

childwise

childwise issue 30 Spring/March 2008
Daycare Trust National Childcare Campaign

NATIONAL CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN



Our annual survey

Complete our survey and enter the draw to win £50 worth of vouchers.

Working Tax Credits

Are you receiving help with your childcare costs?

Parent Champions

Parents are spreading the word about childcare.



Welcome

Welcome to the spring edition of *childwise*, Daycare Trust's quarterly newsletter for parents.

Daycare Trust is the national childcare campaign, and for us to be effective in our campaigning we need you! We need your participation, your opinions and your support. There are many ways that you can become involved and in this issue we highlight some of our ongoing projects, as well as giving details of campaign issues that you can become involved with.

In this issue we also have our annual readers' survey, so please take a few minutes to complete our questionnaire; we want to know what you think about *childwise* and hear your experiences of childcare. All completed questionnaires will be entered into a prize draw to win £50 worth of shopping vouchers.

National Childcare Week is fast approaching in June 2008. Look out for the enclosed flyer giving details of the children's creative competition as well as other events to mark the week.

If you would like to know how you can become involved in any of our work, or you would like to share your experiences of childcare with us, please contact us at: info@daycaretrust.org.uk or call 020 7840 3350.



Alison Garnham & Emma Knights
Joint-Chief Executives

Daycare Trust is a member of the Campaign to End Child Poverty.



For more information about the campaign, visit www.endchildpoverty.org.uk.

Could you be getting help through tax credits?

There have been many stories in the press about problems with tax credits - overpayments, underpayments, complicated lengthy application forms - all resulting in many parents not claiming money that they are entitled to. But, if you are working, on a low income and paying for registered or approved childcare, the childcare element of Working Tax Credit could go a long way in helping you to pay for your childcare.

You can now check whether you are eligible to claim by using Daycare Trust's new online Tax Credit Checker at www.payingforchildcare.org.uk. If you find that you are eligible, call the Tax Credit Helpline for your application pack. Don't let the size of the form and guidance notes put you off claiming, it could save you hundreds of pounds in childcare costs. If you need help filling in the form, speak to a welfare adviser at your Children's Information Service, local children's centre or Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Your tax credit award will be based on your family's income, how many children you have and how much you pay for childcare. Check this thoroughly and if you notice any mistakes or miscalculations tell the Tax Credit Office immediately to avoid problems with payments. And don't forget to tell them of any changes in your circumstances, it may mean your tax credits increase.

For further information about the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and other help towards childcare costs, visit www.payingforchildcare.org.uk. You can also call the Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 or visit the Revenue's website, www.hmrc.org.uk, for Tax Credit information.

Speak up about flexible working

We would like to hear from you about flexible working. Should all parents of school age children be entitled to ask for flexible working patterns?

Currently, the Government is considering giving parents greater rights to request flexible working. We know - because you tell us - that flexible working is one of the things that makes life easier for parents and carers. We are recommending that all parents with children up to the age of 18 should have the right to request flexible working. Without flexible working, many parents, including lone parents will be unable to take paid work even though the Government is expecting them to.

What do you think? We'd like to hear from parents who currently have flexible working conditions and those with a child over six who would like more flexibility. Please get in touch on 020 7840 3350 or email: scharity@daycaretrust.org.uk

Parents become childcare champions

Did you find out about childcare from a friend or family member? If so, you're not the only one. Research shows that over 70 per cent of parents choose childcare based on conversations with people in their community. Because word-of-mouth is so important in promoting childcare, Daycare Trust has developed the Parent Champions Project.

Parent Champions are people who have had positive experiences of using childcare. They encourage other parents to experience the benefits of formal childcare and help them to overcome the barriers to accessing childcare.

The project is based in London and is being run locally by three organisations that have extensive experience of working in the community. Community Links works with disadvantaged families and individuals in Newham offering advocacy, advice and educational programmes. Women Like Us runs an innovative school gates programme for women in London and is working with Parent Champions in Camden. Working Links is working throughout the UK to help people get back to work. They are delivering the Parent Champions Project in Tower Hamlets.

