

Appendix A – Discussion Guides

HMRC/DfE

Families' experiences and behaviour in the Childcare Affordability Pilots (CAP09)**Discussion Guide – Final draft (26/01/10)****ACTUAL COSTS GROUP****Objectives:**

The overarching objective of this research is to understand the importance of the affordability of childcare, relative to other factors, in parents' decisions about whether to move into, and remain in, work and childcare.

This study also evaluates the Actual Costs Pilot, among the 2009-10 cohort, focusing on customers' experiences and behaviour under another method of payment, but where the total level of support is the same.¹

Specific objectives are as follows:

- To explore customers' reasons for taking up the new system of support;
- To explore whether a system based on actual costs means that customers can cope better with seasonal variations in childcare costs (relative to the current tax credits system), and to gain a greater understanding of how parents' costs vary throughout the year, and the reasons for this;
- To explore whether reporting costs incurred at the end of each month is easier for customers than having to calculate their average costs over the course of a year;
- To explore whether paying childcare separately from the rest of the award makes it easier for customers to understand how the support they receive relates to the costs they incur;
- To explore customers' experiences and perceptions of calling HMRC every four weeks to report their childcare costs, and whether increased contact with the tax credits system results in a better customer experience;
- To explore how customers find a system where they receive support largely in arrears;
- To explore perceptions and experiences of the transition payment and of the facility to draw forward payments from future months.

Outline of the research programme:

- 45 in-depth interviews with customers who have taken up the offer of a special package of help towards childcare costs, allowing them to report the childcare costs on a four-weekly basis and receive payment in arrears that relates directly to this.
- 25 in-depth interviews with customers from the control group, who have taken up the offer of a system of help being offered by the Government whereby up to 80% of the childcare costs they pay will be covered if they are already in work or move into work for at least 16 hours per week. This is the basis of childcare support in the current tax credits system.
- We will conduct paired-depth interviews with couples where appropriate;

¹ The CAP09 pilots and evaluation were scaled back following the 2010 election and some components of the evaluation were removed, for example, research with some groups of families.

- All interviews will be held in London and the South East between 28th January and 12th March 2010
- Each interview/depth to last between an hour and an hour and a half

| Notes | Guide Sections | Guide Timings |
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| 1. Introductions and background | Sets the scene, reassures participants about the interview, confidentiality. Discusses the general work and life circumstances of the participant | 5 mins |
| 2. Employment history | This section will briefly look at the current work status of customers, including the transition into employment of those who had been unemployed prior to taking up HMRC's offer of help towards the cost of childcare. | 5 mins |
| 3. Using and paying for childcare | This section will explore participants' current childcare arrangements in more detail. | 10 mins |
| 4. Coping with seasonal variations in childcare costs | This section will explore participants' childcare arrangement expectations over the coming year and will examine how they envisage dealing with any seasonal variations. It will also look at if and how they may track of any seasonal variations in cost over the 12 months they'll be on the pilot. | 20 mins |
| 5. Interest in the offer | This section explores participants' reasons for taking up the new system – what attracted them to it initially. | 15 mins |
| 6. Making a claim and first impressions | This section will explore the process of making a claim and their views on the more regular contact they will have with HMRC under the pilot scheme. It will also look at pilot participants' early experiences of reporting their childcare costs to HMRC and overall understanding of the need to report changes in circumstances. | 30 mins |
| 7. Conclusion and Thanks | A summary of the conversation and key messages. The moderator will also gain provisional agreement of participation in the next wave of the research. | 5 mins |

Using this guide

We use several conventions to explain to you how this guide will be used. These are described below:

| Timings | Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| 5 mins | <p><u>Underlined</u> = Title: This provides a heading for a sub-section</p> <p>Bold = Question or read out statement: Questions that will be asked to the participant if relevant. Not all questions are asked during fieldwork based on the moderator's view of progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bullet = prompt: Prompts are not questions – they are there to provide guidance to the moderator if required. | This area is used to summarise what we are discussing, provides informative notes, and some key prompts from the moderator |
| How long it takes | Typically, the researcher will ask questions and use the | |

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| | prompts to guide where necessary. Not all questions or prompts will necessarily be used in an interview | |
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| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| 5 mins | <p><u>1. Welcome and introduction</u></p> <p>NOTE: Use the introduction to gauge the register that should be used in the interviews. What is written here is a <i>guide</i> only – but the information provided here should set the tone for the rest of the interviews and indicate how the questions should be phrased (i.e. whether they are currently in or out of work). Try to avoid the use of technical language – unless the participant uses it themselves – and explain terms clearly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank participant for taking part ● Introduce self, Ipsos MORI ● Emphasise that we will be talking about their experiences of finding work and childcare and, specifically, their experiences of reporting their childcare costs to HMRC on a four-weekly basis. ● Confidentiality: reassure all responses anonymous and that information about individuals will not be passed on to anyone, including HMRC or any other Government Department ● Explain outline of the research ● Role of Ipsos MORI – independent research organisation (i.e. independent of GOVERNMENT), gather all opinions: all opinions valid ● Get permission to digitally record – transcribe for quotes, no detailed attribution <p>PILOT RECRUITMENT CHECK: I believe you have recently taken up the offer of help towards childcare costs, allowing you to report the childcare costs on a four-weekly basis. Is this correct?</p> <p>CONTROL RECRUITMENT CHECK:</p> | <p>Welcome: orientates participant, gets them prepared to take part in the interview. <i>Outlines the ‘rules’ of the interview (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines).</i></p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Fine to mention HMRC at this stage. However, please do not mention the alternative method of payment to participants from either the pilot or control groups.</p> <p>Some interviewees (from the pilot group) will only have experienced the pilot system and it would be confusing for them to find out now that there is a system of averaging in place for other claimants. It is in the terms and conditions of the pilot but it is likely some have not read / absorbed this. At this stage, do not try to explain the averaging system to interviewees.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: This will already have been checked at the recruitment stage. However, mentioning it at this stage will aid recollection of the letter prior to asking about it in the following section.</p> |

| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| | <p>I believe you have recently taken up the offer of a system of help being offered by the Government whereby up to 80% of the childcare costs you pay will be covered if you are already in work or move into work for at least 16 hours per week. Is this correct?</p> <p><u>Personal Background</u> I'd like to start by learning a little about you.</p> <p>Can you tell me a bit about your household?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can I just check how many children do you have and how old are they? - Does anyone else live with you? PROBE: Partner, another family member, friends. <p>And apart from Working Tax Credit, what other benefits, if any, do you currently receive? And what other benefits have you received in the past? IF COUPLE: And what benefits does your partner currently receive?</p> <p>PROBE to check if the list of benefits mentioned is the full list, or if anything has been omitted</p> <p>USE SHOWCARD A IF NECESSARY to check if the list of benefits mentioned is the full list, or if anything has been omitted.</p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: As well as acting as a lead in to the rest of the interview to make the participant(s) comfortable, this section allows us to begin to understand the outlook of the participant(s).</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: PROBE FULLY – We need to find out whether this is a comprehensive list or a rough guess. If necessary, prompt participants with a showcard.</p> |

| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| <p>Up to 5 minutes</p> | <p>2. Employment history Firstly, can you describe any work that you do at the moment? IF APPLICABLE: And what work is your partner currently doing?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: If conducting a paired depth, check current work status of both participants. Also, ask about nature of partner’s work, how long they have been in that role, skill level, sector, location, temporary/permanent etc.</p> <p>IF WORKING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of work are you currently doing? PROBE: Role, skill level, sector and location (in relation to proximity to the home). - How long have you been doing that job? PROBE FULLY TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER OR NOT PARTICIPANT WAS WORKING PRIOR TO ACCEPTING HMRC’S OFFER OF ASSISTANCE TOWARDS CHILDCARE COSTS. - Was this the job you were doing when you started receiving assistance towards your childcare costs? IF NO: What were you doing before this? Why did you change job? PROBE FULLY ON DETAILS OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT. - Is this job permanent, temporary or casual? IF TEMPORARY OR CASUAL: How long do you expect to be doing this job? What do you expect to do after that? PROBE FULLY – TO GET AT WHETHER THERE IS A SENSE OF STABILITY/ PERMANENCE ABOUT THEIR WORK. - What are your working hours? Do you have regular working hours, or do your working hours change regularly? <p>IF NOT CURRENTLY WORKING/WORKING FEWER THAN 16 HOURS PER WEEK:</p> <p>When were you last in paid employment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was this the job you were doing when you accepted HMRC’s offer of assistance towards the cost of childcare? IF NO: Probe fully on recent employment history. - How long was this job for? | <p>This section will look at the current work status of customers, including the transition into employment of those who had been unemployed prior to taking up HMRC’s offer of help towards the cost of childcare.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: The participant might be out of work at this point, so would need to use past tense here and throughout the interview.</p> <p>If they have ceased, work questions should focus on the job that got them on to the pilot as this is the one that we are most interested in. If they have ceased the job that got them on to the pilot and taken up another by the time of the interview, please also pick up details on this as well - expect it will be as the diary is completed.</p> <p>Note that the participant might have been in work prior to joining the pilot, so they may have started the job they are currently doing some time ago.</p> |
| <p>Appendix A1 – Discussion Guide for the Pilot group Families’ experience and behaviour in the CAP09</p> | <p>111</p> <p>What were your reasons for leaving?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the main reasons why you are not working at the moment? PROBE FULLY - IF NOT MENTIONED: To what extent was your decision to not work related to issues to do with childcare? | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: While assistance with childcare costs is dependant on the recipient being in employment for 16+ hours per week, we may speak with people who are moving in and out of employment.</p> |

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| <p>Up to 10 minutes</p> | <p><u>3. Using and paying for childcare</u> I'd like to talk about the different childcare providers that you currently use. MODERATOR TO GIVE SHOWCARD B OF CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO PARTICIPANT Which of the different kinds of childcare provider(s) shown on this card do you use now? When do you use them? PROBE: Ascertain all the different sources used, when they use them. MODERATOR NOTE: If the participant has used a family member as childcare, please probe to find out which family member: the child's grandparent(s); the child's older brother/sister; another relative</p> <p>And which of these childcare providers do you claim financial assistance from HMRC for? PROBE FULLY. And of these providers, can you tell me a bit about how you found out about them? PROBE: Examine where they got the information from and the importance of each of the sources.</p> <p>What was it that made you choose the childcare provider(s) that you did?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent was cost a consideration in choosing a childcare provider? - And how important was flexibility (for example, the availability of childcare over school holidays, the requirement to continue paying for childcare over school holidays (when it might not be needed) and/or the availability of extra childcare, possibly at short notice? - And location? <p>I would now just like to get a sense of how all your childcare and work arrangements fit together, so I can understand better how you manage them. I'd like to try and draw a map of where you work and where the childcare you use is.</p> <p>ASK PARTICIPANT FOR STREETNAMES AND/ OR POSTCODES OF THEIR</p> | <p>This section will explore participants' current childcare arrangements in more detail.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: The participant may have different answers for different individual children – please record <i>all</i> their responses.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please ensure that participant is referring to formal childcare arrangements only. "Formal" childcare refers to the childcare that the participant is able to claim financial assistance from HMRC for. These types of childcare will have an official Ofsted number.</p> |
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| | <p>WORKPLACE AND ALL TYPES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL CHILDCARE USED. Note: details of these locations may have been described earlier in the interview. If this is the case, check to confirm.</p> <p>PROBE: How easy do you find it to get to your workplace and the places where you use childcare? What kind of transport do you use?</p> <p>And overall, how easy or difficult do you find it to balance work and childcare? PROBE: Why do you say this? What are the challenges you face when doing this? How do you meet these? PROBE: Does your current childcare provision have enough flexibility (e.g. for times when you work fewer or more? Ascertain whether they have informal systems of support in place they can rely on when needed. MODERATOR NOTE: Please look at the issue above carefully, particularly if the participant has irregular working hours.</p> <p>How do you pay for your formal childcare?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you pay on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis? PROBE FULLY – Particularly if the participant uses a variety of childcare providers, we need to see if they pay different providers on a different basis, - How do you pay for your formal childcare? PROBE FOR CASH, CHEQUE, DIRECT DEBIT ETC. - How does this differ from how you receive the financial assistance from HMRC to pay for your formal childcare? PROBE – See how easy/difficult it is for them to make a payment based on the cash cheque they receive currently. - How, if at all, do you currently budget for these costs? PROBE: Do you have a separate pot of money from which you pay for your childcare costs (e.g. one partner’s income, a certain benefit) or do these get paid alongside the rest of the household bills? | <p>We will also look at this issue later in the guide – so no need to go into too much detail here of BACs versus cash cheque.</p> |
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| | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Aim to get an understanding of the extent to which participants currently plan and budget for their childcare costs.</p> | |
| <p>Up to 20 minutes</p> | <p>4. Coping with seasonal variations in childcare costs I'd now like to talk in a bit more detail about any childcare you anticipate using over the coming year.</p> <p>Can you talk me through the types of childcare you expect to use each month, and for roughly how many hours (a week?) you expect to use each type of childcare?</p> <p>PLOT THIS ON A DIARY – SO WE HAVE A CHILDCARE EQUIVALENT OF THE EMPLOYMENT CALENDAR. MAKE SURE WE END UP WITH THE FULL FORWARD PICTURE OVER THE YEAR FOR EACH CHILD. NO NEED TO GO INTO COST DETAIL – WE JUST NEED TO SEE HOW THINGS WILL CHANGE.</p> <p>Do you expect your use of childcare to vary at all throughout the year? Why? PROBE: Look at whether they expect to have seasonal variations in childcare costs – this will be particularly relevant where there are children of school age in the household. PROBE: Will these variations be to formal or informal arrangements? REFER BACK TO SHOWCARD IF NEEDED.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IF APPLICABLE: How do you think these variations will fit in with your working hours? PROBE: Do you think you will need to change your working hours to fit around your childcare arrangements? IF YES: Can you talk me through why you think this might happen? - Are there any times during the coming year when you think you might find it difficult to make suitable childcare arrangements? Why do you say this? PROBE: To what extent is this based on prior experience? <p>To what extent do you expect the cost of your childcare arrangements to change during the course of the year? PROBE: Are these formal or informal childcare costs? REFER BACK TO SHOWCARD IF NEEDED.</p> | <p>This section will explore participants' childcare arrangement expectations over the coming year and will examine how they envisage dealing with any seasonal variations. It will also look at if and how they may track of any seasonal variations in cost over the 12 months they'll be on the pilot.</p> <p>May have different answers for different individual children. Please record all.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: This is an area of particular interest for HMRC and something that we will refer back to in wave 2 of the research. Please probe fully and gain as much detail as possible on participants' expectations.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the main reasons for these anticipated changes? PROBE: School holidays, changes to working hours, changes to partner’s working hours, poor fit between childcare provider and their working arrangement. - How do you think you will manage to cover these costs? - Are there any months when you think you will struggle to cover the cost of childcare? Why is this? - PILOT ONLY: To what extent do you think the way in which HMRC calculates and provides payment towards your childcare costs will help you during these months? - CONTROL ONLY: Is there anything that HMRC could do to make it easier for you to manage during these months? <p>Have you been keeping track of how much you have spent on childcare? PROBE: Does the participant have a clear system for keeping track of costs? PROBE: If participant has a system for keeping track of their childcare costs, find out how this system was developed – had the participant had any formal childcare arrangements prior to receiving assistance from HMRC.</p> <p>If yes, how easy or difficult has it been to keep track of your childcare costs? Why do you say that? PROBE: To what extent do seasonal differences make it difficult to keep track of costs? How about any previous experience of paying for childcare – how far has this influenced how you keep track of your costs?</p> <p>And do you intend to keep track of your costs over the next year? If yes, how? PROBE FULLY Do you expect your childcare costs to fluctuate? When do you think you’ll be paying more? Why do you say this? And when do you think you’ll be paying less? Why do you say this?</p> <p>How easy or difficult do you expect monitoring your costs to be? Why do you say that?</p> | <p>NOTE TO MODERATOR: Probe fully to ascertain how they plan to keep track of childcare costs over the next year. We will look at differences between the control and pilot groups in our analysis.</p> |
| Up to 15 | 5. Interest in the offer | This section explores participants’ reasons for |

