or mostly urban population. For example, just 12.5 per cent of local authorities in the South West had sufficient childcare for working parents in all areas. No Welsh local authority reported that they had sufficient childcare in all parts of the local authority for the five groups of children in our survey, although the numbers of holiday childcare projects have increased in many

Welsh local authorities. The lower levels of childcare sufficiency in rural areas, including Wales, reflects the greater challenges of providing holiday childcare for children living in rural areas. However, these challenges are not insurmountable; for example, transport can be built into holiday childcare for children living in rural areas.

The Childcare Act 2006 obliges local authorities in England and Wales to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for working parents and those undertaking training to enable them to work. The same legislation obliges local authorities to have regard to the childcare needs of parents of disabled children. Given this legal duty, it is very disappointing that, five years after the Childcare Act 2006, just 27 per cent of English local authorities have sufficient holiday childcare for working parents. Unless a particular local authority is taking steps to increase holiday childcare provision for working parents, its absence puts the local authority at risk of legal challenge.



Table 2: Numbers of settings and places for holiday childcare in England, 2003-2009

Year	Number of holiday projects in England	Number of places on holiday projects in England
2003	2,800	121,700
2006	6,400	263,900
2007	5,800	230,300
2008	6,500	262,000
2009	6,400	260,000

Source: Childcare and Early Years Providers Surveys, Department for Education

Information about holiday childcare

Daycare Trust's holiday childcare survey was initially targeted at local authority Family Information Services (FIS) in England and Wales and the equivalent Children's Information Services (ChIS) in Scotland. In England and Wales the broad duties of a FIS are outlined in the Childcare Act 2006 and its supporting regulations. FIS and ChIS teams generally operate telephone helplines for parents who seek information about childcare and support in meeting its costs, although some FIS teams have recently been incorporated into generic council helplines. Some FIS teams have also experienced major financial cuts, jeopardising the quality of their service.

The holiday childcare costs survey has enabled Daycare Trust to monitor the quality of information about holiday childcare available to parents. We were concerned that a significant number of FIS did not have data on holiday childcare, just four weeks before the start of the school holidays. Some 11 per cent of English local authorities said that they did not know if they had enough holiday childcare for parents who work full-time and 10 per cent stated that they did not know about the sufficiency of provision for disabled children. This is a worrying observation – without data on sufficiency a local authority cannot



plan to fill gaps in childcare provision. Daycare Trust will be using this information and evidence from members of the National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS), which merged with Daycare Trust in 2011, to campaign for continued investment in information provision, and to ensure that local authorities are meeting their duties under the Childcare Act 2006.

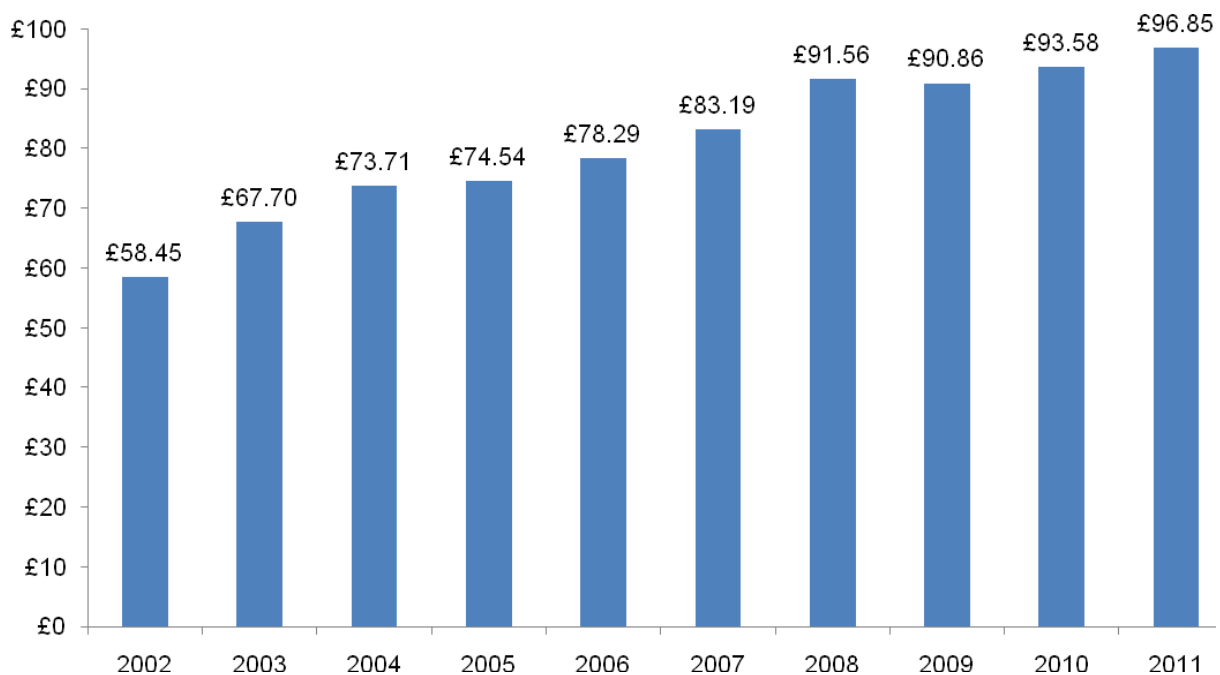
The 10 year picture

This is the 10th holiday childcare survey undertaken by Daycare Trust. Much has changed in this period and a great deal of progress has been made to extend affordable holiday childcare to a greater number of families. The Education Act 2002 enshrined in law many of the recommendations of the 1998 National Childcare Strategy. The following year – 2003 – saw the introduction of Working Tax Credit (WTC), within which payments for childcare incentivised work by subsidising childcare for lower income fami-

lies. Alongside these changes to extend the availability and affordability of childcare have been changes to compel lone parents to seek work once their youngest child is seven (soon to be five).