There are now ten active Parent Champions. Before getting started, they received training from the three community organisations around skills for outreach and engaging with parents, different types of childcare available in their community and where parents can go to get financial help with childcare.

Julie, a Parent Champion in Camden, explains that,

“ Some parents are keen to get back to studies or to work but are apprehensive about leaving children. Others have not taken time to look around for childcare mainly because they felt they would not be able to afford childcare even if it was available to them. ”

Michelle, a Parent Champion in Camden, says,

“ I have really enjoyed meeting the childcare agencies in my area, and I feel more connected to the immediate environment than I did before. ”



The Parent Champions started their active outreach work in January 2008 and now speak to other parents wherever they are, including at school gates, libraries, mosques, even door-to-door in their neighbourhood.

Parent Champions are not expected to be experts on childcare. Instead, they speak about their positive experiences and provide contact information for the Children's Information Service, offer to help parents find out about local childcare or help with childcare costs. Parent Champions have noticed that many parents they talk with express surprise about the widespread availability of childcare services and support.

They also help parents become comfortable using childcare. For example, Parent Champions in Newham take parents to childcare taster sessions at Community Links childcare programmes. In Tower Hamlets, one Parent Champion was aware that there were parents in her community who rarely left their homes. To help them feel less isolated and more confident about using childcare services, she is now accompanying these parents to toy libraries for young children.

To find out more about the Parent Champion Project contact Daycare Trust on 020 7840 3350 or email: info@daycaretrust.org.uk.

childwise annual readers' survey

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your feedback is invaluable to us and all completed forms will be entered into a prize draw for £50 worth of vouchers.

1. About you

Are you:

- Male
- Female

Are you a:

- Parent
- Carer (please describe)

.....
 Childcare provider (please describe)

If you are a parent, are you?

- Employed - full/part time (please specify)
- Full-time parent and partner working
- Full-time parent and claiming benefits
- In training
- A student – further education/higher education (please specify)
- Other (please specify)

2. About your children

How many children do you have in the following age bands?

0–2	3–4	5–11	12–14	15–18
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Do any of your children have a disability?

- No
- If yes please give more details:

3. About your childcare

What types of childcare do you use?

- Day nursery
- Nursery school/nursery class
- Children's centre
- Playgroup/pre-school
- Specialist day nursery/pre-school for children with disabilities/special educational need (SEN)
- Breakfast/after-school club
- Holiday club/scheme
- Childminder
- Nanny
- Au pair
- Friends/family (please specify)
- None

Overall, are you happy with your childcare provision?

- Yes
- No

Please make any comments about the childcare that you use:

4. Paying for childcare

Have you **applied** for any of the following sources of financial help towards paying for childcare?

- Child Tax Credit
- Childcare element of Working Tax Credit
- Disability element of Child Tax Credit
- Severe disability element of Child Tax Credit
- Childcare vouchers through your employer
- Other workplace scheme
- Childcare Assist through New Deal
- Care to Learn
- Funding from your college/university
- Funding from your local authority
- Disability Living Allowance (for your children)
- Free early years place (3 and 4yr olds)
- Childcare Affordability Programme (London only)
- Assistance through any other scheme (please explain below)

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Please give your comments on the application process, such as how simple the application was, whether the forms were clear and if you needed help applying.

Have you ever **received** any financial assistance towards paying for childcare from the following sources?

- Child Tax Credit
- Childcare element of Working Tax Credit
- Disability element of Child Tax Credit
- Severe disability element of Child Tax Credit
- Childcare vouchers through your employer
- Other schemes through your employer
- Childcare Assist through New Deal
- Care to Learn
- Funding from your college/university
- Funding from your local authority
- Disability Living Allowance (*for your children*)
- Free early years place (*3 and 4yr olds*)
- Childcare Affordability Programme (*London only*)
- Assistance through any other scheme (*please explain*)

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Please give your comments on these payments such as whether the payment covers your childcare costs, if it is paid regularly, whether you have been overpaid or underpaid and how your enquiry has been dealt with.