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| <p>mins</p> | <p>I'd now like to talk a bit more about your decision to take up HMRC's offer of assistance towards the cost of childcare.</p> <p>SHOW INITIAL INVITATION LETTER</p> <p>Do you remember receiving this letter?</p> <p>ALL PARTICIPANTS SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED THIS LETTER FROM HMRC. IF THEY DO NOT RECALL IT, CHECK HOW THEY FIRST FOUND OUT ABOUT HMRC'S OFFER OF ASSISTANCE (e.g. through the outbound reminder calls from <i>Spoken For</i>) AND ADAPT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ACCORDINGLY.</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <p>Prior to receiving the letter, were you aware that you could get help towards the cost of childcare as part of Working Tax Credit?</p> <p>IF YES: How did you know about this? PROBE: Explore the importance of formal and informal networks in their information gathering.</p> <p>Why had you not applied for this assistance in the past? MODERATOR NOTE: They may have claimed in the past – they just had to not be claiming it at the time of the pilot.</p> <p>Were you aware of any other kinds of help and support available to you with regard to childcare? PROBE: Look at whether they aware of Sure Start, Lone Parent Advisors (if applicable) and so on.</p> <p>Could you tell me in your own words what you understood this letter was trying to tell you? PROBE FULLY TO ASCERTAIN THE EXTENT TO WHICH CUSTOMERS UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE PACKAGE OF HELP BEING OFFERED TO THEM WAS</p> <p>To what extent did you understand how much you would be able to claim? PROBE: How did you feel about this? Did you think it would be enough to cover your childcare costs? Why did you think this?</p> <p>PROBE: (Where appropriate): Did anyone else help you read or understand the letter? Who?</p> | <p>taking up the new system – what attracted them to it initially. It will also look at pilot participants' early experiences of reporting their childcare costs to HMRC and overall understanding of the need to report changes in circumstances.</p> <p>Moderator note: the original letter was not from HMRC, it was from DCSF, as were the reminder letters. Would be better just to show them to letter we are talking about each time for this section.</p> |
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| | <p>What did you do with this letter when you received it? PROBE: Did you read it straight away or put it to one side to read at a later date? Did you show it to anyone else or talk about it with someone? If a couple, did they mention it or seriously discuss it? IF YES: Who did you show it to / discuss it with? CHECK WHETHER PARTICIPANT CALLED THE HELPLINE UPON RECEIPT OF THIS LETTER.</p> <p>IF PARTICIPANT CALLED THE HELPLINE INITIALLY:</p> <p>Was there anything in particular in this letter that prompted you to call the helpline? Why do you say that?</p> <p>What were your main reasons for expressing an interest in the offer? PROBE FULLY: Not previously aware of assistance available, keen to return/remain in employment, new system will make it easier to cover childcare costs on an ongoing basis, whether the offer just happened to arrive when they were moving into work / taking up formal childcare anyway</p> <p>And did you have any reservations about doing so? PROBE FULLY: Lack of suitable childcare, not all costs are covered, payment not taking account of seasonal differences in childcare (CONTROL ONLY), potential problems with reporting costs on a regular basis (PILOT ONLY), potential problems with receiving payment in arrears (PILOT ONLY).</p> <p>Did you change anything about the way you looked for a job after receiving the letter from DCSF? Or after you had contacted the helpline? PROBE: See if the participant did anything to find a job more quickly, or if they made different decisions about what kind of work they would be happy to do after receiving information about the pilot.</p> <p>IF PARTICIPANT DID NOT CALL THE HELPLINE INITIALLY, BUT WAS CONTACTED BY THEM AT A LATER DATE:</p> <p>Why did you not call the helpline when you first received the letter from HMRC? PROBE: Concern about eligibility, concern about finding work or moving</p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Note that there are two types of calls made to claimants (as opposed to claimants calling in). One is the 'outbound' call,</p> |
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| | <p>into work, lack of understanding of what was being offered, lack of time.</p> <p>What was it that prompted you to take up the offer of assistance?</p> <p>Did you receive a reminder call from the Childcare Affordability Pilot Helpline?</p> <p>IF YES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When was this? How long was it after you received the initial letter? - How did you feel about receiving this call? PROBE: Did participant feel they were being chased? Or did the call act as a useful reminder? - What information were you given during this call? Was any of the information different to that contained in the initial letter? In what way? - What was it that prompted you to accept the offer of assistance? - To what extent did the helpline staff clearly explain the terms of the offer to you? How far did this have an effect on your thinking about whether or not to take it up? PROBE: Did the participant take up the offer as a result of the call, or were they considering the offer anyway? Had they found work in the period between receiving the letter and the follow-up call? <p>Did you change anything about the way you looked for a job after receiving the letter from DCSF? Or maybe after the helpline had contacted you? PROBE: See if the participant did anything to find a job more quickly, or if they made different decisions about what kind of work they would be happy to do after receiving information about the pilot.</p> | <p>asking them if they want to participate, and the second type is a 'kit' (keep in touch) call which is made at intervals.</p> <p>It's important to make the distinction between the two types of call for data analysis.</p> |
| <p>Up to 30 mins</p> | <p>6. Making a claim I'd now like to talk about your experiences from the point when you decided to take up the offer.</p> <p>MODERATER NOTE: track this on the customer journey so we can see how their experience developed over time.</p> <p>ALL WHO CALLED THE HELPLINE:</p> | <p>This section will look at the stages that participants went through prior to taking up assistance with their childcare costs, including how they went about finding work and childcare. In particular, this section will look at any issues participants experienced in co-ordinating work and childcare.</p> |

