

issue 17
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childwise

CHECK OUT CHILDCARE: NEWS AND VIEWS FOR PARENTS FROM DAYCARE TRUST

Research review
see our summary inside

What to expect
from your Children's
Information Service

Pop it on a postcard
you can help make childcare for all a reality

Visit Daycare Trust's website at www.daycaretrust.org.uk

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 DAYCARE
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THE NATIONAL CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN

POP IT ON A POSTCARD

Welcome to the latest edition of *Childwise*. Daycare Trust's newsletter for parents.

What would make life better for you and your family? Now's your chance to tell the Chancellor what you want from the Government's review of childcare. All you have to do is complete and return the enclosed postcard.

The Government has invested significant amounts of money in childcare. We now need to ensure that all families can access quality affordable childcare when they want it.

The postcard campaign is an opportunity for parents and children to say what you really want to make life better for your family.



Stephen Burke
Director, Daycare Trust

welcome
to Childwise

Readers' view - you have your say



Thank you to all of you who responded to our recent readers' survey. Your feedback and comments on *Childwise* and childcare in general are invaluable for improving the newsletter and supporting our campaigning work.

So what did you think? The majority of readers are parents with children under the age of eight, followed closely by all types of childcare providers. General information and news about childcare was voted as most useful and interesting. 70% of you however would like more information on current childcare policy and research (which we've included in this issue).

You also expressed a variety of comments on your childcare experiences. Here are just a couple of your comments that I'm sure many of you will agree with:

"I have found it very difficult to find childcare since my son started school. The school has an after school club but there are only 16 places for 400 children!"

"Childcare is very expensive but I love to go out to work...It would be nice if the Government recognised the costs involved for working mums."

What the research really says

There has been a flood of research on childcare and working parents recently. It can be confusing and worrying for parents, who want to be sure they are making the best decision for their children. Here's our summary of some of the recent findings.

RESEARCH PROJECT: UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL, CHILDREN OF THE 90S

WHAT THEY FOUND: The research looked at mothers' employment and its effects on children's cognitive development (how well they can read, write and speak). Findings show that for the majority, mothers' employment during the first three years had no adverse effects on children's cognitive development. Negative effects were only apparent where mothers returned to work full-time, before a child was eighteen months old and who relied entirely on informal childcare, such as care by a friend, neighbour or relative. Short periods of informal care or a mixture of registered and informal childcare were not damaging to children.

Mothers' full-time employment alone did not affect children's cognitive development, often because in such households fathers were more involved in childcare. A father's active involvement with the care of children under the age of two was found to be beneficial to children's development.

You can find out more information on the Children of the 90s research at www.alspac.bris.ac.uk

RESEARCH PROJECT: EPPE STUDY (EFFECTIVE PROVISION OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION)

WHAT THEY FOUND: This study is investigating the effects and benefits of early education and childcare for children. It has found that good quality pre-school experiences has a positive impact on children's learning and development during school and beyond. Learning at home combined with high quality pre-school education, such as playgroups, day nurseries and childminding networks make a positive difference to children's social skills and intellectual and cognitive development.

More information on the EPPE research project can be found at www.ioe.ac.uk/projects/eppe

RESEARCH PROJECT: PwC, UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE

WHAT THEY FOUND: Economists from PricewaterhouseCooper examined the cost of providing childcare for all children aged between one and four and found it would have a net benefit worth £40billion to the economy over the next 65 years. Although there is a cost in providing universal childcare, it is far outweighed in the long term, by factors such as increased female employment and increased earnings later in life for children. The study concluded that despite the initial expense, within 20 to 30 years universal childcare services would pay for themselves and be profitable for the economy.

More information and a copy of the report are available on the PricewaterhouseCoopers website www.pwc.com

RESEARCH PROJECT: BRITISH GAS - COST OF WORKING STUDY

WHAT THEY FOUND: This survey of working mothers looked into the 'cost' of working for women and the personal financial gain it had. In their survey, four in ten mothers worked full-time and of those who worked part-time, 60% had two jobs. They found that the average woman earned £864 a month after tax, but £808 of this went straight on expenses such as childcare, clubs and classes for their children, 'guilt treats' for children and support with household tasks such as cleaning and ironing.

74% of the mothers surveyed said that they worked to cover the cost of everyday living and a staggering 89% declared that they never spend any of their earnings on themselves.

For more details on this piece of research you can contact Lisa Kilmartin at QBO Bell Pottinger on 020 7861 2424



Your childcare choices

Underlying all of this research is the importance of good quality childcare, but what are the signs to look out for when making your choice? Visiting childcare providers is important, particularly if you are not sure which type of service will suit you and your child best. Here are some top tips on what to look out for and questions to ask during your visit:

- A warm welcome for you and your child.
- Children who are busy but relaxed and happy. What range of activities are planned for each day?
- Carers who are trained and experienced, who respond well to you and more importantly to your child. What qualifications and experience does the carer have?
- If it's a group setting, do they have a key carer scheme, whereby one member of staff will have the main responsibility for your child?
- Clean and safe premises.
- Toys, books and displays that represent different cultures in a positive way.
- Enough space for children to play in without getting in each other's way. What's the child:carer ratio?
- Quiet, comfortable areas where your child can sleep or rest.
- A safe secure place for outside play. If there's no outside space, are regular visits to parks or playing fields planned?

If you opt for informal childcare, ask your Children's Information Service for details of local parent/carers and toddler groups, soft play or sessional play sessions. These kinds of activities will be fun and stimulating for your child and a good opportunity for their carer to meet other parents and carers.