5. childwise

Please indicate where you receive your copy of **childwise** from?

- I am a parent member and receive it through the post
- Through the Children's/Family Information Service
- Children's centre
- From the Daycare Trust website
- Other (*please specify*):

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How long have you been reading *childwise* for?

Less than 6mths	6-12mths	1-2yrs	More than 2yrs
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What do you find most useful?

- Information about paying for childcare
- Information about childcare policy
- News about childcare settings
- News about the work of Daycare Trust
- News about events
- Other (*please specify*):

What would you like to see more of?

- Advice about choosing childcare
- Childcare policy
- Campaign news
- Research
- Real-life stories
- News about other events
- Details about publications
- Other (*please explain*)

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Would you be interested in an e-newsletter?

- Yes
- No

6. Membership

Are you interested in becoming a member? (If you would like to become a member, please fill in the form on the back and return)

- Yes
- No

What service would you like membership to include?

- Publications
- Free access to Daycare Trust's events
- Reduced costs to other childcare events
- Email copies of research and other reports
- Vouchers for services and goods
- Other – (*please specify*)

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7. Your details:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey,
 Please return it to Daycare Trust, 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES
 and you will be entered into a draw to win £50 worth of vouchers.**

National Childcare Week 2008 2–8 June

Daycare Trust's National Childcare Week is now in its 11th year and we very much hope that you will lend your support to the week, either by joining in one of the exciting events and activities being planned or by organising your own.

To mark National Childcare Week and the 2008 Year of Reading, The Children's Mutual is sponsoring a 'design a book cover' and a creative writing competition for children and young people aged up to 14. Details of how to enter are included on the flyer in this issue of *childwise* or can be found on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

Winners of the competition will be invited to attend an awards ceremony in London on 2 June 2008.

Details of other national and regional events will also be on our website.

Why not organise your own event to mark the week? This could be a picnic, a book day, a competition, an open day or even a summer fair. Let us know what you are doing and we will promote this by putting the details on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

To receive further information about National Childcare Week, email nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk or call 020 7840 3350 and ask to speak to our Events Officer.

Listening to children about childcare

Consulting with children about their experiences and views of childcare is an essential part of the expansion of the extended schools programme and is the aim of our *Listening to children about childcare project*, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. For this exciting research project, we plan to speak with children aged between 6 and 12 (up to age 18 for disabled young people) all over England about what they really think about childcare.

We have already conducted interviews and focus groups with 61 children and young people and they have been giving us amazing insights into what it's like for them to go to childcare, such as after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

Children spoke about the great things about childcare – especially being able to make new friends, do things they might not otherwise get to do, and to be in a safe place while their parents are at work. They also spoke of negative issues such as their fears of leaving after-school clubs to walk home, especially when it's dark out. They worry about being attacked by gangs when they leave a club and sometimes just feel safer going straight home after school. Other children spoke about how difficult it can be for shy children to go to after-school and holiday clubs, especially if they don't know any of the other children.

We hope to explore these and other issues with more children in the coming months. So if you think you know children who might like to express their views on childcare, contact our Research Officer – Aoife Fitzpatrick – on 020 7840 3350 ext 203 or email her at afitzpatrick@daycaretrust.org.uk.

Become a Parent member of Daycare Trust

Daycare Trust membership for parents is free in 2008. For your free subscription to *childwise*, please fill in the form below and become a Parent member of Daycare Trust. Return completed forms to:

Daycare Trust, 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES, or fax it to 020 7840 3355.

You can also download the membership form from our website: www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

I would like to become a Parent member of Daycare Trust and receive my free copy of *childwise*.

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

We may occasionally contact you about other publications and services we offer. If you do not wish to be contacted please tick this box.



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