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| <p>RECAP: You said that for these reasons [mention as appropriate] you decided to call the helpline number on the letter.</p> <p>How did you find calling the helpline? PROBE: Was it easy to get through? What time did you call? Were the helpline hours convenient?</p> <p>And how did you find the people you spoke to? PROBE: How far were they able to help you with your queries? Did they give you all the information you needed? What else would it have been helpful to know?</p> <p>ALL WHO DID NOT CALL THE HELPLINE INITIALLY, AND WHO RECEIVED A FOLLOW-UP CALL</p> <p>How did you find the person who called you in relation to this offer? PROBE: How far were they able to help you with your queries? Did they give you all the information you needed? What else would it have been helpful to know?</p> <p>Did you express an interest in the scheme during this call, or did you call back at a later date? IF CALLED BACK: Ask how they found that call (how easy it was to get through, whether they asked any further queries, how helpful the staff were etc).</p> <p>IF OUT OF WORK AT THE TIME OF BEING RECRUITED ONTO THE PILOT/CONTROL SCHEMES</p> <p>And to what extent did the (tax credits related) people you called support you in your jobsearch? PROBE: How did they do this? Did they suggest you go and speak to other organisations? IF YES – which ones? How helpful was this? How often were they in touch with you? How did you find this – too infrequent/too often? What else would've been helpful?</p> <p>When you found work, what steps did you then take? PROBE: were you called as part of the helpline's efforts to keep in touch with you or did you call them?</p> <p>Did you have to speak to anyone else at this stage? IF APPLICABLE -PROBE: How did you feel about having your query transferred to the TCO? Was there any</p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: There may well be some duplication here in the early stages of this section with the previous section. Please use your judgement and adapt the questions to suit the circumstances of the original. Careful probing here will help us understand the differences in views between the two helplines.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: The participant's initial contact will be with the Childcare Affordability Pilot Helpline. This is run by SpokenFor – though participants are unlikely to know it by this name. Once they have been recruited onto the pilot/control scheme, they are passed to the Tax Credits Office. However, they may not be aware of the distinction between the two helplines – it may just appear as one office they talk to about tax credits. It is not necessary to explore participants' understanding of this distinction but please keep it in mind as it is possible that participants will mention the change of helpline.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: Participants are passed over</p> |
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| <p>impact on you?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: customer may not necessarily understand that they are being transferred from one organisation (Spoken For) to another (TCO). Ask this sensitively.</p> <p>ASK ALL</p> <p>And how did you find making the claim for this support with your childcare costs? PROBE FULLY HERE.</p> <p>What kind of information did you need to provide? How easy was it to find this? PROBE: Did they know the OFSTED registration numbers of their childcare providers for example?</p> <p>IF PILOT GROUP ASK:</p> <p>Moderator to mark down the following details on the customer journey.</p> <p>And did you receive a payment before you reported any costs? It was up to £500. IF YES, PROBE: When was this? To what extent did this cover the money spent?</p> <p>Did you need to pay a deposit or upfront payment for childcare? Did the initial payment help to cover this?</p> <p>IF PARTICIPANT CHOSE NOT TO RECEIVE THE TRANSITION PAYMENT: Why not? PROBE: See if the participant was concerned about owing money to HMRC at a later date, and why.</p> <p>Have you received any subsequent payments? Was the amount paid what you were expecting? Why do you say this? How have you found receiving money in arrears? Why do you say this?</p> <p>ASK PILOT GROUP ONLY:</p> | <p>to TCO when they have found work and eligible childcare.</p> <p>IMPORTANT: FROM HERE UNTIL THE END, THE ISSUES ARE KEY FOR HMRC SO GET AS MUCH DETAIL AS YOU CAN.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: On acceptance of the offer, participants have to confirm to the Tax Credits Office over the telephone that they are in work and what their average weekly childcare costs are (control). On pilot they will</p> |
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| <p>How have you received the payments – what form has the money taken? PROBE – Ask them if they have received cash cheques. And how has this affected how you pay for the childcare you use? PROBE – ask whether using a cash cheque has made it easy/difficult and why. What impact would being paid differently have? PROBE – What about if you were paid by BACs? Why do you say this?</p> <p>How much contact have you had with HMRC since making your initial claim? PROBE FULLY FOR ALL CONTACT PARTICIPANT HAS HAD AND RECORD ON THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY.</p> <p>When you last contacted HMRC, what did you tell them? (this question aims to explore if customers will use this opportunity (when calling HMRC) to report any changes of circumstances, in addition to reporting childcare costs.)</p> <p>How easy or difficult has it been for you to update HMRC with the childcare costs you have incurred?</p> <p>How do you feel about contacting HMRC regularly with information about your childcare costs? Why do you say this? PROBE: What are the benefits of this approach? And the disadvantages? Have you remembered to call on-time so far? How long have phone calls tended to last? What are your thoughts on this?</p> <p>Have you missed any calls to report your childcare costs for a month? PROBE: if yes, what happened? Have they had payments withheld? What was the impact of this?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Probe carefully here- this will allow us to gauge, for example, whether they remember receiving a phone call or letter to chase them up to report their costs.</p> <p>What is your understanding of your responsibilities in relation to claiming assistance with your childcare?</p> <p>Are you aware of the facility to draw forward payments from future months? What is your understanding of this facility? Have you used it?</p> | <p>report their costs at the end of each four week period.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Term ‘initial payment’ may not mean anything – if so the amount could jog their memory. It was up to £500 and most will have taken the full amount.</p> |
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| <p>IF YES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why did you use this facility? How helpful was it? - How did you go about doing this? What did this entail? - What information were you required to provide? - Did you have any reservations about doing this? <p>ASK ALL</p> <p>Do you anticipate your costs will be higher/lower over the coming year? When? Do you know how you will deal with these fluctuations (e.g. by drawing forward payments from the following month)?</p> <p>And to what extent is it clear to you what you need to do to manage your claim in the coming months? PROBE: For instance, are there any circumstances other than your monthly call to report costs under which you would need to contact HMRC? Why do you say this?</p> <p>What impact, if any, has accepting the offer of help towards your childcare costs had on the way you keep track of costs? PILOT ONLY: If previously used formal childcare, are they doing anything differently now that they have to report their costs on a monthly basis?</p> <p>IF CONTROL GROUP ASK:</p> <p>When applying for the childcare element of tax credits, you were required to calculate your “average weekly childcare costs”? Can you tell me in your own words what you understand by the term “average weekly childcare costs”?</p> <p>And how did you go about calculating this? How easy or difficult was it to provide a figure to HMRC? PROBE: What particular difficulties did you face? And how did you go about overcoming these?</p> <p>And how accurate do you feel this figure is? PROBE: Has this amount been enough to cover the childcare costs you have incurred to date? Why do you say</p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Participants are required to call HMRC every month with the childcare costs they have incurred during that month. They may be aware that if they do not call, they do not receive payment for that period, BUT it is important not to prompt participants at this stage – as this may alter behaviour and, hence, affect the research findings.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Probe for awareness of changes of circumstance that need to be reported to HMRC – BUT do not prompt participants as this may have an impact on the findings.</p> |
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| | <p>this?</p> <p>Are there any times in the coming year when you would expect your costs to be higher or lower than this average? IF YES: Why do you expect your costs to change? And how do you think you will deal with these changes? How easy or difficult do you think it will be? Why do you say that?</p> <p>How much contact have you had with HMRC since making your initial claim for assistance towards your childcare costs? PROBE FULLY FOR ALL CONTACT PARTICIPANT HAS HAD AND RECORD ON THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY.</p> <p>What is your understanding of your responsibilities in relation to claiming assistance with your childcare?</p> <p>Can you tell me after what events in your life you might need to notify HMRC of a change of circumstances which would affect the childcare element of your tax credits?</p> <p>Can you tell me how soon you need to inform HMRC of these changes after they occur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, how do you know this? • If no, explore possible reasons <p>And can you tell me why it is important to update HMRC with changes of circumstances?</p> <p>Have you notified HMRC of a change of circumstances since making your claim for the childcare element of tax credits? If yes, what sort of change (specifically if it relates to children or childcare)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, How easy or difficult was it? Why? <p>And to what extent is it clear to you what you need to do to manage your claim in the coming months?</p> | |
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| <p>5 mins</p> | <p><u>7. Conclusion and Thanks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Just thinking about all the things we have discussed today, what do you think of the system so far? Why do you say this? And how easy will it be for you to keep track of your childcare costs each month? - Is there anything else you think is relevant and wish to discuss? - Thank participants; explain the next steps (e.g. what HMRC will do with the findings). THANK AND CLOSE. Reassure about confidentiality - Would you be happy for us to contact you again to see how you're getting on in a few months' time? Explain plans for next wave, additional incentives and gain provisional agreement from participant. | <p><i>Key messages, particularly interested in ...</i></p> <p><i>Draws interview to a close.</i></p> |

Diaries for transition to work/ childcare costs

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| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |

Customer journey



Start

Finish

HMRC/DfE

Families' experiences and behaviour in the Childcare Affordability Pilots (CAP09)**Discussion Guide – FINAL (13/10/10)****ACTUAL COSTS PILOT, NON TAKE-UP GROUP****Objectives:**

The overarching objective of this research is to understand the importance of the affordability of childcare, relative to other factors, in parents' decisions about whether to move into, and remain in, work and childcare. The Non Take-Up group specifically evaluates reasons for families not joining the Actual Costs Pilot.²

Specific objectives are as follows:

- Explore how childcare is currently used – the mix of formal and informal care and attitudes towards each
- Understanding of budgeting approach, how variations in costs are dealt with, how payments are made and attitude towards the offer of variable payment;
- To explore how customers understand how the support they receive relates to the costs they incur
- To explore customers' experiences and perceptions of contacting HMRC and whether a potential increase in contact played a role in not taking up the offer; and
- Attitudes towards using formal childcare and what cost, quality and choice restrictions there are on the childcare that is available.