As a consequence of legislation and policy enacted by central government, the numbers of holiday childcare places has increased in all parts of the UK since 2002. Table 2 on the previous page shows data from the *Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey* on the number of holiday childcare places. Some of the year-on-year changes will be a consequence of changes in the size of the child population. Parents' ability to pay is another factor affecting the viability of holiday projects. But support for the projects from central and local government also affects the number of places available to parents. Overall, much has been achieved in extending the range of provision, although as we note above, there is still insufficient childcare in some areas and for older children and those with disabilities.

Figure 6: England regional average cost over the last 10 years



Conclusions and recommendations

In the last 10 years much has been achieved to increase the availability of holiday childcare in many parts of England, Scotland and Wales. But it still remains a significant financial outlay for many families and high costs of holiday childcare prevent some parents from working. From a period of expansion up until 2009, the number of places for children now appears to be decreasing. In many areas there is still insufficient childcare for working parents, and for the parents of secondary school age children or disabled children. Daycare Trust calls for central and local government to consolidate the progress it has made over the last 10 years and realise the aspiration of sufficient affordable holiday childcare for all children.

We call on the UK, Welsh and Scottish governments to:

- Review their national strategies to ensure that there is sufficient childcare for all children at all times of the year. Central governments should give local authorities the means to close the gaps in holiday childcare services, including expanding services in the public sector if needed.
- Provide a policy lead and look at ways of better organising holiday childcare for children in rural areas.
- Recognise that most parents incur extra costs during the nursery and school holidays and ensure that Tax Credit and benefit payment levels reflect these seasonal differences.
- Ensure that the Universal Credit, set to replace Tax Credits between 2013 and 2016, is responsive enough to adjust quickly for parents whose childcare costs vary across the year to claim for holiday childcare costs.
- Support flexible working, including term-time only contracts, with new employees given the right to request flexible work at the start of their employment, not just after 26 weeks in the job. There should also be Government support for an advertising campaign about flexible working targeted at sectors where there is little acceptance of flexible working practices.
- Amend regulations to ensure that self-employed parents can claim childcare vouchers.
- Encourage all childcare providers, but particularly holiday clubs and after-school providers, to accept childcare vouchers. Providers should also be able to register with the relevant regulator, even if they are only providing childcare for children aged eight and over, so that parents can use childcare vouchers and the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, to help pay for their childcare. This is not currently the case in Wales, even though the Welsh Government has indicated that it will create such a mechanism.

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1. Data from the Labour Force Survey, Quarter Two, 2010 and Daycare Trust calculation.
 2. See Bell, A., Finch, N., La Valle, I., Sainsbury, R. and Skinner, C. (2005) *A question of Balance: Lone Parents, Childcare and Work*, London: Department for Work and Pensions
 3. The average for Great Britain is the mean of the 10 English regions, Scotland and Wales.
 4. <http://www.ifs.org.uk/budgets/budgetjune2010/brewer.pdf>
 5. <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/news/107/Going-full-time-not-an-option-as-childcare-reform-means-work-wont-pay-for-many-parents>
 6. The Childcare Act 2006 applied to England and Wales, although it has different territorial applications to these two nations. In England the Childcare Act 2006 obliges local authorities to have sufficient childcare for working parents and those making the transition to work. It also obliges local authorities to run Family Information Services and undertake Childcare Sufficiency Assessments. Childcare sufficiency duties are weaker in Scotland.
 7. Welsh Government (2011) *Nurturing Children, Supporting Families: policy priorities for childcare*, Cardiff: Welsh Government

We call on local authorities to:

- Calculate the impact of cuts to childcare and play service budgets, and not implement cuts that increase levels of child poverty in their area. Our research shows that play services are used by many low income working families and cuts in this area will have a disproportionate impact on this group.
- Ensure that holiday play schemes offering a full daycare service are not cut and that subsidies continue to be available for lower income families.
- Support discrete Families Information Services and Children's information Service helplines, so that they are able to provide a full service to parents, and provide a brokerage role for holiday childcare where required.



Acknowledgements

Daycare Trust would like to thank and acknowledge the help and support given by Family Information Services and Childcare Information Services in the compilation of the cost survey. Data from the Labour Force Survey was provided by the Office for National Statistics and the UK Data Archive, and both organisations bear no responsibility for the calculations in this report.

Computershare Voucher Services

We are also very grateful for the support of Computershare Voucher Services, who sponsored this 2011 holiday childcare costs survey. Computershare Voucher Services is the UK's largest dedicated childcare voucher provider responsible for the administration, management and development of childcare vouchers which help working parents pay for registered childcare; including holiday activities, clubs and camps. Computershare Voucher Services is a founder member of the Childcare Voucher Providers Association (CVPA), the industry body launched to represent childcare voucher providers and promote best practice within the sector.

Daycare Trust has been championing childcare for 25 years, campaigning for quality, accessible and 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, trade unions and policy makers. Daycare Trust has recently merged with National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS) and now works to support families through local Family Information Services.

Daycare Trust offers a range of services, including:

- Consultancy and research
- In-house training
- Membership
- Support for Family Information Services
- We offer on-line information for parents: info@daycaretrust.org.uk

To find out more about our work visit www.daycaretrust.org.uk

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