

And the winners are...



Chancellor's Christmas Card Competition

We celebrate the artistic talents of hundreds of children

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Focus on informal childcare provided by grandparents

Welcome

Happy New Year and welcome to the first issue of *childwise* in a brand new decade!

Change is happening in the childcare world – some welcome, some not. As always we try to bring you the news that affects you in this newsletter. One of the major changes that happened at the end of 2009 was Gordon Brown's decision to scrap childcare vouchers. And then the subsequent reversal of that decision, allowing this type of support childcare to continue, but only for lower rate tax payers. We were pleased to see this reversal and it shows that 'parent power' can work!

Although the decision to scrap vouchers was aimed at releasing funds to provide more early years education places for two-year olds, a development we fully support, we did not agree that this essential funding support for childcare should be withdrawn in order to pay for it – right policy, wrong funding decision. Daycare Trust, along with many others in the childcare sector and parents, like you, raised our concerns and fed them back to the Prime Minister, and it seems our efforts worked! We were delighted that the Government responded to our concerns and had a rethink.

The end of 2009 also saw Daycare Trust celebrate the artistic talents of hundreds of children across the country with an awards ceremony held in honour of the winners of the Chancellor's Christmas Card Competition. Winners from two categories, junior and senior, received prizes from the Chancellor's wife, Maggie Darling, who hosted the event at Downing Street. I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who participated in the competition and I hope that you will continue to contribute to our work in the future.

I wish you all a positive 2010 and look forward to having you involved in our work over the coming year and beyond. Don't forget to sign up to our Parent Network to get involved – you can use the form on the back of the newsletter. I hope you enjoy this issue of *childwise*.

Alison Garnham
Chief Executive



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

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

An update on childcare vouchers

In his speech to the Labour Party conference in September 2009, Gordon Brown announced that the savings that parents make through tax relief on childcare vouchers, and other forms of employer-supported childcare, would be withdrawn by April 2015. The savings made by this change would be used to fund the extension of free early years education places for two-year-olds.

Childcare vouchers of up to £55 per week, or £243 per month, are exempt from tax and National Insurance contributions.

On 3 December the Prime Minister announced that he had reversed the decision to scrap childcare vouchers and employer-supported childcare, but that this type of support for childcare would continue with some changes to the current rules.

From next year, tax relief will only be available on the basic lower rate of tax at 20 per cent, meaning there will only be 1 level of support for everyone.

Higher rate tax payers, who currently receive the tax relief at 40 per cent, will continue to do so until 2015. From April 2011, any new entrants to employer-supported childcare schemes will only receive the tax relief from vouchers at the 20 per cent rate, even if they are higher rate tax payers. Basic rate taxpayers currently save up to £904 per year and higher rate taxpayers save up to £1,195 per year.

The decision to keep childcare vouchers will have a direct impact on the expansion of free early years education places for two-year-olds. These will no longer be extended to 250,000 children, as originally stated, but will increase more slowly and go to fewer families.

For information about the free early years entitlement in your area, contact your local Family Information Service (FIS). You can get contact details for your local FIS by phoning **0800 2 346 346** or by using the 'Find your FIS' link on www.familyinformationservices.org.uk.

For further information about childcare vouchers and employer-supported childcare, see our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk, or contact our Information Line on **0845 872 6251**.

Chancellor's Christmas Card Competition

Following the success of the National Childcare Week art competitions, Daycare Trust was chosen by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon Alistair Darling, and his wife, to be this year's beneficiaries of the Chancellor's Christmas Card Competition, to design their Christmas card.

Entries poured into our offices and in total we received over 400 designs, sent in from children who had participated through their nurseries, after-school clubs, schools, Sure Start children's centres, childminders and playgroups, and at home with their parents.

The judging panel, which included Keith Chapman (originator of Bob the Builder, Fifi Forget-Me-Not and co-creator of Roary the Racing Car), Naomi Wilkinson (Five's Milkshake! presenter), Sonali Shah (CBBC Newsround presenter) and representatives from Daycare Trust and The Children's Mutual then had to select the finalists, whose entries would be sent to The Chancellor and his wife for the final choice.

All the finalists were invited to the awards ceremony at Downing Street in December, where they all anxiously waited to hear if their design had been selected to win. Two-year-old Daniel Lee won the junior category with his hand printed robins and Lucy Waller, aged 10, from Buccaneers Out-of-school club, won the senior category. Their winning designs were used by the Chancellor and his wife as their Christmas cards to send seasonal greetings to leaders across the world.

"I was really impressed with the standard of entries this year. It is great to see British kids being so creative and imaginative at such a young age, and I am proud to champion such a fantastic charity which supports childcare in the UK." Keith Chapman



Junior winner

Daniel Lee, aged two, whose hand printed robins (left) secured him the Junior prize, with his mum and presenters from Five TV.





Senior winner



The winning design in the senior category (left) was created by Lucy Waller, pictured here with the Chancellor, his wife Maggie, and Keith Chapman.

Maggie Darling, the Chancellors wife, presented the winners with their trophy and a prize of £50, while their childcare setting/out-of-school club received a voucher for books and art

materials, which was kindly donated by NES Arnold. All of the younger children who attended also received a goodie bag including Fifi and the Flowertots and Roary the Racing Car and Five TV gifts.

"I want to offer my congratulations to the competition winners. The quality of all entries was incredibly high, and all the children should be really proud of what they've achieved. Alistair and I are really pleased with our Christmas card design." Maggie Darling

Also at the awards ceremony were Keith Chapman and Naomi Wilkinson, plus Beth Evans, Kemi Majeks and Jen Pringle, all from Five's Milkshake! and Shake! and there were special guest appearances from Fifi Forget-Me-Not and Big Chris from 'Roary the Racing Car' and of course the Chancellor himself! The competition was kindly supported by The Children's Mutual.