Outline of the research programme:

- 50 in-depth interviews with customers who have been offered, and not taken up a special package of help towards childcare costs, allowing them to report the childcare costs on a four-weekly basis and receive payment in arrears.
- Thus, all interviews are with those who have taken up the offer of a system of help being offered by the Government whereby up to 80% of the childcare costs they pay will be covered if they are already in work or move into work for at least 16 hours per week. This is the basis of childcare support in the current tax credits system.
- We will conduct paired-depth interviews with couples where possible;
- All interviews will be held in London and the South East between 18th October and 24th December 2010
- Each interview/depth to last between an hour and an hour and a half
- There are 5 separate groups of participants, based on the amount of contact they had with HMRC and the interest they showed in the offer. Some questions in the guide are specific to these groups and such questions are highlighted throughout this guide. These groups are defined as follows:

² The CAP09 pilots and evaluation were scaled back following the 2010 election and some components of the evaluation were removed, for example, research with some groups of families.

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| Group 1: Received the offer letter but were never in contact with Spoken For |
| Group 2: Responded to offer letter and had contact with Spoken For but did not register interest |
| Group 3: Responded to offer letter to register interest, but were not contacted for activation in May/June |
| Group 4: Responded to offer letter to register interest, at least one attempt was made (by TCO or Spoken For) made to contact them for activation in May/June but did not get through. |
| Group 5: Responded to the offer letter, registered interest and successfully contacted for activation but declined |

| Notes | Guide Sections | Guide Timings |
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| 1. Introductions and background | Sets the scene, reassures participants about the interview, confidentiality. Discusses the general work and life circumstances of the participant | 5 mins |
| 2. Employment history | This section will briefly look at the current work status of customers, including the transition into employment of those who had been unemployed prior to taking up HMRC's offer of help towards the cost of childcare. | 5 mins |
| 3. Using and paying for childcare | This section will explore participants' current childcare arrangements in more detail. | 10 mins |
| 4. Coping with seasonal variations in childcare costs | This section will explore participants' childcare arrangement expectations over the coming year and will examine how they envisage dealing with any seasonal variations despite not joining the pilot. | 20 mins |
| 5. (Lack of) interest in the offer | This section explores participants' reasons for not taking up the new system – do they remember the offer and what was unattractive about it? | 15 mins |
| 6. Budgeting for childcare costs | This section aims to get an understanding of the extent to which participants currently plan and budget for their childcare costs. | 10 mins |
| 7. Using childcare | This section looks into general attitudes to childcare. It also looks at issues around upfront payments, difficulties finding affordable childcare and potential cost barriers | 20 mins |
| 8. Conclusion and Thanks | A summary of the conversation and key messages. | 5 mins |

Using this guide

We use several conventions to explain to you how this guide will be used. These are described below:

| Timings | Questions | Notes and Prompts |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 5 mins | <p><u>Underlined</u> = <u>Title</u>: This provides a heading for a sub-section</p> <p>Bold = Question or read out statement: Questions that will be asked to the participant if relevant. Not all questions are asked during fieldwork based on the moderator's view of progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bullet = prompt: Prompts are not questions – they are there to provide guidance to the moderator if required. | This area is used to summarise what we are discussing, provides informative notes, and some key prompts for the moderator |
| How long it takes | <p>Typically, the researcher will ask questions and use the prompts to guide where necessary. Not all questions or prompts will necessarily be used in an interview</p> | |

| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
|---------|---|---|
| 5 mins | <p><u>1. Welcome and introduction</u></p> <p>NOTE: Use the introduction to gauge the register that should be used in the interviews. What is written here is a <i>guide</i> only – but the information provided here should set the tone for the rest of the interviews and indicate how the questions should be phrased (i.e. whether they are currently in or out of work). Try to avoid the use of technical language – unless the participant uses it themselves – and explain terms clearly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank participant for taking part • Introduce self, Ipsos MORI • Emphasise that we will be talking about their experiences of working and childcare and, specifically, their experiences of estimating the cost of and budgeting for formal childcare • Confidentiality: reassure all responses anonymous and that information about individuals will not be passed on to anyone, including HMRC or any other Government Department • Explain outline of the research • Role of Ipsos MORI – independent research organisation (i.e. independent of GOVERNMENT), gather all opinions: all opinions valid • Get permission to digitally record – transcribe for quotes, no detailed attribution <p>RECRUITMENT CHECK: I believe you currently claim tax credits or other benefits that help with paying childcare costs for your child/ren? Is this correct?</p> <p><u>Personal Background</u> I'd like to start by learning a little about you. Can you tell me a bit about your household?</p> | <p>Welcome: orientates participant, gets them prepared to take part in the interview. <i>Outlines the 'rules' of the interview (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and Data Protection Act guidelines).</i></p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Fine to mention HMRC at this stage.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: This will already have been checked at the recruitment stage. However, mentioning it at this stage will aid recollection of the letter prior to asking about it in the following section.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: As well as acting as a lead in to the rest of the interview to make the participant(s) comfortable, this section</p> |

| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can I just check how many children do you have and how old are they? - Does anyone else live with you? PROBE: Partner, another family member, friends. <p>And apart from Working Tax Credit, what other benefits, if any, do you currently receive? And what other benefits have you received in the past? IF COUPLE: And what benefits does your partner currently receive?</p> <p>PROBE to check if the list of benefits mentioned is the full list, or if anything has been omitted</p> <p>USE SHOWCARD AND PROBE ON: Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Jobseeker’s Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Carers Allowance etc.</p> <p>And how long have you been receiving this benefit/tax credit? MODERATOR TO PROBE ON EACH BENEFIT/TAX CREDIT MENTIONED</p> | <p>allows us to begin to understand the outlook of the participant(s).</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: PROBE FULLY – We need to find out whether this is a comprehensive list or a rough guess</p> |

| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| <p>Up to 5 minutes</p> | <p>2. Employment history Firstly, can you describe any work that you do at the moment? IF APPLICABLE: And what work is your partner currently doing?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: If conducting a paired depth, check current work status of both participants. Also, ask about nature of partner’s work, how long they have been in that role, skill level, sector, location, temporary/permanent etc.</p> <p>IF WORKING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of work are you currently doing? PROBE: Role, skill level, sector and location (in relation to proximity to the home). - How long have you been doing that job? - Was this the job you were doing when you started receiving assistance towards your childcare costs? IF NO: What were you doing before this? Why did you change job? PROBE FULLY ON DETAILS OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT. - Is this job permanent, temporary or casual? IF TEMPORARY OR CASUAL: How long do you expect to be doing this job? What do you expect to do after that? PROBE FULLY – TO GET AT WHETHER THERE IS A SENSE OF STABILITY/ PERMANENCE ABOUT THEIR WORK. - What are your working hours? Do you have regular working hours, or do your working hours change regularly? (check whether over 16 hours a week) <p>I’d like you to briefly talk me through how you found your most recent job. I’m just going to map it down on this piece of paper so we can keep track of the steps you took. Moderator to write all the following information down as a customer journey taking care to note specific dates, occurrences, different organisations involved and emotional impact.</p> <p>When did you start looking for work/thinking about increasing your hours? PROBE: Why did you start looking then?</p> <p>Was the age of your child/ children a factor in going back to work? PROBE: Try to uncover how old the child/ children were when they felt comfortable leaving them in formal childcare and going to back to work.</p> | <p>This section will look at the current work status of customers, including the transition into employment of those who had been unemployed prior to taking up HMRC’s offer of help towards the cost of childcare.</p> <p>IMPORTANT MODERATOR NOTE: The participant might be out of work at this point, so would need to use past tense here and throughout the interview.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: While assistance with childcare costs is dependant on the recipient being in employment for 16+ hours per week, we may speak with people who are moving in and out of employment.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: it is important to work out how stable (or not) their work is – if work is very stable this may mean they had less interest in the pilot, or if they knew at the time of the offer that they were about to leave their job, for example</p> |