You'll find more information on our website www.daycaretrust.org.uk or you can request a copy of *Choosing Childcare* by calling 020 7840 3350.

MONEY MATTERS - CUT OUT AND KEEP



This new feature will keep you informed of financial support available to parents and childcare providers. Why not cut out and collect the series for future reference.

Care to Learn?

If you are 16 or over and under 19, interested in studying but unsure how you can afford childcare, Care to Learn? could be the answer you are looking for. Care to Learn? is a new funding scheme, launched in August 2003 to support young parents in learning or training. It can fund up to £5000 per child, per year to support

- Registered childcare costs
- Additional necessary travel costs
- Childcare during private study
- Retainer childcare fees

From August 2004, the scheme will also be widened to offer the same support to all parents under the age of 19, including those who are under 16. You can find out more information about Care to Learn? online at www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn, or if you are a parent you can call their helpline on 0845 600 2809. Childcare providers and advisers can find out more details by calling 0161 234 7269.

What to expect from your CIS*

You may have heard of your local Children's Information Service (CIS)*, but you may not be familiar with the variety of services and information that they can provide. Whether you are trying to find childcare, are interested in a career in childcare or want to know more on what's available for children and families in your area, your CIS should be your first port of call. Here's some of the information your CIS can offer:

- Listings of full day and sessional childcare provision including childminders, day nurseries, out of school care, playgroups, pre-schools and nursery schools
- Advice on childcare options and how to make your choice
- Information on financial support available towards childcare costs
- Details of family and parenting services including parent and toddler groups, soft play sessions, parent drop-in groups and parenting advice services
- Other children's activities (eg: sports and leisure clubs)
- Advice on childcare careers (training, qualifications, taster sessions & recruitment fairs)
- Information on setting up childcare services or becoming a registered childminder or registered home carer

For contact details of your local CIS you can call ChildcareLink on 0800 096 0296 or visit www.childcarelink.gov.uk

Every Child Matters

The recent Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' sets out the Government's proposals for reforming the delivery of services for children, young people and families. It builds on existing measures to ensure that we protect children at risk of harm and neglect and support all children to develop their full potential. The Government is consulting with parents, children and professionals on the proposals made in the Green Paper and would like to hear your views. The consultation on 'Every Child Matters' will run until 1 December 2003. For more information on the Green Paper and the consultation visit www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters or call 0870 000 2288. A summary of the Green Paper can be ordered from the DfES publications line 0845 602 2260.



Answers on a postcard please...

Daycare Trust has launched a major postcard campaign calling on the Chancellor, Gordon Brown to provide affordable, quality childcare for all families, including a children's centre in every community.

We are aiming to make a real impact through this campaign, and you are the ones who can make a difference. You'll find a copy of a postcard in this issue of Childwise and all you have to do is complete and post it to show your support.

For more copies of postcards please contact Daycare Trust on 020 7840 3350 or info@daycaretrust.org.uk. You can also download a supporting letter and poster for the campaign from our website www.daycaretrust.org.uk

dear childwise...

I've heard of Sure Start, but I don't know exactly what services they offer. How can I find out more?

Sure Start provides a range of services for children, parents and communities bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support. Some Sure Start services are universal, so all children and parents are eligible for and have access to certain services. Free part-time early education, for example, is now available to all children aged 4 and from April 2004, all three year olds will also have the option of a free part-time early education place. All parents also now have access to information and advice through their local Children's Information Service.

The development of more and better quality childcare is a key part of the new Sure Start services and they aim to create at least 250,000 new childcare places by 2006. Some Sure Start services are based in areas where they are needed most and the specific range of services they provide will be based on the needs of local families. Children's centres provide childcare, early education, health and family support and advice on employment opportunities. Sure Start local programmes (of which there are now 524) continue to provide a variety of community based services. Children's centres and Sure Start local programmes are currently based and will continue to be developed in disadvantaged areas, so access to these Sure Start services will depend on where you live.

For more information on Sure Start services visit www.surestart.gov.uk or call 0870 001 2345.

Yours, Childwise

GETTING TOGETHER

The National Childbirth Trust has launched their Getting Together pack, a fantastic guide for parents on setting up, advertising and running a successful informal parents' group. Full of useful resources and advice, the packs are also ideal for existing groups, with lots of ideas on activities and getting more and perhaps a wider scope of people to attend. For more details or to order a pack you can call 0870 444 8707 or visit www.growagroup.com

Changing Standards

The Sure Start Unit has carried out a review of the national standards for under 8s daycare and childminding and the resulting changes to these came into action in September 2003. Two changes mean that childminders cannot smack or smoke in front of children in their care (something they could previously do with a parent's written permission) and that childminders will be able to look after more than one child under one year old if they have appropriate levels of training and experience. Copies of the updated standards are available from the DfES publications line 0845 602 2260 or online at www.surestart.gov.uk

GET CHILDWISE

For your free subscription to Childwise please fill in the form and post it to Daycare Trust at 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES, or fax 020 7840 3355, e-mail info@daycaretrust.org.uk or phone our helpline on 020 7840 3350.

We may occasionally contact you about other publications and services offered by us. If you do not wish to be contacted please tick

Name

Address

Contact number

How did you hear about Daycare Trust?



Daycare Trust is the national childcare charity, campaigning for quality affordable childcare for all children aged 0-14 and raising the voices of children, parents and carers. We advise parents and carers, providers, employers trade unions and policymakers on childcare issues.

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