Thank you to everyone who supported the competition.

National childcare week 2010

Planning is now underway for this year's National childcare week, which will run from 12–19 July 2010.

Details of our children's competition, which has once again been kindly supported by The Children's Mutual, will be announced shortly.

We very much hope that childcare settings and providers around the country will join with us by organising events and activities to celebrate National childcare week.

To register and receive information, see our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk, or email your details to nationalchildcareweek@daycaretrust.org.uk.



Parents and quality

Parents have lots of difficult decisions to make for their children, and one of those decisions is which childcare to use: do you choose a childminder or a nursery? Do you choose the after-school club run at your child's school or do you go elsewhere? And when looking at childcare providers, how do you judge the quality of the setting and whether your child will enjoy it there?

It is clear from research studies that high quality childcare improves the life chances of all children – it boosts children's learning and gives them a chance to mix with others. Plus it enables parents to work, undertake training, and/or meet other parents.



Daycare Trust wants to find out more about what parents think about what high quality childcare looks like. In 2004, a MORI study for Daycare Trust found that the top quality issues for parents were the quality of staff, a warm and caring atmosphere, good quality buildings and facilities, and reliability. When looking at improvements, the most frequently mentioned improvement was in terms of outdoor space.

We are now doing some new work on what parents think high quality childcare consists of – to be published in a policy paper in the spring – and we would be really grateful if you would take five minutes to tell us what the top quality factors are for you and your children. The questionnaire is online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/parentsquality. All responses received by Friday 5 March will be entered into a prize draw to win £50 of high street shopping vouchers.

We will bring you further information about quality in childcare in future issues of *childwise*.

You can judge quality by visiting a setting and experiencing it for yourself. Talk to the staff, find out what the facilities are like and what activities are on offer, what training staff do and whether they have childcare qualifications. You can find further information and advice about choosing a suitable childcare provider, including ideas of questions to ask, on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk, or by calling our Information Line on 0845 872 6251. You can also download our factsheet 'Choosing quality childcare' from our website.

Daycare Trust is now promoting Nannyshare.co.uk

Nannyshare.co.uk specialises in matching up families who live close to each other and are seeking to cut their childcare costs by sharing a nanny. Nanny-shares generally bring children from two families together in one home, or the week is split with a few days at one home and the rest at another.

The Nannyshare website allows you to enter your postcode and find families nearby who want to share a nanny. You can then subscribe and create a family profile so other families can see your needs and vice versa. All members of the Daycare Trust Parent Network will receive a 20 per cent discount on the subscription charge.

To become a member of our Parent Network, for free, see our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk, call us on 0845 872 6260 or use the form on the back of this newsletter.

You may be able to claim help with childcare costs when using a nanny if they voluntarily register with Ofsted. For further information about this and general information about nannies, see our 'Finding and choosing and nanny' section of our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

nannyshare
meet families * share childcare costs

Listening to grandparents

In previous issues of *childwise*, we've brought you information about the work we are doing on our *Listening to Families* project. The final part of this project now focuses on the informal childcare that is provided by grandparents, and the relationship between informal and formal childcare provision.

Since the *Childcare Strategy* was introduced in 1998, and with local authorities having to ensure that there is sufficient childcare provision in their area (introduced by the duty in the Childcare Act, 2006), there have been a number of Government initiatives to improve formal childcare provision. There is, however, still significant evidence to suggest that grandparents play an important role in their grandchildren's lives, providing financial, emotional and childcare support, when needed. Since 1998, childcare provision has, in fact, improved and expanded and there has been a widespread increase in usage, particularly among three- and four-year-olds. However, parents continue to rely on informal childcare, and in particular grandparents, for their children's care, due to the flexibility that it allows and the minimal or no cost to them. There is evidence to suggest that parents' reliance on informal childcare may increase in the current harsh economic climate, as affordability becomes an even greater issue for some families.

There has been limited research carried out which clearly documents the views of grandparents themselves. The *Listening to Grandparents* research project explores how and why grandparents are relied upon to provide childcare for their

families. It also captures what grandparents themselves feel about the childcare that they provide, plus their views on important issues, such as whether they expect payment for the childcare that they provide, how they view the care that they provide compared to formal childcare and if they work, how they combine childcare with employment and other responsibilities. It also looks at whether grandparents think the government should provide additional support for them.

In addition to speaking to grandparents, we also wanted to speak to parents and hear their views about childcare and how and why they make the decisions about their childcare options. We were most interested in their reasons for relying on childcare provided by grandparents, how they relied on this form of childcare and, if applicable, how this related to any formal childcare they used. This research adds to the increasing amount of literature that focuses on the relationship between informal and formal childcare. It has been well documented that families rely on different childcare 'packages', or a 'caring jigsaw', using a combination of childcare options to meet their needs, for various reasons, including: economic, developmental and parental.

Gathering evidence for this project involved interviews and focus groups with over 40 grandparents and 20 parents in England during November–December 2009. The final report will be published in February 2010. Information about the final report will be available on our website, www.daycaretrust.org.uk.

Join our Parent Network

For your free subscription to *childwise*, please fill in the form below and join Daycare Trust's Parent Network. Return completed forms to: Daycare Trust, 2nd Floor, Novas Contemporary Urban Centre, 73-81 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 0NQ

I am a parent and would like to join Daycare Trust's Parent Network 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.

NATIONAL CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN

daycare
trust

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