| Timings | Key Questions | Notes and Prompts |
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| | <p>How long did it take you to find work/increase your hours? PROBE: Ask about the number of positions applied for, how easy it was for them to find suitable vacancies, was word-of-mouth a factor, whether they turned down any successful applications, and why (especially was it because it couldn't fit with the childcare they could arrange?).</p> | |
| <p>Up to 10 minutes</p> | <p>3. Using and paying for childcare I'd like to talk about the different childcare providers that you currently use. MODERATOR TO GIVE SHOWCARD B OF CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO PARTICIPANT Which of the different kinds of childcare provider(s) shown on this card do you use now? When do you use them? PROBE: Ascertain all the different sources used, when they use them, how long they have been used for and any changes over time. MODERATOR NOTE: If the participant has used a family member as childcare, please probe to find out which family member: the child's grandparent(s); the child's older brother/sister; another relative</p> <p>And which of these childcare providers do you claim financial assistance from HMRC for? PROBE FULLY. And of these providers, can you tell me a bit about how you found out about them? PROBE: Examine where they got the information from and the importance of each of the sources.</p> | <p>This section will explore participants' current childcare arrangements in more detail.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: The participant may have different answers for different individual children – please record <i>all</i> their responses.</p> <p>We might expect childcare to be relatively stable as they've been claiming for it for a while. But if there have been changes to this, we would want to know why.</p> <p>Therefore, please probe around whether or not childcare arrangements are long-standing.</p> |

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| <p>What was it that made you choose the childcare provider(s) that you did?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent was cost a consideration in choosing a childcare provider? - And how important was flexibility (for example, the availability of childcare over school holidays, the requirement to continue paying for childcare over school holidays (when it might not be needed) and/or the availability of extra childcare, possibly at short notice? - And location? - To what extent do you use or have you used more than one childcare provider? Why is that? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o PROBE ON: is this due to moving to a new area, dissatisfaction with the childcare provider, one provider isn't available at all times, lack of flexibility <p>I would now just like to get a sense of how all your childcare and work arrangements fit together, so I can understand better how you manage them. I'd like to try and draw a map of where you work and where the childcare you use is.</p> <p>ASK PARTICIPANT FOR STREETNAMES AND POSTCODES OF THEIR WORKPLACE AND ALL TYPES OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL CHILDCARE USED. Note: details of these locations may have been described earlier in the interview. If this is the case, check to confirm.</p> <p>PROBE: How easy do you find it to get to your workplace and the places where you use childcare? What kind of transport do you use?</p> <p>And overall, how easy or difficult do you find it to balance work and childcare? PROBE: Why do you say this? What are the challenges you face when doing this? How do you meet these? When is it most challenging? When is it easiest? PROBE: Does your current childcare provision have enough flexibility (e.g. for times when you work fewer hours or more? Ascertain whether they have informal systems of support in place they can rely on when needed.</p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please ensure that participant is referring to formal childcare arrangements only. "Formal" childcare refers to the childcare that the participant is able to claim financial assistance from HMRC for. These types of childcare will have an official Ofsted number.</p> |
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| | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please look at the issue above carefully, particularly if the participant has irregular working hours.</p> <p>How do you pay for your formal childcare?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you pay on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis? PROBE FULLY – Particularly if the participant uses a variety of childcare providers, we need to see if they pay different providers on a different basis, - How do you pay for your formal childcare? PROBE FOR CASH, CHEQUE, DIRECT DEBIT ETC. - How does this differ from how you receive the financial assistance from HMRC to pay for your formal childcare? <p>And what, if any, informal childcare provider(s) do you use? By informal, I mean any of types of childcare that are not registered with Ofsted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How did you pay for this childcare? | |
| <p>Up to 20 minutes</p> | <p><u>4. Coping with seasonal variations in childcare costs</u> I'd now like to talk in a bit more detail about any formal childcare you've used this year and anticipate using over the financial year year, that is April to March.</p> <p>For how long have you been receiving childcare costs from HMRC via Tax Credits?</p> <p>IF FIRST YEAR:</p> <p>How easy or difficult have you found calculating your average annual childcare cost? Why is that?</p> <p>IF NOT FIRST YEAR:</p> <p>To what extent has calculating your annual costs become easier or difficult over this time? Why do you say that?</p> <p>ASK ALL:</p> <p>Can you talk me through how you calculated your annual childcare costs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What did you take into account when doing this? PROBE: old receipts / | <p>This section will explore participants' formal childcare arrangement expectations over the coming year and will examine how they envisage dealing with any seasonal variations</p> <p>May have different answers for different individual children. Please record all.</p> <p>Emphasise that any help we are discussing is Tax Credits from HMRC</p> <p>Explore how use of childcare has changed during the year to date and how it is expected to change ongoing – particularly around school holidays during summer and Christmas.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you think you will manage to cover these costs? - Are there any months when you think you will struggle to cover the cost of childcare? Why is this? <p>Have you been keeping track of how much you have spent on childcare? PROBE: Do you have a clear system for keeping track of costs? PROBE: If participant has a system for keeping track of their childcare costs, find out how this system was developed – had the participant had any formal childcare arrangements prior to receiving assistance from HMRC.</p> <p>If yes, how easy or difficult has it been to keep track of your childcare costs? Why do you say that? PROBE: To what extent do seasonal differences make it difficult to keep track of costs? How about any previous experience of paying for childcare – how far has this influenced how you keep track of your costs?</p> <p>If no, why is that? PROBE ON: costs never change, so no need to track; feel like they should track costs but never do, if so why</p> <p>What, if anything, could HMRC do to make it easier for you to manage during these months?</p> | <p>not discuss this with the participant as we do not want to misinform or confuse them</p> |
| <p>Up to 15 mins</p> | <p><u>5. (Lack of) interest in the offer</u></p> <p>I'd now like to talk a bit more about HMRC's offer of changing the way you report your childcare costs and the amount you receive each month to help pay these.</p> <p>SHOW INITIAL INVITATION LETTER</p> <p>Here is a copy of the letter you received notifying you of the offer...(Show respondent a copy of the letter) Do you recall receiving this letter?</p> | <p>This section explores participants' understanding of the offer, their reaction to the letter and, ultimately, why they chose to not take the offer up.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Do they pay much attention to things they get through the post?</p> |

