

Caring for older children

What makes an
outstanding after
school club?

Paying for childcare
for older children

The latest
Daycare Trust
research



Welcome

I hope you enjoy this edition of childwise and find the contents useful. Childcare for older children is an area of 'unfinished business' for Daycare Trust. While the Government has done the right thing in introducing extended schools, in far too many areas the rhetoric outstrips the reality on the ground. Too many schools are still dragging their feet in introducing truly comprehensive 8am to 6pm services and many parents cannot find the supervised care they need for their children.

One of the outstanding issues is the fact that although primary schools are required to provide childcare as part of the extended schools package, for their secondary school counterparts, a range of activities is deemed sufficient. According to our own Listening to Families research series, many parents don't think this is adequate. For example, in November, lone parents on benefits will be required to consider paid work when their youngest child is 10 years old (down from 12 last year), but they need to know their children are being taken care of in a supervised environment. They are not content to leave their children at home or school without knowing it is someone's duty to know where they are, that they are safe, out of harm's way and not getting into trouble! And who can blame them. The pressure to be a responsible parent is as strong today as the pressure to return to work – which way to turn?

Daycare Trust will continue to put pressure on Government to slow down the requirements on lone parents at the same time as insisting that they press ahead to ensure that the necessary childcare provision is in place so parents can choose to engage in paid work, secure in the knowledge that their kids are well looked after.

There is a lot still to do.



Emma Knights and Alison Garnham
Joint-Chief Executives

Childcare Advance: scoping the need for help with up-front costs

From calls to our Information Line, we know that for many parents having to pay up-front childcare costs including fees in advance, deposits, retainers and administration fees to secure a place with a childcare provider can create a significant barrier to starting or returning to work. This is because whilst parents may be able to get help with ongoing childcare costs from tax credits or their employer, to pay up-front fees, they need to find a large amount of money at a time when they have not had a regular income from work.

'As I am no longer working I do not have the luxury of a lump sum or saving for that deposit.'

Louise, Horsham

In November 2008, Daycare Trust was awarded funding from Friends Provident Foundation for a project to investigate which parents experience difficulty meeting these costs, the help currently available and to suggest options for a sustainable scheme that would offer financial help to parents with these costs.

Our research included a survey of parents and feedback from childcare providers and Family Information Services. 200 parents completed the survey and from their responses we found that:

- Overall 58 per cent of parents said that they found it difficult to meet up-front childcare costs.
- Families with an annual household income of less than £40,000 were most likely to report having difficulties.
- Average up-front costs reported were £300–500.
- Families with an annual household income of less than £18,000 were most likely to seek help to pay these costs.
- Overall, 21 per cent reported that up-front childcare costs affected their decision to return to work; more parents in couples than lone parents reported this.

'We're both working full-time and earning between £22,000–25,000 [joint income]. Our nursery fees up-front were £630 and although we tried to get help, we didn't.' **Michelle, Kings Lynn.**

The Childcare Advance project suggests that help could be offered to parents as a low interest or interest-free loan from their employers or local community or financial organisation. We are now looking for funding to run pilot Childcare Advance schemes across England.

The final report and a summary of the findings and recommendations are available at www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/published-research.html.





Childcare for older children

Childcare isn't an issue that only affects parents with children under five; if you're a working parent, the likelihood is that you will need to find some sort of out-of-school childcare for your children throughout their primary years and often beyond.

The benefits of childcare for children goes far beyond enabling parents to work or study; children are able to take part in activities they wouldn't normally do in the school day, they can meet and play with friends in a safe environment, do sports or arts activities, join study clubs and for those attending breakfast clubs, have a nutritious breakfast before the school day starts. Schools and parents report increased confidence and self-esteem among children who attend out-of-school clubs and better attendance and increased concentration from children attending breakfast clubs. By 2010 the Government hopes that all primary schools will offer parents a range of extended schools services which include childcare such as breakfast clubs and after school clubs.



We visited an after school club in Hertfordshire to find out what was on offer.

The Big Top after school club has been running for 10 years and received an 'Outstanding' assessment following its latest Ofsted inspection. The club is attached to Merryfield School in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire and takes children from four local schools, all of whom walk there accompanied by play workers. As the club can accommodate children up to the age of 14, they also sometimes get older children from secondary schools attending. And it's not hard to see why.