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| <p>IF YES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you do when you received this letter? Did you read it straight away? Why/Why not? <p>Can you remember roughly when you received it? What did you think of it? What was the main message you took from it (if any at all)?</p> <p>The letter you received was from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now known as the Department for Education). Had you heard of them before?</p> <p>IF YES: – Where did you hear of them? And what were your attitudes towards them?</p> <p>IF NO: What do you think of the sender? What do you think they might be responsible for?</p> <p>Did you trust that the letter was from the then DCSF (NOW DfE)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASK ALL: • Do you feel you receive a lot of mail? How much? • Do you receive a lot of mail from the government, or other government agencies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who from? What are these letters usually about? • What do you normally do when you receive mail? Do you read it straight away? Or do you file it away? Is there any mail you wouldn't read at all? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE: What do you normally do when you receive mail from the government, or government agencies? <p><i>Cognitive testing of letter – do they understand it? Tone? Trust issue?</i></p> <p>Overall, what did you think of the letter when you first received it?</p> <p>PROMPT: Tone, clarity, language, length and the factors that stand out and those that don't</p> <p>Can you please describe in your own words what you think the letter is trying</p> | <p>Do they get a lot of junk mail that reduces the importance of correspondence they receive by letter? Also note the degree of confidence with which they answer these questions – this will inform how later responses are interpreted.</p> |
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| <p>to tell you? MODERATOR TO PROBE ON KEY CONCEPTS LIKE FORMAL CHILDCARE. PROBE: Did you know it was about tax credits? What did you think you would have to do in order to be eligible for this method of payment? And if you took up this offer, did you think it would cost you anything? What issues in the letter were you unsure about? If so, did you find out any more information about these issues? Who from? Did you show or discuss the letter with anyone? If so, what did they make of it? <u>Did you have any doubts about your eligibility for this way of receiving payment for your childcare costs? Why do you say this? Where does this perception come from?</u> Did you have any doubts about whether or not the letter was genuine? MODERATOR NOTE: probe around whether or not people were worried that this was some sort of scam or that they could be subject to fraud. IF THEY RECALLED THE LETTER: <u>ASK ALL</u> Thinking back to when you received this letter, did you call the helpline number on the letter? IF NO: Why not? What stopped you from doing this? ASK GROUP 2, 3, 4, 5 And what made you respond to the letter? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE ON: trust, keen to find out more, Do you remember being called by the helpline around the time you received the letter, or at a later date? IF YES: PROBE: how many calls did you receive / make? Did you register your interest in the scheme when you called/were called? ASK GROUP 2 ONLY At which point did you decide that you were not interested in the offer? Why did you decide that you were not interested at this point? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: </p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Are respondents understanding the letter and the offer?</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Explore attitudes towards contacting HMRC – did this put anyone off? Was it too much hassle? How did the phone call go? Did it provide enough information?</p> |
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- Did you feel that you needed more information?
- What kind of information did you need? Why do you say this?
- Did you trust/believe the offer? Why/why not?
- Did you have other considerations at the time? What were these?
- And were there any other factors which stopped you from registering at this point? Why do you say this?

**How could the phone contact you had with the helpline have been improved?
What difference would this have made?**

- PROMPT: What other information would it have been useful for you to have? Why do you say this? Are there any changes you can think of in how this information is delivered that would be useful to you or people like you? What are these?

If you experienced a second call, how did the two calls differ?

- Was there something about the 2nd call that put you off the offer?

ASK GROUP 3, 4 AND 5

And what made you decide that you were interested in the offer?

- PROBE:
- Being paid the amount of money that I spent that month
- How was the phone call? Helpful / unhelpful?
- Was there anything you were unsure about?
- Did you trust/believe the offer? Why?

Was there any information they asked of you that you could not immediately provide? What was this? Why were you not able to provide it?

PROMPT: Personal details? Childcare details? Employment details? Other?

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| <p>What did you think of the advice and information you received from the helpline? PROMPT: To what extent was the information helpful? Did you get all the information you needed? What else would it have been helpful for you to know? How could the phone contact you had with the helpline have been improved? What difference would this have made? PROMPT: What other information would it have been useful for you to have? Why do you say this? Are there any changes you can think of in how this information is delivered that would be useful to you or people like you? What are these? Was it difficult to register your interest? What bearing did your phone conversation(s) have on your decision to either register, or not register your interest to take up the offer of a different way of paying for childcare? Why do you say this?</p> <p>ASK GROUP 4</p> <p>Our records show that you initially expressed an interest in the new payment scheme. Do you recall receiving any calls asking you to take part? This would have been in May or June this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IF YES: ▪ PROBE: Had something changed in your circumstances which meant you were no longer interested in the offer? ▪ PROBE: Was there something about the final call that made you change your mind? If so, what? ▪ IF NO: ▪ Did you try and call the helpline yourself? <p>ASK GROUP 5</p> <p>Our records show that you initially expressed an interest but, after being recontacted about starting this new payment scheme, you declined to take</p> | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please note the level of confidence with which participants recall the telephone call.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: For those who experienced more than one call, we are interested in finding out if there was anything in the 2nd call that put people off the offer</p> |
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| | <p>part. This would have been in May or June this year. Can you tell me why you declined to take part in the scheme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: Had something changed in your circumstances? If so what? ▪ PROBE: Was there something about the final call that made you change your mind? If so, what? <p>ASK ALL</p> <p>How do you feel the offer compared to your existing way of receiving payments for your childcare costs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that the new way described in the offer would be better or worse for you? Why do you say that? • What aspects did or did not particularly appeal to you? • MODERATOR NOTE: need to explore if declining to take up the offer was due to not wanting to change from current system or a concern that the new system would be too much hassle; refer back to the participant's current situation – work history, stability of costs, etc; was there any concern about the way the system works (i.e. concern about changing making over payment more likely or any previous experience of tax credits)? | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Please note the level of confidence with which participants recall the telephone call.</p> |
| | <p><u>6. Approaches to budgeting</u></p> <p>How do you find managing money generally? Do you have a system for managing your money? Do you keep a household budget, for example? How, if at all, do you currently budget for childcare costs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do you keep track of the money you spend on childcare? ▪ PROBE: Do you have a separate pot of money from which you pay for your childcare costs (e.g. one partner's income, a certain benefit, the childcare costs you get from tax credits) or do these get paid alongside the rest of the | <p>This section aims to get an understanding of the extent to which participants currently plan and budget for their childcare costs.</p> |