The range of activities on offer is hugely varied from arts and sports activities, board games, table football, pool, Wii and DVDs plus the use of the large playing field outside. Children arrive after school and sit down for a drink and snack and can then choose how they want to spend their time. A group of children hover round a table covered in Lego and other construction toys whilst another couple sit chatting with a worker and colour pictures. The table football is surrounded by a crowd of five and six year olds while someone else settles down to watch a DVD. Outside two play workers are refereeing a game of football and supervising high speed scooting.

Jackie Gaitley, manager, who set up the club ten years ago, has given priority to having well trained staff. She explains: "All our staff are qualified first aiders, they have all achieved their level three in play work or are training for it (even the caretaker) and most of the staff work or have worked in the school."

Help with homework at the Big Top after school club

But this isn't the only reason for their success; the club is keen to foster a strong sense of community amongst the children and they regularly fundraise for charities. They sponsor a child's education in Gambia and organise sponsored events at the club to raise money for new equipment and toys for the club. Their recent 'Skipathon' raised enough money to buy a Wii and the sponsored 'Hush' (a popular event among staff) raised money to buy new scooters and other play equipment.

The real marker of the success of the Big Top is the positive feedback given by the children who attend.

Chloe aged 9 says; "it's great to see your friends from other schools. We play basketball, have dancing lessons, make dream catchers and mess around in the wild garden outside which is like a jungle." Her friend, also Chloe, 10 from Parkfield Primary school explained about some of the visitors they have: "We've had a dance instructor who also did stage make up and gave us all really scary pretend scars and bruises, we had a man from the zoo who brought in snakes and an anaconda and we've learnt about healthy eating from a nurse."

Callum, 8 is scooting around outside and has been going to the club for four years. He says; "there's nothing I don't like about the club. I love pool, table football, being outside on the scooters and the Wii. Mum goes to work but even if she didn't I'd still want to come here."

Clearly the Big Top goes that extra mile to ensure the children are safe and having a good time and this is a great example of how an after school club can offer school aged children excellent after school care.



To find out about the breakfast and after school clubs in your area, contact your Family Information Service or visit <http://childcarefinder.direct.gov.uk/childcarefinder>.

If you want more information on how to set up an out-of-school club, what regulations there are and what funding might be available visit the Out Of School Alliance website at www.oosa.org.uk

After school clubs are one childcare option for older children, many parents choose to use a childminder because they can offer a homely environment to children before and after school. Many childminders will drop off and pick up from school and should offer the full range of activities appropriate to the age group. Children can do their homework, play and watch TV, in other words do what they would do at home.

You can find details of childminders in your area from your local Family Information Service. Alternatively to find out more about what childminders do and the activities they can offer school age children contact the National Childminding Association on 0845 880 0044 or visit: www.ncma.org.uk

Paying for childcare for older children

If your children are aged 15 or under (16 if they are disabled) and you pay for childcare, you could get help with your childcare costs. People often think that help with childcare costs is restricted to care for children under five but so long as your childcare is registered, you may be able to get help with your costs for older children from Working Tax Credit or through an employer childcare scheme.

Childcare for children over five includes; children's centres, childminders, breakfast and after school clubs, out-of-school activity clubs and holiday play schemes.

Breakfast and after school clubs

Any childcare for children up to the age of seven MUST be on Ofsted's Childcare Register. This means that they are inspected by Ofsted and an inspection report should be freely available for parents to see. You will need the Ofsted registration number of the provider when filling out your application form for tax credits or joining your employer's childcare scheme.

If your child attends an out-of-school club exclusively for children aged eight or over, you will need to check that they are registered as they don't have to be. They can however, opt to join the voluntary part of the Ofsted Childcare Register which allows eligible parents to claim help with their costs. Any activity-based club can also join the voluntary part of the Childcare Register including; sports, drama, arts, homework and faith-based clubs. If you're not sure whether the childcare you use or would like to use is registered it's worth speaking to the manager to find out.