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| | <p>household bills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In months when childcare costs are lower than expected, during school holidays for example, do you put this money aside for later months when costs may be higher? <p>When applying for the childcare element of tax credits, you were required to calculate your “average weekly childcare costs”? Can you tell me in your own words what you understand by the term “average weekly childcare costs”?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ And how did you go about calculating this? How easy or difficult was it to provide a figure to HMRC? PROBE: What particular difficulties did you face? And how did you go about overcoming these? ▪ And how accurate do you feel this figure is? PROBE: Has this amount been enough to cover the childcare costs you have incurred to date? Why do you say this? <p>How easy or hard do you find it to budget?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: Why is this? <p>BUDGETING EXERCISE: <i>Use the sheet in the appendices to map out the participants current weekly/monthly incomings and outgoings and try to determine whether the respondent thinks that it would make financial sense for them to receive childcare costs in a different way.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: Have you ever incurred an overpayment, in particular with regards to childcare? If so, how did you respond to this? <p>To what extent, if at all, did hearing about the letter change their budgeting behaviour?</p> <p>Do you think there would have been any financial benefits to receiving your formal childcare costs based on you reporting your costs every four weeks?</p> <p>Is there another way you would prefer to receive your childcare payments? What might that be? Why do you say that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE ON: How could the amount you receive be different? And what about the timing of payments – how could that be different? | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Do budget setting exercise to determine whether they think a different payment system would work for them</p> |
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| <p>Up to 30 mins</p> | <p>7. Using Childcare I'm now going to talk a little bit more about the sorts of childcare you have used, how you feel about different types of childcare providers, and how easy or difficult it is to find providers in your area.</p> <p>MODERATOR: RECAP ON THEIR PAST USE OF CHILDCARE PROVIDERS</p> <p>So generally then, do you feel your childcare arrangements are best placed for your current situation?</p> <p>PROMPT: Why do you say this? How do you feel about the childcare that you use? What do you like/dislike about it? If they used a different provider in the past, ask which they prefer and why?</p> <p>How do you feel about the quality of the childcare? How important is this for you when deciding on childcare?</p> <p>How did you decide that the quality of the childcare was of a high enough standard?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PROBE: Where did you go to for information on childcare providers? Did you use similar providers to your friends, for example? What sources did you use to help you decide this (formal vs informal sources)? Did you do this before you started using a particular childcare provider? <p>How do you feel about a formal provider – such as a nursery or childminder – taking care of your child(ren) for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROMPT: Why do you say this? How does it compare to how you feel about your family or your friends looking after you children? Which do you prefer? Why? ▪ MODERATOR NOTE: exploring whether formal childcare is their first choice or if it is used because family and friends are not available | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: General attitudes to childcare. Also looks at issues around upfront payments, difficulties finding affordable childcare and potential cost barriers</p> |
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| | <p>IF HAPPY WITH FORMAL CHILDCARE: Why do you say that? Are there particular childcare providers you are / have been happy with, and others you are not so happy with? Which are these? Why do you say this? Do you think that formal childcare is good for your child/children? Why? What are the benefits?</p> <p>IF NOT HAPPY WITH FORMAL CHILDCARE: Why do you say that? Are there particular types of childcare providers you are unhappy with? (If necessary PROBE: lack of trust with childcare providers, cost, bad past experience, prefer family, prefer themselves,</p> <p>IF SAY THEY FEEL THEY SHOULD BE LOOKING AFTER THEIR CHILD: Why do you say that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROMPT: Would this be all the time or only part of the time? Do you think the age of your child/ren will have a bearing on how you feel about this issue? When do you think things might be different? How do you feel about informal childcare? (i.e. having relatives, friends, neighbours looking after your child – would this be preferable to formal care, and is it a viable option for you?) <p>ASK ALL</p> <p>What, if any, have your experiences of using formal childcare providers been like in the past? Is that different to now? How?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: How have your past experiences made a difference to the childcare you use at the moment? How much choice did you have over what sort of childcare to use? ▪ PROMPT: How easy was it to arrange? How did you find paying for this kind of childcare? How accessible was the childcare provider to your home? And to your place of work (if applicable)? What did you think of the quality of care offered? Why do you say this? Were you using the childcare while you were at work, or was their another reason? | <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Explores whether or not cost and availability are barriers to childcare</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE: Education, disability, etc. <p>Have you faced any difficulties in the past with finding suitable childcare for your child/ren?</p> <p>PROMPT Can you talk me through these? How did they affect you?</p> <p>ASK ALL WITH MORE THAN ONE CHILD</p> <p>Is it important to you that both of / all your children go to the same childcare provider? Would this make balancing work and childcare easier or more difficult?</p> <p>How affordable do you think the formal childcare providers in your area are? Has this ever been a barrier to you using them to look after your child? If so, how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROMPT: Why do you say this? When has this been a problem? Have you looked for childcare and found it too expensive? What kind of childcare was this? Can you remember how much they asked you to pay? Have friends and family told you it is too expensive? (PROBE ON THIS IF SO). ▪ What difficulties, if any, have you had with finding appropriate childcare in your area? <p>To what extent do you find childcare to be affordable? Why do you say this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROMPT: Have you ever found the cost of formal childcare to be a deterrent? In particular, is it easier to afford at some times of the year than others? ▪ If yes, did you think the offer would help to eliminate this barrier? How much money do you think is affordable for you to pay? Why do you say this? What kind of provider would charge these rates do you think? Would you consider using them? Why/why not? <p>Did you need to pay a deposit or upfront payment for childcare?</p> | |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE ON: whether or not this has ever been problematic <p>Were you aware that the offer of a different payment method from HMRC included a loan of up to £500 to help cover any initial payments?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PROBE ON: Would this have been helpful? ▪ Why not? PROBE: See if the participant was concerned about owing money to HMRC at a later date, and why. <p>Were you aware that the offer also provided you with the chance to draw forward payments for future months if you expected your childcare costs to increase?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How were you made aware of this? <p>Do you think this facility to draw forward payments for future months would have been useful to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why do you say this? How helpful could it be? - What advantages would a system like this have? - Would you have any reservations about doing this? PROBE: would you have any concerns about overpayment and having to pay back if you were given too much money? <p>To what extent do you feel that the help provided through Tax Credits – where you receive 80% of the cost of your formal childcare – is sufficient to allow you to use formal childcare?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, if any, sort of restrictions does this help place on what childcare you can or cannot afford? Has it influenced which childcare you use, and how? | |
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| | <p>Is the cost affordable at all times during the year, or only in certain months? Why is this the case?</p> <p>To what extent is it harder to find local childcare providers at different times of the year?</p> <p>PROBE: during the summer holidays, Christmas period, seasonal work etc.</p> <p>MODERATOR NOTE: Refer back to mapping exercise earlier.</p> <p>What do you consider to be a reasonable distance to travel? Is this how far you currently travel to reach your childcare provider?</p> <p>How do you find out about childcare providers in the area?</p> <p>PROMPT: Do you feel like you know what is available? How have you found this out?</p> <p>Are there any other factors which have made it difficult for you to find suitable childcare?</p> <p>PROBE: What were these? Why were they important?</p> | |
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In which months is childcare most heavily used?

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| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |

Start

Appendix B – Initial Offer Letter

Appendix B: Initial Pilot offer letter

0800 030 4422 Helpline open: 08:00 – 20:00 Mon - Fri
www.direct.gov.uk/childcarepilot

Date: xx

Ref number: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Addressee 1
Addressee 2
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Address Line 5
Postcode

Special help with your childcare costs

The Government is offering 2000 families across London and the South East of England a special package of help towards childcare costs – and it's available to you. This package is a change to the usual childcare support you get as part of your tax credits and will give you the increased support you need, when you need it. This should help you budget better.

Here are the details. From May 2010 the Government can make its childcare payments to you so that they change as your childcare costs change – for instance, more money when your costs are higher, like over school holidays. We can even give you money up-front when your costs go up and you will still get up to 80% of the childcare costs you pay. There is a limit which means the most you can get is:

- **£140 a week** for one child
- **£240 a week** for two or more children

So don't delay. To register your interest and find out more about this extra help call **our FREE dedicated helpline on 0800 030 4422** (please give the reference number at the top of this letter when you call).

When you call our helpline, you'll be given further information on this package.

If English is not your first language we can provide a translation service and if you are hearing impaired we can offer this service via Tynetalk.

Yours sincerely,

David Fitzgerald, Deputy Director – Childcare

Any personal information you provide us with will be used for research purposes and may also be used to update related information. Further details are available from the Helpline. If you don't want us to contact you about this offer, or if you do not wish to be contacted to take part in any research relating to this offer, please let us know by calling **0800 030 4422**

Appendix C – Example of a Cost Breakdown Letter

Appendix C: Cost breakdown letter



**Child Benefit Office
Benefits & Credits**
Waterview Park
District 15
Mandarin Way
Washington
NE38 8QG

Mr Joe Doe
2 Street
City
AA1 2BB

Phone 0800 0855 041

www.hmrc.gov.uk

Date 28 March 2010
Our ref
Your ref 00000000
NI number BB224466C

Dear Mr Doe

Thank you for contacting us with your childcare costs for the period 4 January 2010 to 31 January 2010. We will make a payment of £320.00 into your bank account within 5 working days.

Please contact us on 26 February 2010 for your next payment, with your cost for the period of 1 February 2010 to 28 February 2010.

However, if you will have no childcare costs for a while, please call **0800 030 4422**.

How your payments have been worked out

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| Your childcare costs for period 4 January 2010 to 31 January 2010 | = £400.00 |
| Payment due | = £320.00 |
| Advance paid (if applicable) | = £0.00 |
| Previous advance deducted (if applicable) | = £0.00 |
| Total payment | = £320.00 |

Other information

Please tell us straight away if your circumstances change.

If you don't, you may not be getting all the money you are entitled to, or you could be building up an overpayment that you may have to pay back.

If you have any questions about your payments or want to tell us about a change, please phone us on the above number.

Yours sincerely