For more information about Ofsted registration and inspection, see www.ofsted.gov.uk

Holiday childcare

If you only use registered childcare during the school holidays, you may be eligible for help with your childcare costs through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. When you start paying childcare costs or, if you have arranged a childcare provider, up to one week before you start paying costs you need to contact the Tax Credit helpline on: 0845 300 3900 and inform them of what your average weekly childcare costs will be and for what period. If you are eligible for help you will also need to contact the office when you stop paying for your childcare. You must do this to avoid an overpayment.

If you need help working out your average childcare costs the helpline will assist you.

If you use childcare throughout the year as well as during the holidays, your tax credit award will be based on your average weekly costs, so when you put in your application for the childcare

element of Working Tax Credit, you need to include any holiday costs that you estimate you will be incurring. This will be included in your weekly tax credit payment.

If your employer offers childcare vouchers, these too can be used to pay for any registered holiday childcare that you use. And you can save these up so the cost of holiday childcare is spread throughout the year.

To find out more about Working Tax Credit and employer supported childcare (and other help with childcare costs including schemes for students), see www.payingforchildcare.org.uk.

Free Childcare for Training

Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work is a new scheme, launched in April 2009, to help workless parents back into work. It provides up to £175 per week to pay for childcare whilst they are training or learning. The scheme forms part of a wider government strategy to reduce child poverty by improving the longer term job prospects of families.

Under the scheme, eligible parents can choose which course is going to give them the right skills to get back into work, ranging from a short refresher course, to a more formal qualification in a range of subjects.

Embarking on a training course can provide the first steps to a new career path. However, many need to consider childcare options for their children. Making an application for Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work can help ease the financial burden of returning to learning, whilst allowing parents the freedom to pursue their career goals.

The scheme is open to around half a million families in England that have:

- One partner in work
- An annual household income of £20,000 or less in the previous tax year
- A child or children under 14
- A child or children under 18 with disabilities

If you are interested in the scheme and would like to find out more, please visit

www.direct.gov.uk/freechildcareforlearning

Application forms are available from Learning Providers, Jobcentre Plus, Nextstep or by phoning the Learner Support Service helpline: 0800 121 8989.

Welfare reform and older children

In 2008 the Government introduced changes to welfare benefits for single parents, so that when their youngest child reached the age of 12, parents would move from Income Support to Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), and therefore need to actively look for work. From this October, the age threshold reduces, so that single parents receiving benefits and whose youngest child is 10 or younger will move onto JSA.

Daycare Trust knows that helping lone parents into work will only work if the **right childcare** and the **right job** are available.

If parents are going to be able to work, having good, local and affordable childcare is essential, as it is unlikely that all jobs will fit neatly into school hours. The availability of holiday clubs and playschemes, which cover parents' working hours through the school holidays are also crucial, as not all parents will be able to arrange their work over term time only.

A 2008 survey by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) found that 34 per cent of families were using a breakfast or after school club or activity, so use of childcare for school aged children is increasing.¹ But we are still finding that there is not enough local childcare, particularly for older children. Daycare Trust's Holiday Childcare Survey found that only 20 per cent of Families Information Services thought there was sufficient holiday childcare for children aged 12 and over. And the DCSF survey also found that children aged 12-14 were less likely to be using out-of-school clubs than younger children.

Finding the right childcare for you and your family will take time, but it is important to get it right. Daycare Trust has top tips on finding childcare and questions to ask nurseries and childminders when you visit our website <http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/finding-and-choosing-childcare.html>. If you cannot find suitable childcare for your child while you work, that is a 'good cause' for not accepting an offer of employment, and your Jobcentre Plus (JCP) adviser should accept this.

Finding the right job is also important – and this will involve working closely with your JCP adviser to find the job and career that suits you and your family. You might want to train or re-train and there may be some support available to do this. If you want to do a course to help you get back to work, speak to your JCP adviser before enrolling, as there may be funding available to pay for childcare while you study, through the New Deal for Lone Parents.

To find out more about how these changes could affect you, please contact our Information Line on 0845 872 6251 or email us at info@daycaretrust.org.uk.

1. Speight, Smith, La Valle, Schneider & Perry, with Coshall & Tipping (2009) Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents 2009. DCSF Research report RR136

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